

Ministry

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Righteousness by Faith—
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Advance or Retreat?

Three years after the General Conference session of 1888 Ellen White wrote to Elder S. N. Haskell these startling words: "It is a solemn statement that I make to the church, that not one in 20 whose names are registered upon the church books are prepared to close their earthly history, and would be as verily without God and without hope in the world as the common sinner. They are professedly serving God, but they are more earnestly serving mammon" (*Christian Service*, p. 41).

Whatever our view on whether the church accepted or rejected the messages of Jones and Waggoner, Ellen White makes clear that three years after this momentous meeting, less than 5 percent of the members of the Adventist Church were prepared to meet their Lord. If those same statistics apply today, we would find less than 10 faithful members in a church of 200. [In other words, the vast majority who help in Sabbath school and participate in the life of the church are unconverted!]

In the context of this statistic, the present discussion on 1888 and righteousness by faith takes on special significance. Our people do not need more material on character perfection, sinlessness, or the nature of Christ, important as these topics may be. Rather, they need to be taught about Jesus and how to experience His righteousness. To talk of perfection will only discourage the majority, who have not even taken the first step toward Christ.

So in this special issue, we do not seek to examine every nook and cranny of what happened in 1888. There is even diversity of opinion among our authors, as there is in the church, as to exactly what happened. What we are presenting is a picture of Jesus and His righteousness. When we know what it means to depend solely on the merits of Jesus Christ every moment of every day, we will be ready for more solid food.

As ministers, we must present before our people the matchless grace of Christ. We need to reveal by our attitudes and words that we too have fallen on the Rock, Christ Jesus; that self has been laid on the altar; that Jesus is first and last in our affections, our time, and our use of money. Rather than doctrines about Jesus, we need to make Jesus Himself the center of our discourses.

We will not help the 95 percent by arguing over differences between justification and sanctification. We will reach them only if we talk about Jesus, His loveliness, His love, His sacrifice, His resurrection, His coming again. May we be foremost in uplifting Jesus Christ before the world and our own members.

What was the essence of the message of Jones and Waggoner? In a letter dated April 7, 1889, Ellen White states it succinctly: "The religion of Jesus Christ has not been as clearly defined as it should be, that the souls who are seeking for the knowledge of the plan of salvation may discern the simplicity of faith. In these meetings this has been made so clear that a child may understand that it is an immediate, voluntary, trustful surrender of the heart to God—a coming into union with Christ in confidence, affectionate obedience to do all His commandments through the merits of Jesus Christ. It is a decisive act of the individual, committing to the Lord the keeping of the soul. It is the climbing up by Christ, clinging to Christ, accepting the righteousness of Christ as a free gift. The will is to be surrendered to Christ. Through faith in the righteousness of Christ is salvation" (*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* [Washington, D.C.: The Ellen G. White Estate, 1987], p. 281).

Study questions at the end of each article add versatility to this special issue of MINISTRY. You can obtain extra copies through your ABC at a very low price for use in prayer meetings, small group discussions, and Sabbath school classes.

Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will use this special issue to bring revival and reformation to our church. We want to see Jesus come in our generation. We take seriously Jesus' words to the church of Laodicea: "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see" (Rev. 3:18, NIV).

We see a church rich in love, speaking constantly of the righteousness of Christ, and full of the Holy Spirit. We see a church that makes Christ the center of every presentation; a church in which the character of every member mirrors His character.

We call for every believer to be a witness in his or her neighborhood and the church to plan to place such a witness in every neighborhood on earth so that within a single generation the glory of God will lighten the earth, God will declare His work finished, and Jesus will come.



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1888--issues, outcomes, lessons

Robert W. Olson

Did the 1888 session yield good for the church or bad? How can we benefit from Ellen White's reaction and counsel?



Robert W. Olson, Ph.D., is secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate in Washington, D.C.

The General Conference session held at Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1888 proved to be a major turning point in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The change in our course was made slowly during the three years following the conference. During that time the unflagging efforts of Ellen White, A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner helped move the church away from the debating spirit and legalism of former years to an emphasis on justification by faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

But this change in direction was not a natural outgrowth of the Minnesota conference. In many ways the Minneapolis meeting was a disaster. The church hit bottom spiritually at that session. Ellen White called it "the saddest experience of my life"¹ and "the most grievous trial of my life."² It is the only General Conference session in Adventist history that was marked by open rebellion against Ellen White on the part of a large number of our ministers. She even wondered at one point whether God might have to call out yet another movement. Concerning many of the delegates, she declared: "As reformers they had come out of the denominational churches, but they now act a part similar to that which the churches acted. We hoped that there would not be the necessity for another coming out."³

Nevertheless, in spite of her deep anguish over the unbelieving spirit manifested by so many, Ellen White confidently anticipated that the Lord would

somehow overrule and that much good would come from the meeting. On the last day of the conference, she wrote to her daughter-in-law: "I have spoken nearly 20 times with great freedom, and we believe that this meeting will result in great good. We know not the future, but we feel that Jesus stands at the helm and we shall not be shipwrecked."⁴

There were others who saw a positive as well as a negative side to the session. Three weeks after its close W. C. White wrote the newly elected president of the General Conference, who was still in Europe: "The delegates at the close of the meeting carried away very different impressions. Many felt that it was one of the most profitable meetings that they ever attended; others, that it was the most unfortunate conference ever held."⁵

Clearly, that session prompted differing reactions. Some felt that the session was bad—very bad. Others, that it was good—very good. What made that meeting so bad? And what made it so good?

The negative side

For several years before the session began, personal differences and animosities had been developing between two groups of church leaders. The Battle Creek brethren were led by George I. Butler, president of the General Conference, and Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review and Herald*. Associated with these men in their sympathies were several local conference presidents, in particular Elders R. M. Kilgore of Illinois, J. H. Morrison of Iowa, R. A. Underwood of Ohio, and I. D. Van Horn of Michigan, as well as a number of lesser lights.

The other group was led by E. J. Wag-

goner and A. T. Jones, who served as coeditors of the *Signs of the Times* and also as Bible teachers at Healdsburg College. Among their friends were W. C. White, S. N. Haskell, and C. H. Jones.

Initially, the differences between these two groups centered on their interpretation of two passages of Scripture. The eastern brethren believed that the Huns were one of the 10 kingdoms of Daniel 7, and that the "added" law of Galatians 3:19-25 was the Jewish ceremonial system. The western brethren, on the other hand, favored the Alemani instead of the Huns, and held that the added law was the moral law.

The fact that Waggoner and Jones were comparatively young men—in their 30s—while Butler and Smith were in their 50s tended to exacerbate the situation. Butler found it difficult to believe that two editorial fledglings could possibly understand the Bible better than he did.⁶

Seeds of conflict

The estrangement between the two sides began when Waggoner published his views on Galatians 3 in the *Signs of the Times* of September 11, 1884. His explanation that the added law was the moral code flatly contradicted the interpretation accepted by Butler and Smith and probably by most contemporary Adventists as well. It so happened that E. J. Waggoner's father, J. H. Waggoner, had taken a similar position 30 years earlier. The elder Waggoner had maintained in 1854 that "not a single declaration" in Galatians "referred to the ceremonial or Levitical law." The epistle, he wrote, "treats solely of the moral law."⁷

Ellen White apparently settled the earlier controversy by stating that Waggoner's interpretation was wrong.⁸ For the next three decades the question of the law in Galatians did not receive much attention; at least the issue did not provoke further controversy. Smith, Butler, and others felt sure that Galatians 3:19 referred to the ceremonial system. They also believed that Ellen White supported this view, since she had rejected J. H. Waggoner's position.⁹

Now the younger Waggoner, in a sense, had thrown down the gauntlet and deliberately revived the controversy. He outlined his position in a series of nine articles published in the *Signs* from July 8 to September 2, 1886. Butler was incensed. He considered the articles an affront to his leadership. He decided to

settle the question once and for all at the 1886 General Conference session. Hurdled he produced an 85-page pamphlet and distributed it to the delegates gathered at Battle Creek for the General Conference session in November of that year. In this tract Butler stated: "The writer acknowledges considerable surprise that during the last year or two the subject [of the law in Galatians] has been made quite prominent in the instructions given to those at Healdsburg College preparing to labor in the cause; also in the lessons passing through the *Instructor*, designed for our Sabbath schools all over the land, and in numerous argumentative articles in the *Signs of the Times*, our pioneer missionary paper, thus throwing these views largely before the reading public not acquainted with our faith. Thus, strong and repeated efforts have been made to sustain the view that the moral law is the subject of the apostle's discourse in the most prominent texts under discussion in the letter to the Galatians. . . ."

"We decidedly protest against the bringing out of controverted views in the manner indicated, concerning matters upon which our people are not agreed."¹⁰

At the 1886 General Conference session a theological committee of nine members was appointed to study the point at issue, which they did immediately. Something of the tension developing between the two groups of church leaders can be felt in Butler's letter to Ellen White, written shortly after the close of the meeting. "Brother E. J. Waggoner came on . . . loaded for the conflict," he wrote. "The theological committee was ordered. . . . It stood, four—Haskell, Whitney, Wilcox, and Waggoner, in favor of the *Signs* position—five, Smith, Canright, Covert, J. H. Morrison, and self, opposed. We had an argument of several hours, but neither side was convinced. The question was whether we should take this into the conference and have a big public fight over it or not. I could not advise it, for I thought it would be most unhappy and result only in heat and debate."¹¹

Public confrontation at that meeting was not avoided altogether; one resolution aimed at Waggoner was passed, while another was defeated. The conference voted to ask Adventist editors "not to permit doctrinal views not held by a fair majority of our people . . . to be published in our denominational papers, as if they were the established doctrines

of this people, before they are examined and approved by the leading brethren of experience."¹²

However, Butler's resolution that called for a censure of the *Signs* for publishing the nine articles on Galatians earlier that year was voted down. Butler lamented: "I think, in justice, it ought to have been passed. But this was very distasteful to Brother Haskell and some others, that even a word should be said implying that the *Signs* had made a mistake."¹³

Ellen White's role

In an endeavor to bring about unity and a measure of peace, Ellen White, who was in Europe, wrote the disputants on both sides and pointed out their faults. She took Waggoner and Jones to task for advancing their ideas before the students at Healdsburg College and for publishing them before the world.¹⁴ Then, six weeks later, after reading the first few pages of Butler's pamphlet on Galatians, Ellen White admonished him, "I think you are too sharp."¹⁵

As a courtesy to Ellen White, the 1887 General Conference session was held in Oakland, California, only about 60 miles from her home in Healdsburg. Public discussion of the Galatians question was avoided, but, according to Elder Butler, there were some serious private discussions of the subject. He later informed Ellen White: "At the Oakland General Conference last year he [Waggoner] took some of our ministers in private conference over this subject and read them a long review he had prepared of my pamphlet, and did every way his ingenuity could invent to impress his view of the subject. . . . I have no evidence that Elder E. J. Waggoner or those backing him ever have any idea of letting up, but think they still propose to fight this to the bitter end."¹⁶

Public discussion of the Galatians issue and other controverted points now became impossible to avoid. In fact, early in 1887 Ellen White had already recognized it as inevitable. She told Butler at that time: "The matter now has been brought so fully before the people by yourself as well as Dr. Waggoner, that it must be met fairly and squarely in open discussion. . . . You circulated your pamphlet; now it is only fair that Dr. Waggoner should have just as fair a chance as you have had. I think the whole thing is not in God's order. But brethren, we must have no unfairness."¹⁷

In early summer of 1888, in preparation for the Minneapolis conference, Waggoner, Jones, W. C. White, and a few other California ministers met for several days in a mountain retreat. W. C. White states: "We spent two days tracing down the history of the different kingdoms that acted a part in the dismemberment of Rome, and one day in the examination of Elder Butler's *Law in Galatians*, and other topics bearing on that question, at the close of which Elder Waggoner read some manuscripts which he had prepared in answer to Elder Butler's pamphlet. . . . At the close of our study, Elder Waggoner asked us if it would be right for him to publish his manuscripts and at the next General Conference place them in the hands of the delegates, as Elder Butler had his. We thought this would be right, and encouraged him to have 500 copies printed."¹⁸

Waggoner published his book *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians* and took a good supply with him when he went to Minneapolis.

Practical righteousness

Nine weeks before the conference began, Ellen White pleaded with her brethren to remember their Christianity at the forthcoming meeting. To the "brethren who shall assemble in General Conference" she wrote: "Let every soul now be divested of envy, of jealousy, of evil surmising, and bring their hearts into close connection with God. If all do this, they will have that love burning upon the altar of their hearts which Christ evinced for them. All parties will have Christian kindness and Christian tenderness. There will be no strife; for the servants of God must not strive. . . ."

"The correct interpretation of the Scriptures is not all that God requires. He enjoins upon us that we should not only know the truth. . . . We are to bring into our practice, in our association with our fellowmen, the spirit of Him who gave us the truth."¹⁹

Somehow a misunderstanding developed as to the topics to be presented at the institute preceding the General Conference. According to W. C. White, Butler had written him a letter in which "he gave a list of the subjects which he said he supposed would come up for consideration. Among these he named prominently the 10 kingdoms, and the law in Galatians. . . . Elder Butler has forgotten it, and does not admit that he ever wrote such a letter."²⁰

Waggoner and Jones came fully prepared with their theological and historical ammunition, but, for whatever reason, Uriah Smith and his friends had made no special preparations. They did, however, bring several hundred copies of Butler's pamphlet on Galatians, which they distributed to the delegates.²¹

Unfortunately, Ellen White's appeal for kindness and tenderness was largely ignored when the ministerial institute convened on Wednesday, October 10, one week before the opening of the General Conference session. A. T. Jones's lectures on the 10 kingdoms, presented on the second day of the institute, resulted in discussion that at times became acrimonious. Still, Sister White was hopeful that a good spirit could somehow prevail. On Sabbath afternoon, October 13, she preached on the love of God and then called for testimonies. "Many bore testimony," she wrote, "that this day was the happiest of their lives. . . . This was a season of refreshing to many souls, but it did not abide upon some."²²

Ellen White blamed both Elder Butler and Elder Smith for blocking the way so that truth and light were treated as unwelcome guests. At 2:30 in the morning of October 15 she wrote to Butler, "I have not the least hesitancy in saying that a spirit has been brought into this meeting, not of seeking to obtain light, but to stand barricading the way, lest a ray should come into the hearts and minds of the people through some other channel than that which you had decided to be the proper one."²³

As the ministerial institute merged into the General Conference session, the presentations included earnest messages by Waggoner on righteousness by faith in Christ, but these were looked upon with suspicion by the Butler-Smith party. Smith no doubt expressed the feelings of many when he declared, "Brother Waggoner's six preliminary discourses on righteousness we could all agree to; and I should have enjoyed them first rate had I not known all the while that he designed them to pave the way for his position on Galatians."²⁴

The discussion on the law in Galatians left the eastern and western brethren further apart than ever. Existing aggravations were only worsened when the two sides confronted each other with their opposing views. One of the most regrettable consequences of the bitter spirit manifested by Butler, Smith, and company toward Waggoner and Jones was

that these animosities were directed against Ellen White as well. With this development, a much more important issue than the 10 kingdoms or the law in Galatians was at stake: acceptance or rejection of Ellen White as a special spokesperson for the Lord.

Actually, the Butler-Smith people were suspicious of Sister White even before the session began because of the friendship between her son and Waggoner and Jones. They were sure that she was part of the "conspiracy" from California. Concerning this change in their attitude toward her, Ellen White wrote: "It was evident that a delusion was upon our brethren. They had lost confidence in Sister White, not because Sister White had changed but because another spirit had taken possession and control of them."²⁵

Sister White characterized the attitude of the Butler-Smith party as rebellion. She declared: "The position and work God gave me at that conference was disregarded by nearly all. Rebellion was popular. Their course was an insult to the Spirit of God."²⁶

"My brethren have trifled and caviled and criticized and commented and demerited, and picked and chosen a little and refused much until the testimonies mean nothing to them."²⁷

The rejection of Ellen White was accompanied by a rejection of everything she stood for, including Waggoner's presentations on righteousness by faith. She wrote Butler, "The spirit and influence of the ministers generally who have come to this meeting is to discard light."²⁸ It appears that most of the 96 delegates were caught up in this spirit of cynicism and unbelief. Note the terms just quoted: "nearly all" had rejected the prophet's authority; "the ministers generally" were opposed to new light. Tragically, the prophet was led to pen these almost unbelievable lines: "In Minneapolis God gave precious gems of truth to His people in new settings. This light from heaven by some was rejected with all the stubbornness the Jews manifested in rejecting Christ."²⁹

"Had Christ been before them, they would have treated Him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ."³⁰

The implications of this unholy attitude are staggering to contemplate. Ellen White held our spiritual ancestors responsible, to some degree at least, for prolonging our world's long night of mis-

ery. She declared: Satan “prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.”³¹

The positive side

E. J. Waggoner’s sermons on salvation through faith in Christ’s righteousness struck a note that had long been missing from Adventist sermons. Most Adventist converts had come from other Christian churches, and their acceptance of Christ was taken for granted. Adventist ministers preached much more about the law and the Sabbath than about Christ. They became skilled debaters who prided themselves on their ability to outargue their Sundaykeeping counterparts. Waggoner’s sermons were different. He concentrated on Christ—His deity, His humanity, and His righteousness, which He offers to us as a gift. In this new emphasis Waggoner had the total support of Ellen White. She told the delegates: “I see the beauty of truth in the presentation of the righteousness of Christ in relation to the law as the doctor has placed it before us. . . . That which has been presented harmonizes perfectly with the light which God has been pleased to give me during all the years of my experience.”³²

“In Minneapolis,” she said later, “God gave precious gems of truth to His people in new settings.”³³ “The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones.”³⁴

These messages were as living water to many thirsty souls who were present. W. C. White called Waggoner’s sermons the turning point in his life.³⁵ Seven years after the conference A. O. Tait was still feeling the glow. He reminisced: “There are quite a number of men in Battle Creek yet who do not see light in this blessed truth in regard to the righteousness of Christ that has been coming to us as a flood of blessing ever since the Minneapolis General Conference. I found that doctrine just the food that my poor soul needed, there at Minneapolis, and I was converted at that meeting, and have been rejoicing in the light of it ever since.”³⁶

Nearly half a century later Elder C. C.

McReynolds still looked back to the Minneapolis session as a truly memorable and blessed experience. He recalled: “At the close of Elder Waggoner’s fourth or fifth lesson I was a subdued, repenting sinner. I felt that I must get away alone with the Lord. I went out of the city away into the woods; I did not want dinner; I spent the afternoon there on my knees and on my face before the Lord with my Bible. I had come to the point that I *did* believe the promises of God in His Word for forgiveness of my sins, and that it *did* mean *me* as well as any other sinner. His promise in 1 John 1:9; Isaiah 1:18; Galatians 1:4; and Titus 2:14 and many of the promises were reviewed. There I saw Him as my own personal Saviour and there I was converted anew. All doubts that my sins were really forgiven were taken away, and from then till now, I have never doubted my acceptance as a pardoned child of God.”³⁷

This kind of divine encounter must have been experienced by more than a few, for Ellen White stated, “Again and again the Spirit of the Lord came into the meeting with convincing power, notwithstanding the unbelief manifested by some present.”³⁸

In order not to lose the benefits of this new emphasis on Christ and His righteousness, Ellen White, Jones, and Waggoner spent the next three years conducting revivals at camp meetings and in our larger churches across the country. There was still much opposition, especially in Battle Creek, but there were many victories. Concerning two of these revivals Ellen White recollected: “We worked—and some know how hard we worked. I think it was a whole week, going early and late, at Chicago, in order that we might get these ideas in the minds of the brethren. . . .

“They think they have to trust in their own righteousness, and in their own works, and keep looking at themselves, and not appropriating the righteousness of Christ and bringing it into their life, and into their character. . . . It was after one week had passed away before there was a break, and the power of God, like a tidal wave, rolled over that congregation. I tell you, it was to set men free; it was to point them to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

“And there at South Lancaster, the mighty movings of the Spirit of God were there. Some are here that were in that meeting. God revealed His glory, and every student in the college was brought

to the door there in confession, and the movings of the Spirit of God were there. And thus from place to place. Everywhere we went we saw the movings of the Spirit of God.”³⁹

As time passed, many—probably most—of those who had sinned so brazenly at Minneapolis confessed their guilt and asked the Lord for forgiveness. This included not only Elders Butler and Smith but their leading supporters as well. Typical was the attitude expressed by Elder I. D. Van Horn when he wrote to Ellen White in 1893: “I am now heartily ashamed of the part I took in the ‘meriment,’ the ‘satire,’ ‘sarcasm’ and ‘wit’ that was so much indulged in by myself and others in the same room at that Minneapolis meeting. It was very wrong—all wrong—and must have been displeasing to the Lord who witnessed it all. I wish it all could be blotted from my memory.”⁴⁰

In addition to these revivals, between 1889 and 1891 three institutes or Bible schools, totaling 46 weeks in time, were held in Battle Creek for our ministers. These institutes also gave special emphasis to the theme of justification by faith. A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner were among the instructors in these institutes, and they were also the key speakers in most of the General Conference sessions throughout the 1890s. Ellen White’s books *Steps to Christ*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, *The Desire of Ages*, and *Christ’s Object Lessons*, with their concentration on Christ’s ministry, His teachings, and His character, were all published between 1892 and 1900. We can thank the Lord that beginning with the Minneapolis conference the subject of justification by faith in Christ’s righteousness has come to have a larger place in the thinking and in the experience of Seventh-day Adventists.

Seven lessons for our day

We must not end with a narration of the evils and the virtues of the Minneapolis meeting. We need to learn important lessons from the experience of our forefathers. These lessons need to be pointed out, meditated upon, and acted upon, or we will be in danger of repeating the mistakes they made a century ago.

First, “we must individually humble our souls before God and put away our idols.”⁴¹ Some have wondered whether the Seventh-day Adventist Church today should, in a General Conference action, make a formal apology to the Lord for the sins of our brethren at Minneapolis

Discussion questions:

1. If the Minneapolis conference was a turning point, was the turn for the better or for the worse?
2. What law or laws is Paul referring to in Galatians 3:19-24? (See *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, pp. 1109, 1110.)
3. If all parties at the Minneapolis conference had heeded Ellen White's plea for Christian kindness and tenderness, how would the conference have been different?
4. Did Ellen White's approval of Waggoner's Minneapolis messages give a carte blanche endorsement to everything he taught?
5. How would you have behaved if you had been a delegate at the 1888 General Conference session?

lis. Ellen White recognized the responsibility of leadership in correcting evils and in setting the proper spiritual tone in the church. But in the 27 years she lived following the Minneapolis meeting she never once suggested that we should pass an official action in which we would formally dissociate ourselves from the un-Christlike attitude manifested by so many at Minneapolis. She did, however, urge the individuals involved to confess their own sins. She warned, "The words and actions of [all] who took part in this work will stand registered against them until they make confession of their wrong."⁴² "Repentance," she said, "is the first step that must be taken by all who would return to God." And "no one can do this work for another. We must individually humble our souls before God and put away our idols."⁴³

Second, we should "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). We cannot afford to neglect our prayer life, even for a day. Elder C. C. McReynolds described the prayerless spirit at Minneapolis: "In our lodging house we were hearing a good many remarks about Sister White favoring Elder Waggoner, that he was one of her pets. The spirit of controversy was up, and when the delegates came in from the last meeting of the day there was simply babble, with much laughter and joking and some very disgusting comments were being made, no spirit of solemnity

prevailing. A few did not engage in the hilarity. No worship hour was kept, and anything but the solemnity that should have been felt and manifested on such an occasion was present."⁴⁴

Because many delegates did not maintain constant connection with God, the door was opened for Satan to control their thinking for a time. We must not allow such a sad chapter to be repeated.

Third, we should learn to love all our brethren, including those who do not share our individual interpretations of Scripture. Referring to Minneapolis, Ellen White lamented: "A difference in the application of some few scriptural passages makes men forget their religious principles. Elements become banded together, exciting one another through the human passions to withstand in a harsh, denunciatory manner everything that does not meet their ideas. This is not Christian, but is of another spirit."⁴⁵

She admonished the brethren: "A. T. Jones and Dr. Waggoner hold views upon some doctrinal points which all admit are not vital questions. . . . But it is a vital question whether we are Christians, whether we have a Christian spirit, and are true, open, and frank with one another."⁴⁶

The law in Galatians and the 10 kingdoms of Daniel 7 were not "vital questions"—nonnegotiables, such as the Sabbath and the investigative judgment doctrines. They were in that class of biblical interpretations where some latitude of belief must be tolerated. On issues that all agree are not vital, is it right to be cool toward our brethren and sisters whose views are not identical with our own? To manifest an un-Christlike spirit toward those in the church who differ with us on these or similar issues is to repeat the spirit of Minneapolis. Just before the Minneapolis meeting Ellen White exhorted the brethren: "Heaven's enlightenment is what is needed, so that when we look upon the faces of our brethren, we may consider: These are they that have been purchased by the price of the blood of Christ. They are precious in His sight. I must love them as Christ has loved me."⁴⁷

Surely this is good counsel for us today.

Fourth, we should search the Scriptures for ourselves and not allow others to do our thinking for us. At Minneapolis Ellen White could see that many of our ministers were simply following the lead of Elders Butler and Smith in their understanding of Scripture. They were not do-

ing their own thinking. Loyalty to leadership—a commendable virtue—became a serious weakness when it led to following leadership blindly.

On October 19 Ellen White cautioned the delegates: "Do not believe anything simply because others say it is truth. Take your Bibles, and search them for yourselves."⁴⁸

Again, on October 24, she entreated: "I want our young men to take a position, not because someone else takes it, but because they understand the truth for themselves."⁴⁹

And on November 3, the last Sabbath of the conference, she once more appealed to the brethren: "We should be prepared to investigate the Scriptures with unbiased minds, with reverence and candor. It becomes us to pray over matters of difference in views of Scripture."⁵⁰

The following day, November 4, Ellen White wrote her daughter-in-law: "The ministers have been the shadow and echo of Elder Butler about as long as it is healthy and for the good of the cause. . . . [Elder Butler] thinks his position gives him such power that his voice is infallible. To get this off from the minds of our brethren has been a difficult matter."⁵¹ Let us not fall into the trap of putting any man where God alone should be.

Fifth, we should emphasize righteousness by faith in our preaching, we should make the subject as clear as crystal to our people, and we should be sure that we ourselves enjoy a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Ellen White urged: "Faith in Jesus Christ's righteousness in the behalf of every individual soul should be held before the people for their study and for them to contemplate thoroughly. This theme cannot be dwelt upon too often and too earnestly."⁵²

Probably all the delegates at Minneapolis would have insisted that they believed in the doctrine of righteousness by faith in Christ. However, many did not act or sound that way, either at the 1888 conference or in the months following. In addressing the 1889 General Conference session, Ellen White stated: "The true religion, the only religion of the Bible, that teaches forgiveness through the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, that advocates righteousness by the faith of the Son of God, has been slighted, spoken against, ridiculed. It has been denounced as leading to enthusiasm and fanaticism."⁵³

Even Uriah Smith's thinking on the

subject appeared to have been fuzzy at times. For example, he editorialized in the June 11, 1889, *Review*: "The law is spiritual, holy, just, and good, the divine standard of righteousness. Perfect obedience to it will develop perfect righteousness, and that is the only way anyone can attain to righteousness. . . ."

"There is a righteousness we must have, in order to see the kingdom of heaven, which is called 'our righteousness,' and this righteousness comes from being in harmony with the law of God. In Deuteronomy 6:24, 25, we read: 'And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.' The Lord would not command them to do what He had not made adequate provision for them to do; and if they did do it, it would be their righteousness."⁵⁴

A week after this editorial was published someone asked Ellen White, "What does Brother Smith's piece in the *Review* mean?" She responded publicly, "He doesn't know what he is talking about; he sees trees as men walking. . . . It is impossible for us to exalt the law of Jehovah unless we take hold of the righteousness of Jesus Christ."⁵⁵

In a manuscript "Looking Back at Minneapolis," written a few weeks after the conference closed, Ellen White stated: "I bore testimony that the most precious light had been shining forth from the Scriptures in the presentation of the great subject of the righteousness of Christ connected with the law, which should be constantly kept before the sinner as his only hope of salvation. . . ."

"It is a study that can tax the highest human intelligence, that man, fallen, deceived by Satan, taking Satan's side of the question, can be conformed to the image of the Son of the infinite God—that man shall be like Him, that, because of the righteousness of Christ given to man, God will love man, fallen but redeemed, even as He loved His Son. . . ."

"This is the mystery of godliness. This picture is of the highest value. It is to be meditated upon, placed in every discourse, hung in memory's hall, uttered by human lips, and traced by human beings who have tasted and known that the Lord is good. It is to be the groundwork of every discourse."⁵⁶

Sister White could hardly have ex-

pressed herself more plainly and more decidedly than when she said: "The point which has been urged upon my mind for years is the imputed righteousness of Christ. . . ."

"There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all, than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone."⁵⁷

Sixth, we should "despise not prophesying" (1 Thess. 5:20). If Uriah Smith had only heeded this admonition at Minneapolis he would have saved himself and many others much heartache. But the devil convinced Smith that Ellen White had contradicted herself. She had told J. H. Waggoner in the 1850s that his view of Galatians 3 was wrong. Now in 1888 she appeared to support the younger Waggoner, who had essentially the same view as his father.

Actually, Ellen White did not take a position on Galatians 3 at the Minneapolis conference. She carefully avoided taking sides on this issue. She pointed out, in fact, that her understanding of this passage was different in some respects from that of Dr. Waggoner.⁵⁸

But Smith was not listening. He allowed himself to brood over what he thought were Ellen White's mistakes. His coolness toward God's prophet continued for more than two years. Finally, on January 7, 1891, he made a full confession. Of this Ellen White wrote: "[Brother Smith] took my hand as he left the room, and said, 'If the Lord will forgive me for the sorrow and burdens I have brought upon you, I tell you this will be the last. I will stay up your hands.' . . . It is seldom that Elder Smith sheds a tear, but he did weep, and his voice was choked with the tears in it."⁵⁹

This temporary rejection of the prophetic voice was harmful not only to Uriah Smith's Christian experience but to the confidence of others as well. Ellen White reminded him that he could not recall the ever-extending consequences of his influence. She appealed, "After your course of action has unsettled the minds and faith in the testimonies, what have you gained? If you should recover your faith, how can you remove the impressions of unbelief you have sown in other minds?"⁶⁰ How much better for us to be immovable in our acceptance of the evidence God has given that Ellen

White was His prophet.

Seventh, let us maintain our confidence in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is the church organization referred to in Revelation 12:17. There is no other. Even though Ellen White entertained doubts about this fact at Minneapolis, she did not entertain those doubts for long. Before she left that city she wrote her daughter-in-law: "I tremble to think what would have been in this meeting if we had not been here. . . . God would have worked in some way to prevent this spirit brought to the meeting, having a controlling power. . . . But we are not the least discouraged. We trust in the Lord God of Israel. The truth will triumph and we mean to triumph with it."⁶¹

Throughout the rest of her life Ellen White continued to sound this same note of confidence in the Advent movement. In the 1890s "kingly power" in our General Conference administration drew from her the scathing words "The voice from Battle Creek . . . is no longer the voice of God."⁶² "The church is in the Laodicean state. The presence of God is not in her midst."⁶³ Yet at the same time she was able to say: "God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port."⁶⁴

"The bulwarks of Satan will never triumph. Victory will attend the third angel's message. As the Captain of the Lord's host tore down the walls of Jericho, so will the Lord's commandment-keeping people triumph, and all opposing elements be defeated."⁶⁵

"I am encouraged and blessed as I realize that the God of Israel is still guiding His people, and that He will continue to be with them, even to the end."⁶⁶ ■

¹ E. G. White manuscript 21, 1888. All quotations from E. G. White manuscripts and letters in this article are drawn from the four-volume *Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987) unless otherwise noted.

² E. G. White manuscript 30, 1889.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ E. G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), book 3, pp. 177, 178.

⁵ W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 27, 1888. Quotations from non-E. G. White letters in this article are drawn from the two-volume *Manuscripts and Memories From Minneapolis* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1988).

⁶ G. I. Butler to E. G. White, Oct. 1, 1888, p. 23.

⁷ J. H. Waggoner, *The Law of God* (Rochester, N.Y.: Review and Herald, 1855), p. 74.

⁸ Uriah Smith to Ellen G. White, Feb. 17, 1890.

⁹ Ellen White did not clarify her position on the law in Galatians until several years later. She did not see it as an either-or question, but believed the added law included both the ceremonial and moral law. See *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, pp. 1109, 1110.

¹⁰ George I. Butler, *The Law in the Book of Galatians* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1886), p. 4.

¹¹ G. I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Dec. 16, 1886.

¹² *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 14, 1886, p. 779.

¹³ G. I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Dec. 16, 1886.

¹⁴ E. G. White letter 37, 1887.

¹⁵ E. G. White letter 13, 1887.

¹⁶ G. I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Oct. 1, 1888.

¹⁷ E. G. White letter 13, 1887.

¹⁸ W. C. White to Dan T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890.

¹⁹ E. G. White letter 20, 1888.

²⁰ W. C. White to Dan T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 164.

²³ E. G. White letter 21a, 1888.

²⁴ Uriah Smith to Ellen G. White, Feb. 17, 1890.

²⁵ E. G. White manuscript 24, 1888.

²⁶ E. G. White letter 14, 1889.

²⁷ E. G. White letter 40, 1890.

²⁸ E. G. White letter 21, 1888.

²⁹ E. G. White manuscript 13, 1889.

³⁰ E. G. White letter 6, 1896.

³¹ E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 235.

³² E. G. White manuscript 15, 1888.

³³ E. G. White manuscript 13, 1889.

³⁴ E. G. White letter 57, 1895.

³⁵ W. C. White to G. C. Tenney, May 5, 1893.

³⁶ A. O. Tait to W. C. White, Oct. 7, 1895.

³⁷ C. C. McReynolds, "Experiences While at the General Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1888," written in 1931.

³⁸ E. G. White letter 51a, 1895.

³⁹ E. G. White manuscript 9, 1890.

⁴⁰ I. D. Van Horn to Ellen G. White, Mar. 9, 1893 (written in Battle Creek).

⁴¹ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1958) p. 590.

⁴² E. G. White letter 24, 1892.

⁴³ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 590.

⁴⁴ McReynolds.

⁴⁵ E. G. White manuscript 30, 1889.

⁴⁶ E. G. White letter 7, 1888.

⁴⁷ E. G. White letter 20, 1888.

⁴⁸ E. G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, Nov. 11, 1889.

⁴⁹ E. G. White manuscript 9, 1888.

⁵⁰ E. G. White manuscript 15, 1888.

⁵¹ E. G. White letter 82, 1888.

⁵² E. G. White letter 85, 1889 (April 1889).

⁵³ E. G. White letter 24, 1889.

⁵⁴ E. G. White in *Review and Herald*, June 11, 1889, p. 376.

⁵⁵ E. G. White manuscript 5, 1889.

⁵⁶ E. G. White manuscript 24, 1888.

⁵⁷ E. G. White manuscript 36, 1890.

⁵⁸ E. G. White manuscript 15, 1888.

⁵⁹ E. G. White letter 32, 1891.

⁶⁰ E. G. White letter 59, 1890.

⁶¹ E. G. White letter 82, 1888.

⁶² E. G. White letter 4, 1896.

⁶³ E. G. White manuscript 156, 1898 (not published in *Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*).

⁶⁴ E. G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Sept. 20, 1892, p. 594.

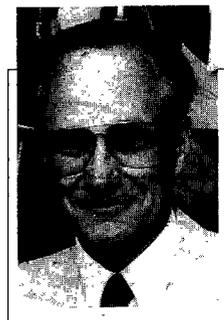
⁶⁵ E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 410.

⁶⁶ _____, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), pp. 437, 438.

The men of Minneapolis

George R. Knight

How much of the conflict at Minneapolis in 1888 could be attributed to theological differences and how much to personality clashes?



George R. Knight, Ph.D., is a professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Personality conflict was a central element in the struggle that took place at the 1888 General Conference meetings.

The champions of "old guard" orthodoxy were George I. Butler (1834-1918), president of the General Conference, 1871-1874 and 1880-1888, and Uriah Smith (1832-1903), editor of the *Review and Herald* and the church's acknowledged authority on prophetic interpretation.

The "opposition forces" from the West Coast were represented by Alonzo T. Jones (1850-1923) and Ellet J. Waggoner (1855-1916), coeditors of the *Signs of the Times* and the *American Sentinel*. Their theological emphases were perceived by the old guard as a threat to some aspects of Adventist doctrine and traditional scriptural interpretation. Smith and Butler did not take such threats lightly.

George I. Butler

Butler had a lofty view of the role of the General Conference president. Never, he wrote in 1873 in reference to James and Ellen White, was there a "great movement in this world without a leader; and in the nature of things there cannot be. As nature bestows upon men a variety of gifts, it follows that some have clearer views than others of what best advances the cause. And the best good of all interested in any given object will be attained by intelligently following the counsels of those best qualified to guide."¹

Butler, who had a draft of leadership blood in his veins (his grandfather was

governor of Vermont from 1826 to 1828), adopted this high view of leadership for himself. He saw himself not only as a strong leader who should rule from the top, but also as a theological watchdog for the denomination. After all, he wrote to Ellen White just prior to the convening of the 1888 session, did not he hold "the highest position that our people could impose"?²

Mrs. White indicated that she was not nearly as impressed as Butler with his lofty view of the denomination's presidency. "I fail," she wrote, "to discover in your letter the right ring. . . . You must not think that the Lord has placed you [and Elder Smith] in the position that you now occupy as the only men who are to decide as to whether any more light and truth shall come to God's people." She further chided Butler for having mingled his own "natural traits of character" with his work, for possessing false ideas of his position in the denomination, for turning his mind into "wrong channels," and for referring to Jones and Waggoner as editorial fledglings.³

Such counsel, unfortunately, did not turn the mentally exhausted president from his course. Near the end of the 1888 General Conference session Mrs. White wrote that "Elder Butler . . . has been in office three years too long and now all humility and lowliness of mind has departed from him. He thinks his position gives him such power that his voice is infallible."⁴ Given this early run-in with administrative "kingly power," it is perhaps not surprising that both Jones and Waggoner later turned against the concept of denominational organization and



A. T. Jones

especially the presidential system.⁵

Uriah Smith

Uriah Smith was of much the same mind as Butler. Having been with the *Review* since the early 1850s, he had by 1888 served as its editor for nearly 25 years. In many ways he saw himself more as the journal's proprietor than its editor. Like Butler, Smith viewed himself as a guardian of theological orthodoxy. Smith succinctly stated his editorial policy in regard to Jones in 1892: "Having by long study, and years of observation in the work, become settled on certain principles, I am not prepared to flop over at the suggestion of every novice."⁶ From all indications it is safe to surmise that he held the same position in regard to Jones and Waggoner in 1888. Neither he nor Butler had the slightest inclination to "flop over" in the face of the younger men from California.

The attitude exhibited by the younger men did not help matters much. As Ellen White put it in 1887, Waggoner lacked "humility" and "meekness," while Jones needed to cultivate "practical godliness."⁷ Jones's personality was particularly calibrated against winning friends and gaining the sympathy of his enemies. Mrs. White repeatedly warned him against his harsh speech toward others, but Jones found it almost impossible to distinguish between frankness and harshness. This was particularly damaging because he considered frankness a virtue.

Alonzo T. Jones

Formerly a frontier Army sergeant, Jones maintained an authoritarian demeanor. That personality trait, coupled with his cocksure belief that he was always right, did much to set a negative tone at the Minneapolis meetings. At one point Jones blurted out to the delegates that he should not be held responsible for Smith's ignorance of certain historical details related to Daniel 7.⁸

His manner did not mollify the "non-flopping" Smith, but caused him and his friends to become more defensive against the "new" ideas.

Ellet J. Waggoner

At 33 Waggoner was the youngest of the major contestants at Minneapolis. He earned an M.D. degree in New York City in 1878, but became dissatisfied with medical practice and entered the ministry. In 1884 he was called to assist his father, J. H. Waggoner, who was editor of the *Signs of the Times*.

The major theological turning point in young Waggoner's life took place at a

Jones's personality was particularly calibrated against winning friends and gaining the sympathy of his enemies.

campmeeting at Healdsburg, California, in October 1882. During a discourse he experienced a vision-like encounter. "Suddenly," he reported, "a light shone about me, and the tent seemed illumined, as though the sun were shining; I saw Christ crucified for me, and to me was revealed for the first time in my life the fact that God loved me, and that Christ gave Himself for me personally." As a result of this experience, Waggoner dedicated his life to discovering "God's love for individual sinners" in the Bible, and to preaching that message.⁹

It was that "vision" that eventually led Waggoner into an in-depth study of the book of Galatians, a study that would bring him into direct confrontation with the Smith-Butler forces at the 1888 General Conference session. True to his 1882 experience, Waggoner discovered the gospel in the book of Galatians. According to Waggoner the law in Galatians was the Ten Commandments. Thus, as he summed up his position, the ten-commandment/schoolmaster law brings us "unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."¹⁰

Issues developed before 1888

That position, which Waggoner began to publish in the *Signs* and to teach at Healdsburg College between 1884 and 1886, flew in the face of 30 years of Adventist theology. Ever since the mid-1850s the denomination's leading ministers had taught that the law in Galatians was the ceremonial law. Butler and Smith viewed Waggoner's position as undermining the denomination's theology of the Sabbath at a time when the United States was facing strong pressure for national Sunday legislation.

Jones, meanwhile, was stirring up



G. I. Butler

theological innovations in another area, publishing them in the *Signs*, and teaching them at Healdsburg. His special area of irritation to the "leading brethren" concerned the identification of the 10 kingdoms of Daniel 7. An untiring student of history and prophecy, Jones concluded that the historic Adventist position on the kingdoms had been wrong. Such a conclusion put him crosswise with Uriah Smith, author of *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation* and the heretofore-unchallenged interpreter of prophecy in Adventist circles. Jones's conclusion, thundered Butler, proved him to be a troublemaker, since he advocated an interpretation "contrary to the long-established faith of our people taken 40 years ago." He bitterly complained that "a crop of young men are rising who venture to publish their pet opinions broadcast to the world, which are essentially different and contrary to the long-established position held among us."¹¹

The Smith-Butler coalition sought to crush the new teachings in a behind-the-scenes battle at the 1886 General Conference session, but after struggling for several hours the investigating committee split in a four to five vote. "The question," wrote Butler, "was whether we should take this into the Conference and have a big public fight over it."¹² Not willing to risk an open confrontation on such a divisive issue, Butler settled for presenting a compromise position before a business session of the delegates. As a result, the business session approved a resolution that "doctrinal views not held by a fair majority of our people" were not to be made a part of the instruction in

Adventist schools or published in denominational papers "as if they were the established doctrines of this people, before they are examined and approved by the leading brethren of experience."¹³

That resolution, however, did little to solve the issues. They continued to smolder until the 1888 General Conference meetings, when they became major agenda items. Their inclusion on the agenda infuriated the General Conference president. "My only regret," he penned on the eve of the meetings, was "that Elder Smith and I did not just wade into them [the new teachings] and show them up in the widest channels possible" when they were first put in print.¹⁴

Butler, who was ill, could not attend the 1888 meetings. He did, however, send a telegram to his followers to "stand by the old landmarks." As a result, his followers dug in for battle. They would not let down their stricken leader or deny traditional Adventist orthodoxy. Ellen White, on the other hand, counseled the delegates to disregard the messages Butler was sending from Battle Creek.¹⁵

During the 1888 meetings, Smith wrangled with Jones over the identity of the 10 kingdoms of Daniel 7, and Waggoner and J. H. Morrison (president of the Iowa Conference and a skilled debater) presented opposing positions on the law in Galatians. Ellen White, meanwhile, sought to mediate between the sides and called for openness, Christian courtesy, and honest Bible study. She did not assume the role of a theological authority, nor did she seek to settle the arguments by using her own writings—even though the old guard had placed her interpretation of the law in Galatians at the center of their rationale for maintaining the traditional position.

The continuing controversy

The conference settled none of the theological differences. Jones and Smith continued to oppose each other on prophetic interpretation throughout the 1890s. More important, however, was the continuing bitterness over the problem in Galatians.

While it was the dispute about the law in Galatians that caused the furor at the 1888 meetings, that issue was not central to the minds of Jones and Waggoner after the session. Waggoner had preached righteousness by faith in Christ in the Galatians context, and it was that salvific emphasis that he and Jones, along with Ellen White, continued to preach

during the next few years as they took the message of Minneapolis to the people. Between 1888 and 1891 they spoke at Adventist gatherings across the nation as they uplifted Christ, His love, and His righteousness. The title of Waggoner's 1890 book, *Christ and His Righteousness*, sums up their emphasis. Their united work, however, was broken up in 1891 by Ellen White's departure for Australia and Waggoner's assignment as editor of *Present Truth* in Great Britain—a position he held until 1902. Jones, meanwhile, remained in the United States. Along with championing the message of righteousness by faith, he served as the denomination's foremost leader in the cause of religious liberty. In 1897 he replaced Smith as editor of the *Review and Herald*.

The Smith-Butler forces did not fare so well in the post-Minneapolis period. They continued to harbor strong feelings over the Galatians issue and the challenge to their authority. Their emotional reaction to the problem and to the personalities of Jones and Waggoner colored their reaction to the message of righteousness by faith, which Butler had uplifted in the *Review* in 1884 and Smith repeatedly claimed to believe.¹⁶ They seemed unable to disentangle that message from their stand on Galatians at the 1888 General Conference session.

Soon after the 1888 meetings, Butler retired to Florida in broken health. Although he recovered after a short period, his wife became an invalid the next year. As a result, he was out of denominational employment for 12 years, supporting himself by growing oranges.

Smith remained as editor of the *Review* until 1897, sparring with Jones over prophetic interpretation and other issues. His editorship during those years, however, was a downhill battle in the face of the popularity of the charismatic Jones, who, by late 1892, had become the most listened to ministerial voice in American Adventism. In 1897 Smith received his ultimate defeat when Jones was appointed editor and he was made Jones's assistant editor on the *Review* staff.

During the early 1890s the Smith-Butler forces began to come out of the fog regarding the doctrine of righteousness by faith as it related to the 1888 controversy. The first major turning point took place at the ministers' school held in Battle Creek during the spring of 1890. During those meetings many of the old-guard ministers began to see that

the law in Galatians had not been the real issue at Minneapolis. That insight brought several confessions; others followed later.¹⁷

Confession

All three of the ring leaders against the White-Waggoner-Jones team at Minneapolis eventually confessed their error on righteousness by faith. Smith was the first to topple. In January 1891, following a Week of Prayer reading penned by Ellen White that emphasized repentance in relation to righteousness by faith, he called for a meeting with her and several leading ministers, and there confessed many of the errors he had made at Minneapolis. Ellen White wrote that Smith "had fallen on the Rock and was broken." Taking Smith by the hand, she "told him that he had said in his confession all that he could have said." The whole experience, reported by General Conference president O. A. Olsen, created "quite a sensation in Battle Creek, and the Lord is working for us in a special manner, and the way is opening up for others to clear themselves."¹⁸ Smith's confession was followed in the summer of 1892 by that of J. H. Morrison, who had represented Butler as the chief spokesman for the traditionalists on the Galatians issue at Minneapolis.¹⁹

Butler was the last of the old guard Minneapolis leaders to confess his error on righteousness by faith. "I fully believe," he penned in June 1893, "that God has blessed greatly to the good of His people and the cause the greater agitation of the doctrines of justification by faith, [and] the necessity of appropriating Christ's righteousness by faith." Butler



E. J. Waggoner

claimed that he had never believed that he could be saved by his good works, but now was "well satisfied that additional light of great importance has been shining upon these subjects." He noted that he "freely endorsed" what he had previously resisted.²⁰

Perhaps the most revealing episode in regard to the unity of the denominational leadership on both sides of the righteousness by faith issue was a meeting called by Jones, Smith, and Dr. J. H. Kellogg at the latter's home during the 1893 General Conference session. Those present were O. A. Olsen, Dan T. Jones, Smith, W. W. Prescott, A. T. Jones, and Kellogg—certainly a strong-minded group that represented the various strands of the struggle. The participants unanimously voted the following resolution: "That, in view of the facts and explanations elicited by this conference, *there is no ground whatever for controversy or disagreement respecting the doctrine of righteousness by faith or concerning the relation of faith and works.*"²¹ Their unanimity on those points, however, did not mean that they agreed on the law in Galatians. Smith and Butler, as we shall see, had difficulties on that point until their deaths.

Apostasy

If Butler and Smith tended to come further into the light on righteousness by faith during the 1890s, one of the great tragedies in Adventism during the same period was that Jones and Waggoner tended, as the decade progressed, toward a darkness created through pushing too far points related to the indwelling Christ. As a result, by 1891 they had gone to extremes in faith healing along holiness lines and were rebuked by Ellen White.²² By 1894 they had slipped off the track in their teaching about organization. In the following years they taught that all human organization was wrong—that the only correct church organization was where each individual was directly ruled by the Holy Spirit.²³ By the spring of 1889 Jones was teaching concepts of "translation faith" that the Holy Flesh movement would build upon. In 1898 he wrote in an editorial that "Perfect holiness embraces the flesh as well as the spirit."²⁴ By 1897 Waggoner had moved into pantheism—a logical extension if the doctrine of the indwelling Christ is taken too far. All of these problems and tendencies can be viewed as perversions

Discussion questions:

1. How should the church handle those who claim to have new light on questions on which the church has had a consistent historical teaching? Would you answer differently for "peripheral" issues than for those that are central to our faith?

2. What was wrong with George Butler's high esteem for the General Conference presidency?

3. Why do you think such a small issue as which kingdoms made up the 10 horns became such a hotly debated issue in the church?

4. Would you have voted in favor of the 1886 resolution about teaching doctrinal views not held by the majority?

5. Why, in your opinion, did Ellen White refuse to take the role of theological authority and settle the debate?

6. How would you describe the role that Ellen White took during the 1888 General Conference session?

7. Uriah Smith's 1891 confession was fully adequate, yet he did not change his views on the law in Galatians. What do you suppose his confession involved?

8. Does the apostasy of Jones and Waggoner prove that their teaching about righteousness by faith was erroneous?

of the doctrine of righteousness by faith.²⁵

Along with his overemphasis on holiness, by 1891 Jones was teaching extremes on church and state relationships that Ellen White and other church leaders repeatedly rebuked. By 1894 he was sponsoring Anna Rice as a second Adventist prophet, claiming that there were more to come.²⁶ Despite these difficulties, Ellen White stood firmly behind Jones and Waggoner and their 1888 message of righteousness by faith. Up through at least 1896 she repeatedly asserted that they were God's messengers in uplifting Christ. On the other hand, it goes beyond the facts to infer that she approved all their extensions of the basic message of righteousness by faith. In fact, she did not even agree with all their theology or scriptural interpretations related to the issue at the 1888 meetings.²⁷

It can be conjectured that despite her many pointed private rebukes to them during that period, her repeated public



Uriah Smith

endorsement of Jones and Waggoner as God's messengers exacerbated their natural lack of humility. Her support did not have to have that effect, but such hearty public endorsements could be kept in balance only if Waggoner and Jones constantly applied their message of surrender to the Holy Spirit in their own lives. Evidently, however, that was the point where they fell short.

Jones, having largely failed as editor of the *Review*, was put out to pasture in 1901. He was replaced by Uriah Smith, who was delighted by the reversal. Unfortunately, however, Smith could not resist responding to the editorials Jones had published on the gospel in Galatians. In 1902 the "new" editor sponsored a series by William Brickley that uplifted the pre-1888 position on the law in Galatians. While Smith still claimed that he believed in justification by faith, his revival of the Minneapolis controversy so upset the General Conference administration that it again removed him from the editorship. His replacement was W. W. Prescott, who had aligned himself with Jones and Waggoner in the early 1890s. These new defeats spelled the end for the aged warrior. The *Review* that announced the change also noted that Smith was seriously ill.²⁸ Never fully recovering from the shock, he passed to his rest in March 1903, at the age of 70.

Butler, meanwhile, came out of retirement after the death of his wife. In 1901, at age 67, he became president of the Florida Conference. From 1902 to 1907 he served as president of the Southern Union Conference. He remained surprisingly active in the work of the church

until his death in 1918. He apparently never did alter his views on the law in Galatians, and the apostasy of Jones and Waggoner in the early years of the new century merely emboldened him in his position.²⁹

Paradoxically, it was the victors at 1888 rather than the losers who eventually left the denomination. Waggoner's most serious problems began in England. Not only did he espouse pantheism, but he began advocating the concept of "spiritual affinity"—the view that a person not rightfully a marriage partner in this life might be one in the life to come. His entanglement with Miss Edith Adams, a British nurse, led his wife to divorce him in 1905. The next year he married Miss Adams.

Though Waggoner separated from denominational employment during the Kellogg schism of 1903, he never became aggressive in his opposition to the church or its teachings. But while he retained his belief in righteousness by faith, by the time of his death in 1916, Waggoner had given up many of his distinctive Adventist beliefs. Shortly before his death he claimed, in what appears to be a carefully written document, that his rejection of such beliefs as the Adventist view on the sanctuary service had begun as early as 1891.³⁰

Jones, who called Waggoner his "blood-brother in 'the blood of the everlasting covenant, preached Waggoner's funeral sermon.'" ³¹ Like Waggoner, he had sided with Kellogg in the Battle Creek schism in 1903, becoming president of the doctor's new Battle Creek College.

Having been rejected in his bid for denominational leadership in the late 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century, Jones, unlike Waggoner, became the foremost public assailant of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination and of Ellen White. In a series of tracts and small books he attacked church organization, the concept of a denominational president, and the person and work of Ellen White.³²

His denominational credentials were removed in 1907 and his church membership in 1909. After 1915 he edited *The American Sentinel of Religious Liberty*, a private publication that took regular potshots at Adventists. His church affiliations were erratic during this period, his last fellowship being with a group of tongues-speaking Sabbathkeeping Pentecostals. Unfortunately for Jones, that

group decided to organize into what was to him the abomination of abominations—a denomination—and Jones had to forsake them.³³ Soon thereafter, Jones's health broke down. After a lingering illness, he passed to his rest in May 1923. ■

¹ G. I. Butler, *Leadership* (Battle Creek, Mich.: 1873), p. 1.

² G. I. Butler to E. G. White, Oct. 1, 1888.

³ E. G. White to G. I. Butler, Oct. 14, 1888.

⁴ E. G. White to Mary White, Nov. 4, 1888.

⁵ See G. R. Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1987), pp. 33, 178-193.

⁶ Uriah Smith to A. T. Robinson, Sept. 21, 1892.

⁷ E. G. White to E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, Feb. 18, 1887.

⁸ A. T. Robinson, "Did the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination Reject the Doctrine of Righteousness by Faith?" (unpublished manuscript, Jan. 30, 1931).

⁹ E. J. Waggoner, *The Everlasting Covenant* (London: International Tract Society, 1900), p. v.
¹⁰ _____, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians* (Oakland, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1888), p. 45.

¹¹ G. I. Butler to E. G. White, Oct. 1, 1888.

¹² G. I. Butler to E. G. White, Dec. 16, 1886.

¹³ "General Conference Proceedings," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 14, 1886, p. 779.

¹⁴ G. I. Butler to E. G. White, Oct. 1, 1888.

¹⁵ E. G. White to W. H. Healey, Dec. 9, 1888; E. G. White manuscript 15, 1888; E. G. White manuscript 13, 1889.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Uriah Smith to Ellen G. White, Feb. 17, 1890; *Review and Herald*, Sept. 23, 1884, pp. 616, 617.

¹⁷ D. T. Jones to J. D. Pegg, Mar. 17, 1890; D. T. Jones to W. C. White, Mar. 18, 1890; O. A. Olsen to G. C. Tenney, Mar. 20, 1890.

¹⁸ E. G. White, in *Review and Herald Extra*, Dec. 23, 1890, pp. 1, 2; E. G. White manuscript 3, 1891; D. T. Jones to R. M. Kilgore, Jan. 9, 1891; O. A. Olsen to R. A. Underwood, Jan. 16, 1891.

¹⁹ O. A. Olsen to J. H. Morrison, July 10, 1892; O. A. Olsen to E. J. Waggoner, July 27, 1892.

²⁰ G. I. Butler, in *Review and Herald*, June 13, 1893, p. 377.

²¹ "Report of Conference for the Consideration of the Subjects of Righteousness by Faith and the Relation of Faith and Works, Held in Dr. Kellogg's Parlor on the Evening After the Sabbath, Feb. 18, 1893" (unpublished manuscript). (Italics supplied.)

²² S. N. Haskell to E. G. White, Oct. 3, 1899; E. G. White manuscript 26a, 1892; J. H. Kellogg to W. C. White, Oct. 2, 21, 1891; Sept. 9, 1892.

²³ See Knight, pp. 178-193.

²⁴ "Saving Health," *Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1898, p. 752. See also Knight, pp. 56-60, 167-171.

²⁵ *General Conference Bulletin*, 1897, pp. 70, 71, 84-89.

²⁶ See Knight, pp. 83, 84, 104-131.

²⁷ E. G. White manuscript 15, 1888.

²⁸ Eugene F. Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), pp. 266-268; Uriah Smith to L. F. Trubey, Feb. 11, 1902; "Notice to Readers of the Review," *Review and Herald*, Feb. 25, 1902, p. 128.

²⁹ A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Jan. 21, 1910.

³⁰ E. J. Waggoner, *The "Confession of Faith" of Dr. E. J. Waggoner*, p. 14.

³¹ *The Gathering Call*, November 1916, p. 6.

³² See Knight, pp. 226-256.

³³ *The American Sentinel*, September 1922, pp. 7, 8; October 1922, pp. 3, 4.

What is the 1888 Message?

C. Mervyn Maxwell

While we do not have transcripts of Jones's and Waggoner's talks at that fateful session, we have an impeccable source for the message of righteousness by faith they were to deliver.



C. Mervyn Maxwell, Ph.D., is chairman of the Church History Department of the Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

A

t the editor's friendly insistence, you and I have been assigned to talk about the "1888 Message," a topic that a lot of people are talking about this year. We're going to take for granted that we all use the term to refer to the *special* righteousness by faith message, whatever it was, that was presented at the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session. We're also assuming that it refers to the form of that message that we ought to be preaching today. This is why the title asks what is rather than what *was* the 1888 Message.

Trying to determine the precise historical content of the 1888 Message is a challenge. We have books and articles that E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones wrote just before and after the 1888 Minneapolis meeting, three brief items in the *General Conference Daily Bulletin* reporting on Waggoner's presentations, numerous comments by Ellen White, and some reminiscences written years after by persons who were there. But when all is said and done, the simple truth is that no one knows precisely what Waggoner and Jones actually said in Minneapolis in 1888. Attempts to discover transcripts of their messages have not yet been successful, and claims that such transcripts have been located have not been validated.

The most recent attempt to discover such documentation was made by my colleague, Dr. George Knight, an indefatigable researcher, for his book *From 1888 to Apostasy*.

The custom of transcribing every ad-

dress at General Conference sessions was not instituted until 1891. But we do have transcripts of many of the talks Ellen White delivered at Minneapolis. Inasmuch as Providence could have overruled to supply transcripts for Waggoner and Jones too, perhaps we really don't need to know precisely what they said.

Ellen White's understanding

One reason we don't need to know precisely what they said is that we have a copious recording of Ellen White's perception of it.

It was Ellen White who told us that 1888 was important. It was she who said that at Minneapolis God gave "a most precious message" through His servants, "Elders Waggoner and Jones."¹ It was she who characterized the 1888 message as the "matchless charms of Christ,"² as "the third angel's message,"³ and even as "the third angel's message in verity."⁴ It was she who spoke of it as marking the beginning of the loud cry.⁵

In contrast to Ellen White, many of the leading brethren who heard the sermons delivered by Waggoner and Jones in Minneapolis were irritated by them. They were alarmed by Waggoner's interpretation of the "schoolmaster law" in Galatians 3:24, 25 as the moral law. During the pre-session they had been equally alarmed by Jones's substitution of the Alemanni for the Huns in the generally accepted list of the 10 horns of Daniel 7:24. As for the righteousness by faith emphasis, they couldn't see how it differed from what they all had been preaching for years. When they heard their prophetess repeatedly endorse Waggoner and Jones, they wrote home that Sister

Some ministers were so deeply moved that they asked to be rebaptized.

White had “changed” and that the California fellows had duped her.

Waggoner is the speaker we are most concerned about when we speak of the 1888 Message in Minneapolis, for it was in connection with his interpretation of the schoolmaster law that he made the major presentations on righteousness by faith on that occasion. Jones made his principal contributions to the Adventist understanding of righteousness by faith after the 1888 General Conference session was completed. Incidentally, E. J. Waggoner was a physician as well as a minister, so he was referred to at Minneapolis as Dr. Waggoner.

Like many of her brethren, Ellen White didn't like everything she heard Dr. Waggoner say. A year earlier she had written to him expressing God's displeasure over his having published his controversial views on the schoolmaster law in *Signs of the Times*. Early on at the Minneapolis meetings she said she didn't see that he was presenting any new light—though she added that she hadn't made up her mind on the matter, that she wasn't prepared to take a position yet.⁶ Even at the close of the meetings she said, “Some interpretations of Scripture given by Dr. Waggoner I do not regard as correct.”⁷ As for the debate between Waggoner and the brethren about the schoolmaster law, she saw both sides as partly wrong.⁸ In fact, she considered the whole schoolmaster issue as a “mere mote.”⁹

Nonetheless, it is highly important in our quest to realize that in between the things she didn't like, Ellen White heard something else that she liked very well. As the days went by, her heart beat ever faster to hear this glorious other something. “I see the beauty of truth in the presentation of the righteousness of Christ in relation to the law as the doctor has placed it before us.”¹⁰ This part of his message, she added “harmonizes perfectly with the light which God has been pleased to give me during all the years of my experience.”¹¹ She appealed to the

ministers on the final Thursday of the session to accept this message—which, she said, they needed to accept—of “the righteousness of Christ in connection with the law.”¹² Shortly after the Minneapolis meetings, she said it was not new light, but rather was “old light placed where it should be in the third angel's message.”¹³ As she heard it joyfully and gratefully, she said, “Every fiber of my heart said amen.”¹⁴

Some other people present also discerned this 1888 Message in spite of the controversy over the schoolmaster law. Some ministers were so deeply moved to repentance and to new faith in Jesus that they actually asked to be rebaptized.

So what was this underlying something that Ellen White perceived to be so grand, the presentation that we sometimes call the 1888 Message? We'd like to preach it too.

In *From 1888 to Apostasy*, George Knight has done some fine thinking and made some helpful comments. He distinguishes between a doctrine and an experience and suggests that what Ellen White desired above all was that we *experience* righteousness by faith rather than define it minutely.

Taking off from there, can we remind ourselves that many doctrines need to be experienced? Sabbathkeeping and tithe paying obviously have dimensions that have to be experienced as well as defined. Even the doctrine of the Second Coming ought to affect all our daily decisions, or believing it isn't worth much.

The fact that a doctrine should be experienced implies of course that we must arrive at an adequate definition of it, or the experience is not likely to be adequate. For example, people who think that Sabbath is Sunday or that it's a holiday rather than a holy day aren't likely to experience the day in the way God intends.

If Adventists today are to have a genuine experience in the 1888 Message kind of righteousness by faith, we need to know the genuine doctrine. We've seen that at its core it was righteousness of Christ in connection with the law. And that it was righteousness of Christ in the setting of the third angel's message.

Both a legalistic belief that we must earn salvation, and a superficial belief that our sins are forgiven without true repentance and without our offering forgiveness to our neighbors, will result in an inadequate experience. When Jesus made His “gospel presentation,” He

promised immediate acceptance to all who came to Him (John 6). And He promised forgiveness full and free; He didn't promise it, as some people believe, in return for a momentary happy belief in God's kindness. In connection with the Lord's Prayer, He said, “If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you.” Praise His name! Then He added, “but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14, 15, RSV). No legalism here, nor flippant grace.

So we must *experience* the 1888 Message; and in order to do so, we need to know its *content*. But not necessarily in its precise Waggoner-and-Jones details—God not having seen fit to preserve that for us.

So what shall we do? I think we should do what Knight suggests in his book. (As a matter of fact, we talked it over while he was writing.)

Inasmuch as the 1888 Message is something that Ellen White perceived through a process of filtering out what wasn't good and recognizing what harmonized with God's revelation to her; and inasmuch as we really have to depend on her perception to know what it really was, I think we should saturate ourselves in the Bible (of course) and also in the writings of Ellen White—especially in the gloriously Christ-centered, practical books and articles that she wrote immediately before and during the 1890s.

For our purposes just now we'll omit unpublished testimonies and concentrate instead on the books most of us have in our libraries, *Steps to Christ*, *The Desire of Ages*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, and *Testimonies to Ministers*, and on another book I think we would all find very helpful, *Through Crisis to Victory*, by A. V. Olson, recently republished as *Thirteen Crisis Years*. The extant talks Ellen

Discussion questions:

1. Do you agree with the author that our best understanding of the 1888 Message should come from Ellen White's perception of it?
2. What is the meaning of the statement that “many doctrines need to be experienced”?
3. How is the 1888 Message distinctly Adventist?
4. What part does repentance play in our acceptance of the 1888 Message?

White presented in Minneapolis are included in the appendix of this book and are among our best evidence for what she saw as the 1888 Message.

Having thus saturated ourselves in the Bible and in appropriate Ellen White publications, I think we should compose sermons that meet the *criteria* of the 1888 message. In the space available here I can only make suggestions as to how we might meet these criteria. You will make additional discoveries as you study. But for what it's worth, let me suggest that any sermon that represents the 1888 Message would do well to meet these basic criteria—

1. *It should focus attention firmly and permanently on Jesus Christ.*

When discussing the 1888 Message in the classic passage in *Testimonies to Ministers*, pages 89 through 98, Ellen White said, "This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. . . . Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family."¹⁵

On the next page she added that "unless he makes it his life business to behold the uplifted Saviour, and by faith to accept the merits which it is his privilege to claim, the sinner can no more be saved than Peter could walk upon the water unless he kept his eyes fixed steadily upon Jesus."¹⁶

At the Minneapolis meeting itself Ellen White preached a beautiful message based on "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us" (1 John 3:1), with her emphasis on the verb "Behold."¹⁷ When summarizing the 1888 Message in response to an inquirer at a camp meeting in 1889, she said that it was the same message "I have been presenting . . . to you for the last 45 years [since 1844]—the matchless charms of Christ."¹⁸

From time to time Pauline, my wife, says to me, "Let's talk about the matchless charms of Christ." It does us good. You might like to make a list of His charms and preach a sermon on every one of them. Meanwhile we're reminded in *Steps to Christ*, that "Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love—this is the subject for the soul's contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be

transformed into His likeness."¹⁹

2. *It should lead to Christ-centered confidence in forgiveness and to Christ-centered consistency in obedience to all the commandments of God, including the fourth.*

The classic passage in *Testimonies to Ministers* from which we previously quoted says also, "The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. . . . It presented *justification through faith in the Surety*; it invited the people to receive the *righteousness of Christ*, which is made manifest in *obedience to all the commandments of God*."²⁰

The passage further states that "all power is given into His [Christ's] hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the *third angel's message*, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure."²¹

A couple of pages later we find, "This is the testimony that must go throughout the length and breadth of the world. It presents the law and the gospel, binding up the two in a perfect whole."²²

In the 1880s many Adventist sermons stressed obedience at the expense of assurance. Today, one failure of many sermons on righteousness by faith is that they say too little about obedience. They invite sinners to come to a God who not only accepts them just as they are (thank God for that!), but who, after accepting them, has little interest in changing them. This sort of invitation Ellen White could never have called the third angel's message. That message closes with the ringing affirmation, "Here are they that *keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus*" (Rev. 14:12).

In Minneapolis, Ellen White saw the character of Christ revealed in the law; conversely, she saw the law of God confirmed at the cross. Righteousness by faith sermons today should draw sinners to accept Christ's power to obey as well as His amazing grace to accept and forgive.

3. *It should be distinctly Adventist.*

We mustn't forget that in the early days of our movement *third angel's message* implied obedience to the holy Sabbath, and was characteristically related to the sanctuary doctrine of the first angel's message and the call to leave Babylon inherent in the second angel's message. In fact, in the 1888 era, *third*

"Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love."

angel's message was shorthand for the characteristic system of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.

For a jewel to be part of a crown it must be set firmly into the crown. One aspect Ellen White greatly appreciated in Waggoner's righteousness of Christ emphasis was that it was "*placed where it should be*" in the third angel's message."²³ We noticed this a few minutes ago, but it seems important enough to be repeated.

Luther's justification by faith was set in his doctrine of the "bondage of the will" and his hostility to the Sabbath. Calvin's justification by faith was set in his doctrine of the sovereignty of God along with predestination and irresistible grace. By contrast, the 1888 Message puts Christ's righteousness in the setting of the third angel, which in turn links it to the other two angels of Revelation 14:6-12. This means that Ellen White perceived it as set firmly in the judgment-hour message of 1844, and in the sanctuary doctrine, and in the Sabbath.

At Minneapolis she frequently made use of sanctuary theology, as, for example, on Sabbath, October 20: "Now Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary. And what is He doing? Making atonement for us, cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. Then we must enter by faith into the sanctuary with Him, we must commence the work in the sanctuary of our souls. . . . Come and humble your hearts in confession, and by faith grasp the arm of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary."²⁴

4. *It should teach us to love one another as well as to love Jesus, and thus also:*

5. *It should call us fearlessly and effectively to repent of our respectable sins.*

In many ways the 1890s, the decade after 1888, was a remarkably good one for Adventists. Our first mission stations for non-Christians were established, for ex-

ample, and our annual growth rate was the second-highest it has been in any decade.

One would like to assume that such success attested the blessing of God on a people who had accepted and appropriated the wonderful 1888 Message.

Tragically, however, the decade was also marked by the need for the constant stream of communications that ultimately appeared in *Testimonies to Ministers*. These messages reveal to us a different picture. You will remember *Testimonies to Ministers* as the book that says that "enfeebled and defective" as the church may be, it is still "the object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard."²⁵

Repeatedly in this book, in passages that we can easily associate with the 1888 Message, Ellen White presents the sublime beauty of Jesus Christ. In stark contrast appears evidence upon evidence that leadership, laity, institutions, conferences, mission fields, and the church as a whole were desperately in need of reformation in harmony with this sublime beauty of Christ. Over and over we get the picture that "not a few, but many" had been losing their spiritual zeal and turning away from the light.²⁶

There had been an "astonishing backsliding" among God's people. The church was "frigid," its first love frozen up.²⁷

Like the worshipers in Ezekiel 9, leaders in Battle Creek (not all of them) had turned their backs to the Lord; like them, many members also had rejected Christ's leadership and chosen Baal's instead. Conference presidents were "following in the track of Romanism."²⁸

All told, the situation was so serious that Ellen White proclaimed that the Lord "has a controversy" with His people and will soon "turn and overturn in the institutions called by His name."²⁹

What exactly was going wrong? Here is one answer: "If you harbor pride, self-esteem, a love for the supremacy, vain-glory, unholy ambition, murmuring, discontent, bitterness, evil speaking, lying, deception, slandering, you have not Christ abiding in your heart, and the evidence shows that you have the mind and character of Satan. . . . You may have good intentions, good impulses, can speak the truth understandingly, but you are not fit for the kingdom of heaven."³⁰

Preaching well and doing a lot of good, while gossiping, complaining, doubting God. Misrepresenting people and mak-

ing fun of them behind their backs. Jockeying for first place. That sort of thing. Church members were acting like ordinary Christians when they should have been reflecting to the world the beauty of Jesus, radiating the holy glory of God's character, and preparing themselves, by His grace, to be clean vessels for the latter-rain outpouring of His Spirit.

When presenting the righteousness of Christ in the 1888 era, Ellen White earnestly appealed for repentance from sins like these. Evidently our righteousness by faith sermons today must call for repentance from ordinary, nasty, respectable sins. We must present God as eagerly willing to forgive us and as expecting us to fully admit our nastiness and to forgive other people for theirs.

6. *It should guide us into a relationship with Jesus that results in our making distinct choices.*

The other day a student stopped after class to remind me of what *The Desire of Ages* says about Judas, of all people. It says that Judas wanted to be good and that he originally sought a relationship with Jesus in order to be changed in character.

Judas "recognized the teaching of Christ as superior to all that he had ever heard. He loved the Great Teacher, and desired to be with Him. He felt a desire to be changed in character and life, and he hoped to experience this through connecting himself with Jesus." Jesus was very kind to Judas, entrusting him with a commission as an evangelist and giving him power to perform miracles. But neither his relationship with Jesus nor Christ's kindness to him did any good in the long run.

Why? "Judas did not come to the point of surrendering himself fully to Christ. He did not give up his worldly ambition or his love of money. While he accepted the position of a minister of Christ, he did not bring himself under the divine molding. He felt that he could retain his own judgment and opinions, and he cultivated a disposition to criticize and accuse."³¹

Whenever I read this page, remembering that it was written in the 1890s, I get the impression that dealing with her own Christian brethren had helped Ellen White understand what the Lord had revealed to her about poor Judas.

We remember the caution in *Steps to Christ*: "Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many

[like Judas? like Adventist leaders in the 1890s? like us today?] will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians."³²

7. *It should be joyful.*

"I wish you would educate your hearts and lips to praise Him," said Ellen White at Minneapolis.³³ "Rejoice evermore," said Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:16.

What joy to be accepted by Jesus—not with a limp handshake, but with arms open wide. What joy to be forgiven—by the mighty Judge Himself. What joy to surrender our lives to the wisdom of our compassionate Redeemer. What joy to forgive others and to have every root of bitterness removed. What joy to grow into the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. What joy to keep the Sabbath in purity and holiness in fellowship with our Lord and the household of faith. What joy to know Jesus whom to know aright is life eternal. "Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy" (1 Peter 1:8, RSV)—or as the KJV concludes the verse: ". . . with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

It's been a great blessing to me to try to think these things through with you. May God help us as we all attempt to preach the 1888 Message this year. ■

¹ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 91. Footnotes in this article refer to the writings of Ellen G. White.

² Manuscript 5, 1889.

³ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 93.

⁴ *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890.

⁵ *Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892.

⁶ Manuscript 15, 1888.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Manuscript 24, 1888.

¹⁰ Manuscript 15, 1888.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Manuscript 24, 1888.

¹⁴ Manuscript 5, 1889.

¹⁵ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁷ Manuscript 7, 1888.

¹⁸ Manuscript 5, 1889. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁹ Pages 70, 71.

²⁰ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92. (Italics supplied.)

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92. (Italics supplied.)

²² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²³ Manuscript 24, 1888. (Italics supplied.)

²⁴ Manuscript 8, 1888.

²⁵ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 449.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 450, 167, 168.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 467, 468, 362.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

³¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 717.

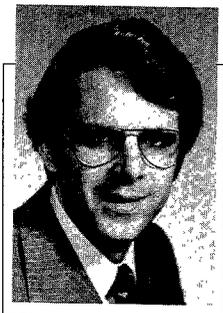
³² *Steps to Christ*, pp. 47, 48.

³³ Manuscript 7, 1888.

Elder Hottel goes to General Conference

Ron Graybill

R. DeWitt Hottel's diary gives a participant's perspective on the 1888 General Conference session.



Ron Graybill, Ph.D., who gathered and edited the materials that appear in this article, teaches history at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Among the historical treasures housed in the General Conference archives is the diary of Elder R. DeWitt Hottel, an Adventist minister who served in Virginia during the late 1880s. Hottel attended the 1888 General Conference session and kept a sketchy diary of his experience.

Although Hottel's diary is its main ingredient, this article also includes insights and information gleaned from several other sources. The blending of these sources offers a day-by-day account of the Minneapolis General Conference session as it might have been experienced by a typical delegate.

The sources used to fill out Hottel's account include the notes W.C. White took on the sermons delivered at the session, reports found in the *Review and Herald*, recollections penned by Ellen G. White, and newspaper stories from the *Minneapolis Journal*. In other words, although Hottel did not actually write everything that is here, he could well have done so because he, or others like him, would have shared in all these experiences. Footnotes identify the material that comes from sources other than the Hottel diary.

Tuesday, October 9, Quicksburg, Virginia

Mollie and I had a good dinner. Left about 5:00 for the depot. Got my bag checked for Battle Creek, Michigan. Mollie cried as I left. I hated to leave her alone, but I think it duty to go. I trust the Lord will keep us both.

Thursday, October 11, Battle Creek, Michigan

I arrived here at 3:00 p.m., walked up to the Review and Herald office. Saw Brother Henry and got a half-fare permit.

Friday, October 12, Chicago, Illinois

Left for Chicago at 1:20 in the morning, slept some, arrived at 8:30 a.m. Since my train did not leave again till evening, I started out to see a few things. Walked down State Street, Wabash Avenue, Michigan Avenue. Went to see *Jerusalem on the Day of the Resurrection*. It was good. Left at 5:30 p.m. and rode all night. It rained some. I have a bad cold, don't feel good.

Sabbath, October 13, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Arrived at Minneapolis at 8:30 this morning. Took the streetcar to the new church at Fourth Avenue and Thirtieth Street. I see the newspaper today calls us a "strange people." ¹ The church is an ample building sitting on the corner, with vacant lots all around. However, the city is moving in this direction. The meeting hall is upstairs, while downstairs they have provided room for Sabbath school and the conference Tract and Missionary Society. The Tract Society has built a depository next to the church.

The General Conference Institute has been under way since Wednesday. Today Brother Smith spoke for Sabbath school on the signs of the times. In the afternoon Sister White spoke with great freedom and power. She took as her text "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." As there has been no little controversy going on over



Delegates pose in front of the church where the 1888 session convened.

the 10 horns, her message was very welcome. Hearts were melted and 62 earnest testimonies were borne in quick succession. At our sundown social meeting we have prayer for Brother Butler, who is too ill to attend. At night Brother Jones spoke on the image of the beast.²

Met quite a number of brethren I knew. Am tired and sleepy.

Sunday, October 14

I had my trunk taken up to my room in the boarding house and put on some clean clothes. Good meetings all day. At 10:30 a.m. Elder Jones spoke on the plucking up of three horns.

It rained a little. I took a walk around the neighborhood.

Monday, October 15

Up at 5:30 a.m., down to breakfast at 6:00. Sister White spoke this morning, bearing out many points I was glad to get. But things began to heat up when Brother Smith spoke at 10:00 on the horns. He said he thought the subject was utterly unnecessary and tended to evil. He said the old view has "stood the test for 40 years" and the new view should be tested as long. This was not reform, he said, but "tearing up" of old truth. He said he, for one, was not going to "sit calmly by and see the foundation stones of our message taken out with ruthless hands."

He said he was laboring at a disadvantage because he did not know the issue was coming up. Then he added, sarcastically, that some seem to have known and "brought in libraries" of source materials.

The issue seems to be that the enumeration of the 10 horns we have usually given should be changed, and the Alemani should replace the Huns.

Smith must have been all the more

upset when young Brother Waggoner spoke in the afternoon on the law in Galatians. He even threw in a few remarks about the divinity of Christ.³

Sister White was in the meetings. The whole thing will be discussed. Got wet today going to my room for dinner and again on my way back to the meetings.

Tuesday, October 16

Day was full of business. Social meeting at the usual hour. At 9:00 a.m., church and state by A. T. Jones. At 10:30 a.m., E. J. Waggoner on the law and the gospel. At 2:30 p.m. A. T. Jones took up the 10 horns again and replied to Smith in no uncertain terms. He told why he had come with "libraries," and discussed several letters that had passed between him and Smith and Waggoner.⁴

We also had a special meeting and voted to circulate a special issue of the *American Sentinel* just before Election Day next month, when Harrison and Cleveland square off.⁵

Wednesday, October 17

A special meeting at 7:15 a.m. in regard to the *Sentinel*. Then Sister White spoke awhile and talked plain to us. The General Conference session opened this morning at 9:00 a.m. Elder Haskell was chosen temporary chairman. With 84 delegates and many visitors, we are told this is probably the largest General Conference session ever held. They have pitched 15 tents next to our boarding house, making this session look much like a camp meeting. I am the only delegate from Virginia. We admitted the Arkansas Conference to the General Conference, also the Australian Conference. Then the session adjourned to the call of the chair.⁶

Uriah Smith spoke again on the 10

horns. He started at 10:20 a.m. and didn't finish till nearly 1:00. It was decided to investigate the matter during the coming year. Brother Waggoner spoke on the law again at 2:30 and at 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, October 18

Rain today. Sister White spoke again at the early morning meeting. At 9:00 a.m. E. J. Waggoner on Galatians, law, etc. At our conference meeting we had a good report on the work in the southern field—Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee.⁷

Friday, October 19

While we were falling asleep last night, we were surprised to hear laughter and loud talk in the next room. The speakers were making light of Brothers Jones and Waggoner, imitating their speaking style in a ridiculous way. Willie White came in for his share of ridicule too. It seems they believe Sister White and her son conspired with Brothers Jones and Waggoner to make a stand here for the views the two young men are presenting.⁸

Today was cold. It snowed. I went to the canvassing class at 5:30 in the morning, then Sister White spoke with us about having faith. More trouble in the afternoon. Brother Waggoner spoke on the law in the morning, but later in the day Brother Smith spoke against him, claiming Romans has no reference to Galatians. Said there is danger in Waggoner's position.⁹

Brother Kilgore said he opposed bringing up the question. He said that there never had been an opportunity like Dr. Waggoner has been given. Said that if it had been Waggoner who was sick instead of Elder Butler, he still would have opposed it.¹⁰

Sabbath, October 20

I was sick all day, but attended most of the meetings. Sister White spoke at 9:00 in the morning and again at 2:30.

Sunday, October 21

Was sick all night and this morning. Didn't get up till nearly 9:00. I came down to the church but could hardly make it. I went back to bed and was in bed all day. Have taken a bad cold and sore throat.

Monday, October 22

Sick all night. Did not rest at all well. I

was going to go downtown to take a bath treatment, but Brother Burdick came and gave me an hour's treatment this morning. Brother Purdham helped. I came near fainting. Went to bed and felt some better, but toward evening felt worse. My head hurt me very bad. I put a warm brick at my feet, which helped. I had a letter from Mollie today. I was glad to hear from her, but I guess she don't know I'm sick.

Tuesday, October 23

I rested some better last night. I feel much better this morning, but my throat is sore yet. I had some lemons, which helped. I got up at 8:00. I praise the Lord for his goodness toward me. Came back to my room early, and drank some hot lemonade and went to bed early.

Wednesday, October 24

My throat is not quite so sore. I feel weak yet, but attended all the meetings. Brother Morrison took up the subject of the law in Galatians. Very eloquent. Said he was glad to defend the truth, but sorry for the necessity of investigating the subject.¹¹

In the afternoon Brother Purdham and I, along with quite a number of others, went downtown to visit St. Anthony's Falls on the Mississippi River. Came back for the evening meeting; Brother Eldridge spoke on the canvassing work.

Thursday, October 25

I was down for the social meeting this morning at 5:30. Sister White was there and spoke. At 10:00 a.m. Brother Morrison spoke on the law in Galatians.

I walked out east awhile this evening. Came back and studied my lesson awhile. At night Brother Prescott spoke on education, which was splendid. Dr. Kellogg came today.

Friday, October 26

Much like yesterday. Social meeting at 5:30 a.m. Sister White was with us. Morrison on Galatians at 9:00 a.m. I walked west a little in the afternoon. Welcomed the Sabbath with prayer in the church. Quite a number of new people have come in for the Sabbath.

Sabbath, October 27

Social meeting at 5:30 a.m. Sister White was not present. Brother Morrison on the law in Galatians. The Tract Society met at 2:30 p.m., other societies afterward—education and publishing, I

think. I was at my room. Brought some peanuts and ate them this evening. We had two canvassers' meetings today; some points of interest were brought out. Saw Dr. Kellogg this evening about my catarrh. He gave me a receipt.

Monday, October 29

At the 5:30 a.m. social meeting Sister White read from a testimony given in 1878. Law in Galatians at 9:00 by Brother M.

Brother P, his brother, and I went to St. Anthony's Falls on the train. Charles P. bought a basket of grapes, and we ate as many as we wanted. Had to miss our dinner. Arrived at the falls at 12:45 p.m. and were there one hour. The falls are nice. We passed behind the water.

When we came back, I went to a Sabbath school meeting. After that, Dr. Kellogg talked awhile. I bought some crackers and apples. No conference meeting today.

Tuesday, October 30

Warm. Social meeting at 5:30 a.m. Sister White with us and read a letter. She said she never expected to attend another General Conference. Brother Morrison at 9:00 on law.

10:30 a.m. Conference. Distribution of labor. I reported partially today. Brother Humman given to Georgia, and Brother Purdham to Louisiana. Canvassing this morning at 8:00.

Wednesday, October 31

Warm. Social meeting at 5:30 a.m. Sister White was present and spoke awhile. Canvassing class at 8:00, conference at 9:00. After dinner Brother Purdham and I went down to see the large flour mill of the Pillsbury Company.¹² Met up with Brothers Lane, Wilcox, and others, went through it. Largest mill in the world.

Thursday, November 1

Warm. 5:30 a.m. social meeting. Sister White there and read and spoke awhile, and others spoke. One man spoke who was a crank on religion. Said Christ had come.

After noon Brother Stevenson and I went downtown and took a bath. Walked down and back. Was in a rubber-type affair. I came back to church and, as I felt bad, came up to my room and went to bed. Brother P. came up with me, but when he heard that Brother Bourdeau was to speak, he went back.

Friday, November 2

At our 5:30 a.m. social meeting the same man claiming that Christ had come began to speak, and Sister White rebuked him and gave some of her early experience and warnings.

Brother Matteson spoke tonight and gave some of his experiences, which were very touching.

Sabbath, November 3

No social meeting this morning. Sabbath school at 9:00. I was in kindergarten class, which was interesting. Brother Waggoner spoke at 10:30 a.m. At 2:30 p.m. Sister White spoke, and a call for backsliders to come out was given. Meeting continued till close of Sabbath.

Sunday, November 4

Social meeting at 5:30 a.m. Sister White was not present. Our crank was present again, and also a lady who tried to speak, but they were stopped. Conference at 9:00 and following was Tract Society, which adjourned about 10:30 a.m. Closed by prayer by Brother Haskell. This closed our meeting.

We had dinner at 12:00 noon, but just before, we went in and had up some Bible questions and questions asked Brother Waggoner. Quite a number came down and took the 2:20 train for Chicago. Nearly a carload of us.

Wednesday, November 7

Arrived at 3:40 p.m. Mollie was not looking for me yet. I was glad to get back safe and find her well and everything all right. I feel thankful to the Lord for His goodness. Ate supper; retired about 8:00, as was tired and sleepy. ■

¹ "Here's a Strange People," *Minneapolis Journal*, Oct. 13, 1888, p. 8. (Complete copies of the *Journal* articles may be obtained through the White Estate.)

² Uriah Smith, in *Review and Herald*, Oct. 16, 1888, p. 648; Oct. 23, 1888, p. 664.

³ Most of the details in this day's entry are taken from *W. C. White Handwritten Notes From Various Meetings Held in 1888* (E. G. White Estate).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Hottel does not mention the names of the candidates.

⁶ Uriah Smith, in *Review and Herald*, Oct. 23, 1888, p. 664.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ E. G. White letter 14, 1889, p. 4; E. G. White letter 85, 1889, p. 3.

⁹ *W. C. White Handwritten Notes*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Hottel does not mention the name of the mill, but the Minneapolis County Historical Society identifies the Pillsbury Mill as the one most nearly fitting his description.

The dynamics of salvation

J. Robert Spangler

The text of a study document produced in 1980 provides background on the church's current understanding of righteousness by faith.



J. Robert Spangler is the editor of *MINISTRY*.

We are reprinting here a study document titled "The Dynamics of Salvation." On October 3 and 4, 1979, a Righteousness by Faith Consultation group, consisting of 145 members, met in Washington, D.C. Following this meeting, an editorial committee of 24 members met in February of 1980 and produced this paper, which was first distributed to the full membership of the consultation for critique and revised in harmony with their responses. This document appeared in the July 31, 1980 issue of the *Adventist Review*. The contents were not only a product of the Righteousness by Faith Consultation but reflected discussions of previous meetings devoted to a study of righteousness by faith.

There are those who accuse the church today of having an official view of righteousness by faith that is comparable to the one held by those who rejected the 1888 message. This is a most serious charge, and if it can be substantiated, then the church's only course of action is to repudiate this view. However, before we advocate doing so let us study carefully what we believe as a church on this grand subject.

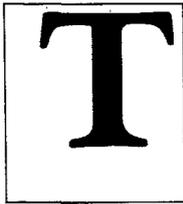
It was my privilege to be a member of the consultation group and other committees that studied in depth the entire scope of the plan of salvation. I feel that this document provides an excellent understanding of what the leadership of this church believes relative to righteousness by faith. If it contains error or if it has any serious omissions, we want to know about it. Your suggestions and comments will be appreciated.

There are, and ever will be, degrees of

understanding of the gospel. No two persons, much less the entire membership, are in the same stages of spiritual understanding and growth; yet there can be general agreement and unity among us on the basics of salvation.

Any discussion of what did or did not take place in 1888 should be seen in the light of a warning Ellen White gave in 1891. She wrote, "Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. Into the definitions of these two terms they often bring their own ideas and speculations. Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration on the vital question of righteousness by faith? Why try to work out every minute point, as if the salvation of the soul depended upon all having exactly your understanding of this matter? All can not see in the same line of vision" (Ellen G. White diary, Feb. 27, 1891, cited in George R. Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy* [Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1987], p. 69).

As spiritual leaders of the church, we should set the pace in studying our precious message and leading our members to do the same. There is much doctrinal illiteracy among us. Family worship, including the study of the Sabbath school lessons, is lacking in many homes. A worldwide revival and reformation in the Adventist movement will result from a daily study of the Word, which produces a deeper relationship with our Saviour. We pray for this type of an experience to become a reality. Rather than debating, criticizing, and condemning, may God help us to experience the joys of salvation and to reach out and share it with others.—J. R. Spangler.



he story of our salvation is inexhaustible. It exposes the mystery of evil and opens the mystery of the cross through which divine love conquers evil. It tells the desperate condition of the human family and God's plan and power to restore us into His image. It is the incredibly good news that God has done for us and does in us what we could never do for ourselves and which we do not deserve.

This story will be our study and song forever. Our minds will continue to be stretched by contemplation of "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints" (Col. 1:26),* and we will discern ever richer treasures of divine love and wisdom.

Yet the good news is for all. Although its depths tax the sharpest intellect, it is simple enough for even a child to understand. God has made it plain that every member of the human family might hear and wonder, and wondering be won by the story of divine love. He would have every one of us come to realize that in Jesus Christ we are accepted, redeemed, and adopted into God's family on earth and in heaven. This assurance turns despair into hope, and desolation to joy; for the transforming power of God's love makes us new men and women in Christ.

Seventh-day Adventists understand the gospel in a particular setting. We see it in the light of the final, end-time messages of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12. Our task is to complete the proclamation of the "everlasting gospel" to all the world just prior to the return of our Lord. It is the same story, the eternal story, the one story from Genesis to Revelation—the message of the third angel, we are told, centers in justification by faith (*Evangelism*, p. 190)—but it is proclaimed in the context of the final events of earth's history and of Christ's ministry in heaven (Dan. 7, 8; Rev. 3, 4; Heb. 8-10).

We also see a cosmic dimension in the story of our salvation. The divine plan reconciles all things in heaven and earth through the cross of Christ (Col. 1:20). The age-long conflict between good and evil originated in heaven in the rebellion of Lucifer against God. It spread to this earth, as our first parents yielded to the tempter; thus sin became part of us, and

our world became the arena in which Christ battles with Satan for our allegiance.

The law of God, which is an expression of His character, plays a central role in this controversy. Lucifer denied the justice and goodness of the law, rejected its authority; and claimed that it could not be obeyed; he and his subjects continue to oppose it. In saving men and women from rebellion and sin, therefore, God remains true to His own character and His law; His gracious activity which saves us at the same time vindicates His character and law; and reconciles the world unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 68, 69).†

This study focuses on the dynamics of salvation. It does not attempt to embrace all aspects of the plan of salvation, even as it does not claim to plumb all the depths of its mysteries. Its concern is with men and women, here and now; it endeavors to tell plainly the good news that God has for us. This good news, the gospel, is so utterly different from human modes of thought that it is startling. It is easily distorted or lost or obscured—even by theological debate. Therefore it must be told and retold, probed ever more deeply, heard once and ever anew.

Section 1. Humanity's desperate need

Before we can accept the good news, we must recognize our desperate need. We must see that we can do nothing to restore ourselves to God, or to improve our evil nature: our condition is hopeless. To such poverty—mental, physical, spiritual—God's salvation comes.

1. *We stand condemned before God* (Rom. 3:19,20). We are rebels at heart and rebels in deed, alienated from God and from one another. Even our "righteous deeds" are as "filthy rags" (KJV) in His sight (Isa. 64:6), because even our motives at best are mixed: we glory in our reputation; we are proud of our good works; we compare ourselves with others. When we see ourselves as God sees us, we know that we are a mixture of good and evil, always a bundle of conflicting desires, emotions, and aspirations. In our innermost being we are corrupt: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but

This assurance turns despair into hope, and desolation to joy.

bruises and sores and bleeding wounds." (Isa. 1:5, 6).

Nor can we change our standing before God. No sacrifice, no gift, no act of devotion—no work of any sort—can restore the broken relationship. Our first parents were created in God's image, but that image became defaced (Gen. 1:27; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 294); after their fall they fled from the presence of God. "Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 595), and we are still running from Him.

2. *We are alienated from our true selves.* We are torn by doubts and conflicts; we are frightened by the depths of sin which we see in others, and we feel within ourselves the surge of the same evil. We are burdened by guilt, for we fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We proclaim our freedom, but are subject to the yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1) and are slaves of corruption (2 Peter 2:19).

3. *We are alienated also from one another.* We seek to gather to ourselves riches, and to grow in reputation at the expense of others; so we are jealous and suspicious, envious and crafty, insensitive and cruel (Jer. 17:9). The network of human relations established by the Creator lies in tatters (Rom. 1:28-32); we seek to patch them here and there, but all our efforts are fragmentary and inadequate.

4. *We are alienated from the created world.* God appointed us to have "dominion" over the world (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:6), but we have turned stewardship into exploitation. We ravage the resources of the earth, consuming them greedily, and turning all we find to our own selfish ends (Rev. 11:18).

So humanity is in a desperate condition. All our plans, hopes, and efforts are corrupted by our sinfulness. Individually and collectively we stand condemned for what we have done and for what we are, for the spirit of rebellion against God that

*The Revised Standard Version is used throughout this document unless otherwise noted.

†Nonbiblical references in this article are from the writings of Ellen G. White.

God's grace always surprises the self-righteous.

is part of us, for our all-encompassing alienation and sin (Rom. 5:18; *Steps to Christ*, pp. 19-25).

We are lost, full of anxiety and loneliness. And we are unable to help ourselves.

Section 2. The divine initiative

The good news of the Bible is that God has taken the initiative to save us. He comes to us in our lostness, offering salvation in all its abundance.

The gospel reverses all human understanding and endeavors. By nature we operate on the principles of achievement: the reward should match the performance. But the good news is that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, KJV). For "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20, KJV). God is generous in His love, extravagant beyond our comprehension.

Throughout the Bible, God takes the initiative to save. With the first sin He came seeking: and His call, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9), echoes down the ages. He calls Abraham and makes him the father of the faithful (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:6-21; Heb. 11:8-10). In Egypt He initiates the rescue of the Hebrew tribes from slavery (Ex. 3:6-10), and in Babylon He intervenes again to bring them home from exile (2 Chron. 36:22, 23).

This saving activity of God is expressed by the word *righteousness*. The Bible shows God's righteousness by what He does; it is not merely a state; rather, it manifests itself uniquely in saving activity. And in that activity Israel finds hope. So the psalmist exclaims, "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness" (Ps. 5:8) and "In thy righteousness deliver me" (chaps. 31:1; 71:2), while God announces, "I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; and My salvation will not delay" (Isa. 46:13; cf. 51:5; 56:1; etc. NASB). So we can say that God's righteousness brings salvation; therefore God is called "the Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6, KJV).

The saving righteousness of God is not

in conflict with His eternal law. At Sinai the law was given in written form as part of God's saving act, to define the terms of the covenant relationship between God and His earthly children, but not as a means of salvation. The law warns that God "will not justify the wicked" (Ex. 23:7, KJV) yet before Him "no man living is righteous" (Ps. 143:2, NASB). And since God as "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen. 18:25) cannot act unjustly, every person must expect a sentence of condemnation on the basis of his performance. Realizing this, the psalmist pleads, "Do not enter into judgment with Thy Servant" (Ps. 143:2, NASB). For the law, given by God's initiative, tells men and women what to do, but not how to gain salvation; only God can create a clean heart (Ps. 51:10), and the prophet announces that God's Chosen One "will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. . . He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:11, 12, NASB).

In Jesus Christ the divine initiative reaches a unique climax. God had continually intervened to bring salvation; now, in a supreme act of self-giving, God the Son becomes the incarnate Christ. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14, KJV). He became one with us, sharing our lot, showing us what true humanity—humanity made in the image of God—is like. He suffered and was tested, struggling with the tempter (Heb. 2:14, 17; 5:7-9). He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15, KJV). By word and life, by death and resurrection, the God-man, Jesus Christ, brings the good news of God's love for us and the salvation He provides (John 3:16).

Over and over, the life and teachings of Jesus reveal God's character (John 1:18). Instead of shrinking in terror or running in rebellion from Him, we are to call Him "our Father" (Matt. 6:9). All that we see of goodness, care, and loving provision in human fatherhood is at best a faint reflection of the heavenly Father. He is the divine Provider, who cares even for the birds and lilies (verses 25-34); He is the divine Lover, who counts everyone on earth as His child, even though His fatherhood is not acknowledged (Matt. 5:43-48); He is the divine Giver, who delights to pour His blessings upon His children (Matt. 7:7-12).

His generosity amazes us. He lavishes salvation; we do nothing to earn it. He is not an angry sovereign, nor a demanding

judge. Rather, He pours out liberally, without regard to what we deserve. Our only condition is our need; we have no claim on Him at all (cf. Matt. 18:23-25; 20:1-16; Luke 18:9-14).

God's grace always surprises the self-righteous. It is the so-called "righteous" who challenge the teachings of Jesus; they cannot comprehend the idea that salvation is really totally free. They cling to some vestige of meritorious human activity, some remnant of their own achievement in which they may find secret satisfaction (Matt. 21:31; Luke 14:11).

The mission of Jesus corresponds with this revelation of God. He comes as the One sent of the Father (John 5:36, 37), the living embodiment of divine love to a lost world. He has come not to condemn us but to save us (chap. 3:16-21; Matt. 1:21).

And this mission exemplifies liberation (Luke 4:16-21). He sets us free from the captivity of the evil one. He sets us free from eternal death (Heb. 2:14, 15). He sets us free from guilt. He proclaims "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:19), offering forgiveness to all who believe. We come to Him downcast, burdened, enslaved; we go away rejoicing, made new to live as sons and daughters of the God who forgives.

Jesus' mission of liberation led inevitably to the cross. He foresaw it, shrank from it, but accepted it in conformity with the divine will. His whole life had pointed to it; as important as it was for Him to live among us and for us, it was only by His death that God could save us (Rom. 3:21-26; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 382).

He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8, KJV). Before the world was created, God had covenanted to meet the crisis of sin and death (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, p. 1149). Sin is not a light thing, and God does not lightly pass over it; the divine initiative meets the demands of the broken law. God is just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus (Rom. 3:26)—through the cross. God would not only become flesh and struggle with temptation without succumbing to it (Heb. 4:15); in the climactic act of the incredible series of divine initiatives, He would die on a despised cross, vicariously for us all. "Being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death

on a cross" (Phil. 2:8).

Jesus died for every person at every place and in every time. This was the event toward which the sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed. It reconciled the world to God (2 Cor. 5:19); it delivered humanity from the power of Satan; it opened the door to a life in union with God. As Christians, we are therefore not ashamed of the cross; it is the guarantee of our forgiveness, the ground of our assurance, and the pledge of our eternal life in God. "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14; *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 161, 162).

While the cross and resurrection of Christ are the focal point of the ages (cf. Heb. 9:26), the divine initiative does not end with them. The risen Christ, ascended to the right hand of the Father, asks for the Holy Spirit to be sent to the world (John 14:16, 26). The Spirit had always prompted men and women to follow God; now He comes in a new way. Without Him our will is weak, so bent toward evil that we cannot of ourselves choose the good. But He energizes the will so that we can respond to the good news and accept the gift of salvation (chap. 3:5-8; 7:17; Phil. 2:13). In this way the ministry of Jesus is perpetuated; the Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

The story of salvation is thus the story of grace and love. The God who delights to forgive has redeemed the world by Jesus Christ. At every point in the story, God takes the initiative.

Section 3. The human response to grace

While Christ by His death has redeemed the world and paid the penalty of every sin, not every person actually will experience salvation. Why is this? Because God does not coerce, not even for our best good. He has provided salvation as a gift, but He does not force that gift upon us. He has made reconciliation, but we must agree to be reconciled.

The human response to grace centers in faith, and the essence of faith is trust, taking God at His word (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:1). In the Bible, a great example of faith is Abraham, of whom Paul quotes from the Old Testament that he "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Rom. 4:3; cf. Gen. 15:6). Here, in the context of a covenant made by God, Abraham's faith is not simply an intellectual assent but a total

response of trust in the promising word of God. It is a readiness to submit himself entirely to God and to accept His word. In this act of faith, Abraham is in a right relationship with God, and obedience is the result (Heb. 11:8). Thus he obeys God and is circumcised (Gen. 17:22-27). Faith in the Biblical sense is never merely a mental act but always a relationship of "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6, NASB; cf. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1111; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 398).

There is no merit in faith itself. We are not saved by faith but by grace: "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8); "There is nothing in faith that makes it our saviour" (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1071). Instead, faith is the means, the instrument, by which we claim God's gift of salvation (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 363). The cross alone is our salvation; faith is our personal acceptance of the cross as God's decisive act in our behalf.

Without the drawing of God, no person will come to Him (John 6:44; *ibid.*, p. 390). Our faces are turned away from Him and we lack even the desire to return. Our will is so weakened that we continually choose only evil (Jer. 13:23). But the Holy Spirit empowers our wills, awakening within us a longing for God. He leads us to repent; we are sorry for sin and turn from it as we reach out in faith to receive God's gift (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1073; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 175). Thus faith itself is a gift from God offered to us all (Eph. 2:8; *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 375) through the Scriptures.

We cannot fully comprehend the manner in which the Holy Spirit energizes our wills to produce faith. We may say that we receive God's salvation because we have chosen to do so, but we must affirm also that whatever is human in faith is possible only because of the divine initiative in the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus there can be no "boasting" in our faith (Rom. 3:27).

The possibility of faith is also the possibility of its rejection. We may resist the urging of the Spirit and spurn the gift held out by God. By doing so, we condemn ourselves, for we have spurned grace and despised love (John 3:18, 19).

The results of the salvation appropriated by faith are all-embracing; we are

Abraham's faith is not an intellectual assent but a total response of trust in the promising word of God.

radically reoriented; we have both a new status and a new life. In the following sections of this paper we shall study in turn the new status and the new life in Christ. We must realize, however, that, while these aspects may be distinguished for the sake of clarity of discussion, they are never separated in experience. God's saving activity which declares us to be His sons and daughters is at the same time a transforming relationship (Rom. 5:1-5; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:16, 17; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114).

Section 4. The new status in Christ

The new status in Christ is too rich to be encompassed by any one term. Among the many expressions used in the Bible to describe this reality, the principal ones are justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, adoption, and sanctification. Each of these terms, while commonly employed by Christians, has a distinctive biblical usage and meaning.

1. *Justification*. This word comes from the setting of a law court. We are regarded as criminals, arraigned at the bar of God's justice. As the law is read out to us, we know that we are guilty. Even if we could plead innocent in terms of external compliance, the law probes our motives and desires, and shatters our defenses: "The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). But now there is a stir in the court. Our Advocate rises to speak in our behalf. Instead of agreeing to our death, He presents His own death; while acknowledging our disobedience, He points to His own obedience. Instead of claiming our righteousness, He covers us with His own righteousness (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 311). Thus He stands for us as our Representative (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 357; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, p. 925) and Substitute (*Selected Mes-*

sages, book 1, pp. 256, 258). Because of Him, the verdict is pronounced, "Acquitted!" We go forth free from the accusations of the law that previously had condemned us. This is the meaning of justification by grace through faith (Rom. 3:21-26).

2. *Reconciliation.* The picture here is drawn from human relations. Friends have fallen out; bitter feelings of estrangement have taken hold. One party, however, has already acted to restore the relationship; He has gone to the full extent, and beyond human expectation, thought, or activity, to make matters right. God has once again taken the initiative; He has "reconciled us to Himself through Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18, NASB). So far as He is concerned, all cause of ill will has been removed. But the second party remains alienated. He harbors feelings of guilt for the activities which led to the disruption of relationships; he feeds upon his hostilities. One day, however, the hopelessness of the situation and the magnanimity of the first party touch his heart. He turns around and is reconciled (2 Cor. 5:20; cf. Rom. 5:10; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 115, 116).

3. *Forgiveness.* This word is related to the world of financial transactions. According to Jesus' parable of the two debtors, we are confronted with a debt that we can never repay. It is so immense that we can never hope to cope with it (Matt. 18:25-35). This debt represents our sin. In the midst of this hopeless condition, however, God freely cancels the debt through Jesus Christ. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). All of our accounts are fully paid up; we enjoy the status of those who have no more debts of sin, and who therefore forgive their debtors (Matt. 18:32, 33).

4. *Adoption.* This model is one of family relationships. We are in a wretched condition, orphans in a hostile world. We seek a home, a place of acceptance, a place to belong. We are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12, KJV). Then one day we are adopted. Our Father completes all formalities, paying the full adoption price and thus making us His own children. He welcomes us into His home and gives us all its rights and privileges. We receive the full status of His sons and daughters. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a

woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5, KJV; cf. Rom. 8:15; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 250).

5. *Sanctification.* This word is usually employed by Christians to denote growth toward the divine ideal. In the Bible, however, it has a wider range of meaning, often signifying new status. Thus, it frequently means "dedication" or "consecration," as when Paul addresses his letters to the "sanctified ones" or "saints" (e. g., Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1). He likewise writes to the Corinthians, "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified" (1 Cor. 6:11). The significance is drawn from the sanctuary setting. In Israel everything and everyone associated with the sanctuary had to be set apart from profane use and "consecrated" to God's service. So, in a world in revolt, God has those who belong to Him, who are set apart from the world and separated unto Him. Because they have accepted His grace through faith, they no longer belong to the prince of evil. They are stamped with God's own identifying stamp; they are His own property, which He holds dear amid the turmoil of this world (Phil. 2:15; *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 49, 50).

These terms—justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, adoption, and sanctification—along with the concepts they entail, all point to our new status as Christians. They tell us how lofty are our privileges and how holy is the name with which we are named (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1070).

These terms also suggest responsibility. Because we are sons and daughters of the King of heaven, we are to live in a manner that befits our royal status. Having been acquitted in court because Jesus has taken our place, we will show our gratitude by the way we live. Since we have become aware of the divine measures, even Christ's death on the cross, which led to our reconciliation, we can no longer take lightly a knowledge of God. With the crushing burden of our guilt rolled away, we will beware of coming under the bondage of debt again. Now that we are no longer alone and estranged, we will rejoice in our new family and seek to honor its name. Because God has called us apart from the world, we cannot maintain its life style and pur-

sue its goals and ambitions (2 Cor. 6:16-18).

We therefore have a new attitude toward sin and sinning. The lordship of sin has been broken in our lives; we are servants of Christ, yielding our members "as instruments of righteousness" (Rom. 6:12-19). We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13). God desires us to have victory over every sin: "My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin" (1 John 2:1). But even if we slip and fall, our sins are not entirely like those of the unredeemed. The acts may seem identical from an external viewpoint, but the inner attitude toward them is radically different. The nonbeliever is at home in sin, unmindful of its consequences and of God, and often in deliberate rebellion against His law. When the believer sins, he hates his sin and sinning, because it was the cause of the death of his Saviour, and he does not want to crucify the Son of God again (1 John 3:4-10; Heb. 6:6; *The Great Controversy*, p. 508).

As long as we stand in the faith relationship with God, we retain our new status as His sons and daughters. Though at times we are overcome by temptation, we are not cast off, because we still have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous (1 John 2:1), who is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). We remain members of the divine family. It is not the occasional good deed or misdeed but the general trend of the life that indicates the direction in which we are moving—whether we have become rebels at heart again or are still standing in the relationship of faith (*Steps to Christ*, pp. 57, 58; *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 249).

The new status involves the new relationship. One cannot be divorced from the other. Having received God's gift of salvation, we now live by faith. We need to reach out to God day by day in loving trust, turning from pride in ourselves and relying entirely upon Him. The relationship will grow and strengthen; if not, it will wither and die. God would have the former, but He will not prevent the latter. He will not violate the element of human freedom in faith. If we allow the new relationship to die, we can no longer claim the benefits of the new status of salvation (Heb. 6:4-8; John 15:4-8; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 366).

Section 5. The new life in Christ

The new status in Christ is inseparably related to new life. The gift of salvation, received by faith, makes us new persons. The divine, initiating love evokes within us a responding love, and we are changed progressively into the likeness of God. This change has several related dimensions.

1. *New birth.* No one can fully unravel the mystery of the new birth. The Holy Spirit works upon us, and we are “born again” or “regenerated” (John 3:4-8). There is a fundamental change in the direction of our life, our attitudes, our values. We retain our individuality, but now it is no longer self-centered; we have turned away from feeding our ego and toward serving God and man. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (verse 6).

2. *Restoration.* Under the power of the Spirit, the nearly obliterated image of God in us is in the process of continual restoration.

There is a restoration of the mental, physical, and spiritual person (1 Thess. 5:23). Instead of anxiety and inner conflict, we have “the peace of God, which passes all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). We have the abiding joy of the Lord, willing to do His will and good pleasure (chap. 2:13), and living for His glory. We honor Him in our body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, presenting it as a “living sacrifice” in service (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rom. 12:1, 2).

There is a restoration of interpersonal relationships. We see all persons as God sees them without pride of race, social class, sex, or religion: All are one in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:28). We love others: we appreciate them for what they are; we seek to understand the circumstances that have molded their lives; we care for them with Christlike concern.

There is a restoration of relationships with the physical world. In sin the dominion over the earth given to our first parents (Gen. 1:26) is exploited; now responsible stewardship under Christ is restored. We regard the world’s resources as God’s gifts to us.

3. *Growth.* The new life is one of growth in Christ. The divine image in us is progressively restored as we, by beholding our Lord, are transformed by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). This process is commonly termed *sanctification*, although the Bible refers to it in various ways. “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the

fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1, KJV). We thus may “grow up into him in all things” (Eph. 4:15, KJV; cf. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 233; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 350; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, pp. 1146, 1147).

Spiritual growth is reflected in our words and actions. These “works,” however, are the result of our salvation and not the means of it. Through the indwelling Spirit we bear the fruit of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23). This fruit is evidence that we have become sons and daughters of God (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1111).

The Christian life involves a new relationship to God’s law. Instead of resenting divine instruction and seeking to evade it, we now delight to know God’s will and to follow it (Ps. 40:8). We put our will on the side of God’s will and shun every known sin; thus His law comes to fulfillment in our lives (Rom. 8:1-4; 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14).

The path of obedience leads us into ever-increasing understanding of God’s will for us (Prov. 4:18). From its magnification in the life and teachings of Jesus, we see that it is far more than a set of rules that call for external compliance. We see that it searches even our thoughts and motives, and the desires and intents of the heart. Further, obedience is not merely the absence of transgression; it is a life of positive goodness. It centers in unstudied, loving activity in relation to every person whose life we touch. It is a life that, in its own sphere, mirrors the life of God in His, as “the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 384; Matt. 5:20-48; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 76-78).

With this understanding, we cannot attempt to enumerate our obedience to God’s law. Even if we were able to list deeds of evil that we have avoided and deeds of kindness that we have done, we could not count the secrets of our own hearts. Nor could we say that we have loved as we might have loved, as God loves.

The life of obedience is properly measured by the degree to which we have completely entrusted ourselves to Christ. We have laid aside trust in ourselves. The more Christlike we become, the less we will trust ourselves and the more we will realize how far short of the divine

By faith we are clothed with the perfect righteousness of Christ.

pattern we still are. But by faith we are clothed with the perfect righteousness of Christ, which has met all the requirements of the law. “Our dependence is not in what man can do; it is in what God can do for man through Christ. When we surrender ourselves wholly to God and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification” (*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 32).

4. *Grace and faith.* We do not live the Christian life in a manner other than the way in which we first accepted salvation. Having accepted salvation through faith, we do not now trust in human accomplishment (Gal. 3:1-5). At every point in the new life, from its beginning to its ultimate glorification, we depend entirely on grace received through faith. “As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him” (Col. 2:6; *Steps to Christ*, p. 69). By the Holy Spirit, God works in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13, KJV). It is the divine initiative which sustains our life in Christ, even as it brought it into being (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1071).

We are to nurture faith. Growth is not automatic; obedience is not mechanical. God wills to re-create us in His image, but we must be willing to foster our relation with Him (John 15:1-8). We are to feed on His Word, commune with Him in prayer, and tell what He has done for us (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 1 Thess. 5:17; Mark 5:19). Day by day we are to understand His will more fully, and experience new dimensions of commitment.

5. *Assurance.* The new life involves assurance (Heb. 10:19-22). Our salvation was secured by the most decisive divine act in history: Christ’s death and

resurrection. We know that He who has begun a good work in us will not leave us to struggle alone. We know that, so long as we put our trust in Him, He will hold us by a hand that will never let us go (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 182). He is able to complete His purposes in us, presenting us blameless before His presence with exceeding joy (Phil. 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 5:23). Already we have passed from death to life; already the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons and daughters of God (1 John 3:14; 5:18-20; Rom. 8:16). He gives us His peace in the midst of strife, and His strength sufficient for our every need (John 14:27; 2 Cor. 12:9). Not only has God in Christ made the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins, but we now have a great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, where He ever lives to make intercession for us and to send forth timely help from the throne of grace (Heb. 7:25; 4:16; *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 32, 33).

6. *Praise*. So we rejoice in the Lord (Ps. 20:5; Phil. 4:4). In every experience of life, in the darkness as well as the light, He is with us (Heb. 13:5). His yoke is easy; He gives us rest (Matt. 11:28-30). "Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith," we abound in thanksgiving (Col. 2:7). In every thing He is working for our good; "we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:28, 37). The Sabbath is the celebration of His creation, His salvation, and His liberating presence. Indeed, every duty of life is consecrated to the Lord of love who has set us free. Through the faithful performance of even the humblest task and by lovingly sharing the good news of salvation, we seek to bring glory to our heavenly Father (Matt. 5:13-16; *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 77).

Section 6. The consummation

"Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 John 3:2, 3). This is the goal of a sanctified life in Christ.

Now our devotion is flawed, our desires are confused. Now we know in part. Now we are beset by doubts in the midst of peace, disappointments in the midst of joy. Now our obedience is hampered by our frailty. One day, however, we shall

be like Him. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21, NASB).

Time reaches toward this climactic end. We live in the endtime. The prophetic time clock signaled that in 1844 the final phase of the great controversy between good and evil commenced with God's pre-Advent judgment. The people of God in all ages have looked forward to God's judgment (Revelation 5). They have waited expectantly for it as the time when God's people will be vindicated and the universe restored to a perfect, sinless state. So in this judgment hour (Rev. 14:6-12) we thank God for Christ

our Advocate, through whom alone we may stand in the judgment, whose love motivates us to holy living, and who soon will deliver all things to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

The consummation is at hand. It is God's final initiative in His saving activity.

Thus the dynamics of salvation forever center in the righteousness of God and His Son. God's righteousness encompasses the sweep of our needs. It leads us from guilt to justification, from sinfulness to sanctification, from alienation to restoration and on to glorification. It brings about the decisive change from slavery to sin to new life in Christ, from bondage in fear to joy in the Spirit. Salvation is from the Lord; the Lord is our righteousness! (Jonah 2:9; Jer. 23:6). ■

Delegates in attendance at Minneapolis

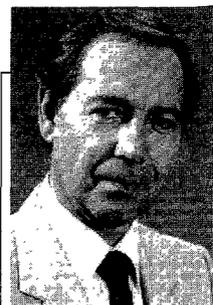
(Compiled from the *GC Bulletin* and *Review and Herald*)

Bagby, J. W. Kansas	General Conference	Michigan	Sharp, W. W. Wisconsin
Beckner, J. B. Missouri	Goodrich, J. B. Maine	Lindsey, D. E. General Conference	Shrock, S. S. Kansas
Belden, F. E. General Conference	Graham, J. E. North Pacific Conference	Matteson, J. G. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden	Shull, B. M. Wisconsin
Bourdeau, D. T. General Conference	Grant, H. Minnesota	McReynolds, C. Kansas	Smith, Uriah General Conference
Boynton, W. C. Nebraska	Hall, C. A. Kansas	Mead, F. L. Minnesota	Smith, W. R. Iowa
Brant, J. N. Michigan	Hall, W. H. Michigan	Miles, E. E. New England	Starbuck, W. H. North Pacific Conference
Breed, A. J. Wisconsin	Hanson, J. F. General Conference	Miller, H. W. Michigan	Starr, F. D. Michigan
Brown, M. H. New York	Haskell, C. P. Colorado	Miller, M. B. Michigan	Starr, G. B. Illinois
Cady, P. H. Wisconsin	Haskell, S. N. California and British Field	Mitchell, H. M. Ohio	Stevenson, T. T. Texas
Chadwick, L. C. Pennsylvania	Henderson, J. P. Arkansas	Moon, Allen Minnesota	Stone, W. J. West Virginia
Conradi, L. R. Central Europe	Henry, A. R. General Conference	Morrison, J. H. Iowa	Swift, J. E. Ohio
Covert, William Indiana	Hottel, R. D. Virginia	Nelson, N. P. Dakota	Tait, A. O. Illinois
Craig, R. B. Indiana	Hyatt, W. N. Nebraska	Nicola, H. Iowa	Thompson, Victor Indiana
Craw, A. Illinois	Hyatt, W. S. Wisconsin	Olds, C. W. General Conference	Underwood, R. A. Ohio
Decker, H. W. Upper Columbia	Johnson, H. R. Iowa	Olsen, A. D. Minnesota	Van Horn, I. D. Michigan
Dixon, N. P. Kansas	Johnson, L. Minnesota	Ostrander, Wm. Michigan	Waggoner, E. J. California
Edwards, W. H. General Conference	Jones, A. T. California and Gen- eral Conference	Parsons, C. H. Kansas	Wakeham, W. H. Iowa
Eldridge, C. Michigan	Jones, C. H. California	Prescott, W. W. Michigan	Washburn, C. A. Iowa
Fargo, J. Michigan	Jones, D. T. Missouri	Purdham, B. F. Indiana	Watt, J. W. Missouri
Farnsworth, E. W. General Conference	Kilgore, R. M. General Conference	Purdon, T. H. Vermont	Westphal, F. H. Wisconsin
Flaiz, C. W. Kentucky	Lane, S. H. General Conference	Raymond, J. W. Pennsylvania	White, W. B. Dakota
Gardner, J. P. Nebraska	Lay, H. S. Michigan	Rees, J. M. Tennessee	White, W. C. California
Gates, E. H. Colorado	Leer, Valentine Dakota	Robinson, A. T. New England	Wilcox, M. C. New York
Gibbs, T. H. Central America and General Southern Field	Lewis, C. C. Minnesota	Rousseau, L. J. Kansas	
Godsmark, O. C.	Lindsay, Harmon	Rupert, G. G. Michigan and South America	

The biblical gospel of salvation

Hans K. LaRondelle

What is righteousness by faith? Is it only forgiveness, or does it demand moral rectitude?



Hans K. LaRondelle, Th.D., professor of theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, has written many books, including *Perfection and Perfectionism*.

Salvation, or redemption, is the central concern of the Bible. Biblical history shows that the entire human race needs salvation, because sin as self-centeredness and rebellion against God is a universal phenomenon. Sin has damaged all human relationships: to our Creator, to other people, to our environment, and even our understanding of our own selves. The world has become self-destructive.

Full salvation, therefore, must provide not only divine pardon of sins but also the restoration of the moral image of God in the repentant believer, and ultimately the eternal redemption of mankind, including our bodies, and our God-given dominion, Planet Earth. The apostle Paul announces this total salvation in his astounding eschatological outlook in Romans 8. Corresponding to man's needs related to the past, the present, and the future are basically three aspects of the biblical message of salvation: justification, sanctification, and glorification. All these are comprehended in the unchanged and unchangeable gospel.

The Old Testament foundation of the gospel

To understand the meaning of justification, sanctification, and glorification, and their dynamic interrelationship, we need to grasp their roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Old Testament is the foundation of the New Testament gospel. Jesus and the New Testament writers continually appeal to the Old Testament to demonstrate the continuity of their

gospel with God's previous revelations to Israel (see Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 4:1-8; 1 Peter 1:15; James 2:21-26; Heb. 8). Paul declares that the Old Testament as a whole underlies and confirms his apostolic gospel of salvation: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify" (Rom. 3:21).*

The Hebrew Scriptures indeed announce that the righteousness of God is a gracious gift from God, offered to Jews and Gentiles in the person of the Messiah of Israel (see Isa. 11:1-12). The priests, prophets, and kings functioned only as divinely appointed types that prefigured the mission of the promised Redeemer. This Messiah will ultimately judge all nations and restore on earth a righteous society that will prosper in everlasting peace (Ps. 2; 72; Isa. 9:7; Jer. 23:5, 6). Essential to the prophetic faith of Israel was the expectation that the coming Messiah was sent by God first to suffer vicariously for "many" and to render His life as an atoning sacrifice, bearing an alien guilt and punishment (see Isa. 53:6, 10, 11; cf. Lev. 6:1-7). Through His self-sacrificing death, God would reconcile Himself with the world. More than that, the hope was expressed that God's righteous Servant *would declare many righteous* by taking their faults on Himself (see Isa. 53:11, Jerusalem). Thus "the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (Isa. 53:10).

The New Testament announces the fulfillment of this ancient hope of Israel. The gospel proclaims that Jesus Christ transcended all animal offerings by be-

*All texts in this article are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.

coming at once the sacrificial victim and the officiating priest who now mediates righteousness and peace to all repentant Israelites and Gentiles (Acts 5:30, 31; Heb. 7:25).

Israel as the redeemed people of God

Israel experienced its liberation and exodus from Egypt's oppression as a divine salvation, remembered as the birthday of the nation, the time when they became the covenant people, the worshiping community of God (see Ex. 20:1). Moses taught Israel that the exodus salvation should serve as the abiding motivation for worshiping God and giving Him gratitude and obedience: "Then Moses and the priests, who are Levites, said to all Israel, 'Be silent, O Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the Lord your God. Obey the Lord your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today'" (Deut. 27:9, 10).

God desired that His divine holiness would be reflected in the society of Israel. Indeed, God acknowledged the righteous conduct of Noah, Daniel, and Job (Eze. 14:14, 20; Gen. 6:9; Dan. 6:5, 22; Job 1:1, 8). Many Israelites loved the Lord with all their heart (Deut. 6:5) and obeyed all His commandments. His sacred law was engraved in their hearts: "It is in your mouth and in your heart so that you may obey it" (Deut. 30:14). A righteous character was the condition for entrance into God's sanctuary on Zion (see Ps. 5; 15; 24). But *who* decided who among Israel belonged to the righteous or to the wicked?

Israel's sanctuary theology of salvation

The Levitical priests were commissioned to judge whether or not the life of a worshiper was acceptable to God (Ex. 22:7-11; Num. 5:11-15; Deut. 17:8-13; 21:5). The priests were to prohibit presumptuous sinners (the "wicked") from entering the sanctuary. Only righteous believers could enter "the gates of righteousness" (Ps. 118:19-21). Thus, who belonged among the righteous or who among the wicked was determined in the sanctuary. The officiating priest, by means of a prescribed formula, declared whether or not a sinner's presented sacrifice was without defect and acceptable in the sight of God (Lev. 1:3; 22:18, 19, 21, 23-25).

The priest's judgment on the sacrifi-

cial animal was identified with the one making the sacrifice when the worshiper placed his hand on the head of the animal (Lev. 1:4; 4:3, 4, 13-15). Scripture makes clear the legal validity before God of the priestly judgments: "Your offering will be reckoned [verb: *hashab*] to you" (Num. 18:27); "that man shall be considered [*hashab*] guilty of bloodshed" (Lev. 17:4); "it will not be accepted. It will not be credited [*hashab*] to the one who offered it" (Lev. 7:18). God imputed righteousness to Abram on the basis of his expression of faith: "And he credited [*hashab*] it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). The Levitical priests, who served as God's mouthpiece, continued this declaration of imputed righteousness by accepting their sacrifices and ministering the atoning blood; they blessed the worshipers with the assurance of divine forgiveness (Lev. 17:11; 4:26, 31, 35).

Justification of a repentant Israel

The postexilic prophet Zechariah painted a dramatic picture of God's justification of a guilty Israel that sought His grace again (Zech. 3:1-7). A remnant of Israel had just returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon. Joshua, the high priest, appeared before God and His angels, representing Israel. Although Joshua, who had come dressed in dirty rags (cf. Isa. 64:6), was being accused by Satan of transgressing God's law, God nevertheless ordered that Joshua's filthy clothes be replaced, explaining: "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you" (Zech. 3:4). Israel's new holiness is portrayed here as a righteousness judicially imputed by God. The Lord thus declared this new exodus people righteous.

The divine call to serve God forever immediately followed this justification: "If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here" (verse 7). Divine justification is indivisibly connected with God's call to sanctification, which is augmented by His promise of glorification. Only by reflecting God's character in its religious and social life could Israel effectively bless all nations (see Zech. 8:13-17). Asaph wrote a striking description of the way the Israel of God could find external glory: "You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory" (Ps. 73:24).

Israel's moral character

The Old Covenant people received from God more than pardon for their sins. They also enjoyed deliverance from sin's defiling power. After confessing his sin, David prayed, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). David received this reply from the Lord: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (Ps. 32:8). In Psalm 19 David asked God for both forgiving and keeping grace: "Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me" (Ps. 19:12, 13). This shows that God expected from the Israelites a sanctified life that was victorious over sin (see Ps. 119).

Israel's sanctuary liturgy made the Decalogue the touchstone of faith and acceptable worship (Ps. 50).¹ The Lord was not satisfied until His holy law was restored fully in Israel's heart and life (Ps. 37:31; 40:8; Jer. 31:33). On the basis of the power that delivered them from Egypt, God commanded Israel: "Therefore be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11:45). He wants to develop a people who will reflect His holy image of righteousness.

The righteous ones in Israel were not absolutely sinless people who no longer needed forgiving grace or atonement. They were, rather, men and women who walked with God and remained within the covenant relationship with their Redeemer and fellow believers (Micah 6:8). When they fell into sin, they sincerely repented, confessing and restoring what they could, and then sought renewed victorious power in the sanctuary (Ps. 32; 51; Prov. 24:16; Micah 7:8, 9, 18, 19).

In short, the righteous ones were those spiritual Israelites who experienced the saving and sanctifying power of God (see Ps. 1; 19; 119).

"Perfect(ion)" in the Old Testament

The biblical idea of perfection has little to do with the speculative concepts of popular philosophies that define perfection either as the ethical ideal of moral virtues or of human reason, or as being in full harmony with the natural order. The term *tamim* ("perfect" or "perfection") occurs more than 130 times in the Old Testament, and is applied both to God and to His people. *Tamim* is used to describe a perfect covenant relationship be

tween God and His chosen people.

Perfection, therefore, does not describe either God or humanity in isolation from the other. The biblical truth about perfection is thus perfection in action, always dealing with some definite historical situation in which God fulfills His covenant with His people.

In the Old Testament, God Himself is the norm of perfection, of righteousness, of holiness, truth, and mercy. Passages that deal directly with divine perfection, such as Deuteronomy 32:4, 2 Samuel 22:31, and Psalm 19:7, apply *tamim* to the dynamic self-revelation of God that saves Israel and keeps her saved: "His works are perfect," "His way is perfect," His Torah is perfect. The parallel phrases in these verses indicate that God's actions are perfect because they fulfill His promises of deliverance: "A faithful God who does no wrong" (Deut. 32:4); "He is a shield for all who take refuge in him" (2 Sam. 22:31); "reviving the soul" (Ps. 19:7).

God's perfection refers to His saving acts to establish and maintain fellowship with His covenant people. His perfection means His perfect or undivided will to save His people and to keep them saved, despite their unfaithfulness (Hosea 11:1-7; Eze. 16).

The prophet Micah calls such acts of God as the leading of Israel out of Egypt and safely into the land of promise the *tsidqot Yahweh*, the righteousnesses of the Lord (Micah 6:5), also translated as "the saving acts of the Lord" (RSV). Other Old Testament writers refer to these acts as "the triumphs" (Judges 5:11, RSV) or "the saving deeds of the Lord" (1 Sam. 12:7, RSV). In response to God's righteousness, His people are called to manifest human perfection in a perfect walk or communion with their Creator. Thus Noah was called "a righteous man, blameless [*tamim*] among the people of his time, and he walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). To Abram God said: "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless [*tamim*]" (Gen. 17:1). Job is described as "blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1; cf. verse 8). And Psalm 119:1 pronounces a blessing on those "whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord."

God gave mankind the seventh-day Sabbath so that people would never seek dignity or righteousness in themselves instead of in the lifegiving blessing of God's fellowship and in His divine rest.

Thus, the Sabbath stands as the emblem of unity and continuity between God's plan of creation and His plan of redemption. The Old Testament never pictures human perfection as an essential sinlessness as such, but as full fellowship with God—as the humble walk with God in which an individual daily receives forgiveness and keeping power for victorious living.

Salvation in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Christ called God's gracious acceptance of a repentant tax collector justification: "I tell you that this man, rather than the other [a Pharisee], went home justified before God" (Luke 18:14). Thus Jesus introduced the gospel of salvation as a message of God's gracious justification here and now for any repentant sinner. The central message of Christ's parables is divine justification—the process by which sinners are delivered from divine condemnation and acquitted in the heavenly judgment. The parables of the lost sheep (Matt. 18:10-14), the lost son (Luke 15:11-32), the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:21-35), and the wedding banquet with its gift of the wedding garment (Matt. 22:1-14) announce the surprising message that God accepts and justifies repentant sinners by His grace and mercy. Although Jesus employed the word *justified* only once in the Gospels, His message was basically the same as that of Paul: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13).

From the start, Jesus announced that entering the kingdom of God was a present possibility, even a responsibility, for Israel (Matt. 11:11-13; 21:31; 23:13; Luke 11:52; 16:16). What was new in His teaching was that the kingdom of God was represented in Him, the Messiah King. Jesus' mission intended to realize both a present and a future salvation. He assured the repentant tax collector Zaccheus: "Today salvation has come to this house. . . . For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what is lost" (Luke 19:9, 10).

This seeking nature of God's fatherly will is illustrated in Jesus' parable of the lost son. When the wayward son returns to his father and begins to confess his sins, the father already has his arms around him and orders his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and

kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:22-24). Forgiveness of sins is more than a legal act. It means restoration to full fellowship with God as our Father.

Jesus revived the original motivation of obedience in the Torah. As Messiah, He summarized the Torah in its twofold love requirement: love to God and to one's neighbor (Matt. 22:34-40; cf. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). He even gave to these two love commandments an emphatic priority: "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt. 22:40). He also extended the love commandment universally when He explained that our neighbor is anyone who needs our help (see Luke 10:25-37). But most of all, His unselfish, unlimited self-giving for others revealed a new quality of love.

Behind Christ's radical demand for love and moral purity (Matt. 5:21-48) lies His conviction that in Him the sovereign rule of God is present. In the believer's saving fellowship with Christ, His command, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48, RSV), is not only an eschatological promise but also a gospel blessing to be applied here and now.

In summary, Jesus considered justification and forgiveness identical concepts that implied both the forensic restoration of the right relation with God and the immediate fruits of spiritual rebirth. By His example Christ further taught that the justified believer is under the obligation to live a life of sanctified love to the glory of God. To such He assured ultimate glorification: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matt. 5:8).

Christian faith and Hebrew faith

Paul considers Moses' statement that Abram believed in the Lord and that the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness (see Gen. 15:6) of fundamental importance. He unfolds its significance most sharply in his polemic against Pharisaic work-righteousness: "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Rom. 4:4, 5).

Paul stresses the personal character of the Christian's faith in God. This faith establishes a relationship of trust between the believer and God. Belief is not

merely an intellectual assent. We fully believe only when we trust the Promiser with our heart, the seat of our will: "For man believes with his heart and so is justified" (Rom. 10:10, RSV).

The second striking feature of Paul's declaration in Romans 4:5 is that God justifies the wicked who believes. The wicked one obviously does not strive to achieve merits with God. However, in response to God's drawing power, he can sincerely repent and trust in the promise of God. Such faith is acceptable to the God of Israel and is reckoned, or credited, as righteousness. This is astounding news that releases the conscience from the burden of guilt before God and delivers sinners from efforts to achieve acceptance with God.

To demonstrate that his message is essentially the same as the teaching of Israel's faith and cultic worship the apostle refers to Psalm 32: "David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

'Blessed are they

whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

'Blessed is the man

whose sin the Lord will never count
against him' " (Rom. 4:6-8).

While David spoke of divine forgiveness as dismissal of guilt, Paul announces that forgiveness is equal to God's justification of the repentant sinner. He interprets the blessing that David received as God's act of crediting righteousness to him apart from works.

Paul intended his illustrations from Abraham and David to serve as examples of how divine justification is offered now in the new epoch of messianic time. The sinner can exercise faith in God as Creator and Redeemer now only if he acknowledges God's new act of creation—the resurrection of Jesus—and trusts in Him as Lord and Saviour. "The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Rom. 4:23-25).

This progression of thought represents the advance from Hebrew faith to Christian faith. Faith in the Lord becomes faith in Jesus as the Lord's Messiah. The New Testament doctrine of justification by God's grace through faith is therefore centered in the person and mission of

Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah. Stated in theological terms, the New Testament's soteriology is based on its christology.

Paul's two appeals to Habbakuk 2:4 further confirm this conclusion. How he cites and applies Habakkuk's statement "the righteous will live by his faith" (Hebrew 'emunah, "faithfulness," "persevering faith") is instructive: "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith' " (Rom. 1:17), or, translated otherwise, " 'He who through faith is righteous shall live' " (Rom. 1:17, RSV). "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith' " (Gal. 3:11), or, translated otherwise: "Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for 'He who through faith is righteous shall live' " (Gal. 3:11, RSV).

In these key statements Paul concentrates exclusively on the issue of how a person becomes righteous in the sight of God. He declares that no one can achieve such a righteousness by any effort to observe the law of God. "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28, RSV). Not a person's earned righteousness, but God's graciously given righteousness, justifies the believer. The gospel of God is the message regarding His Son (see Rom. 1:1-4). The righteousness of Jesus Christ is God's righteousness; which is therefore revealed as a righteousness from God (see Rom. 1:17; cf. Phil. 3:9).

The believer can appropriate this gift only through faith—"through faith for faith" (Rom. 1:17). This faith exists only as a response to the gospel. By faith in Christ a person is reckoned as righteous before God. The gospel of God is revealed as "the gospel of his Son" (Rom. 1:9). Faith in the God of Israel, therefore, is extended to faith in Christ Jesus.

This is not a switch from trust in a personal God to faith in a Christian creed, but an extension from trust in the Father to trust in the Son, within the Hebrew faith in the oneness of God. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, 'Everyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference be-

tween Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved' " (Rom. 10:9-13). Paul uses *justification* and *salvation* synonymously here, appealing to Isaiah and Joel to demonstrate the continuity of his message with the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus' death and resurrection carry eschatological significance for Paul, that is, they deliver the believer from the wrath of God in the last judgment: "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God" (Rom. 5:9, RSV). Jesus' resurrection is therefore essential for the Christian assurance of life eternal (see Rom. 4:25). The apostle thus transforms and renews Israel's 'emunah by identifying it with his vibrant trust and fervent hope in Jesus Christ (see Rom. 6:8; 1 Thess. 4:14). He can even refer to Christ and faith interchangeably (see Gal. 3:22-25). This emphasizes the Christ-centered character of the New Testament faith.

When Paul appeals to the faith of Abram, David, and Habakkuk as his examples of saving and justifying faith, he claims to exercise essentially the same trusting faith in Jesus Christ. One could say that Paul has baptized the Hebrew 'emunah so that it has become faith in Christ.

Paul has primarily focused his message to the Galatians and Romans not on how the righteous Christian should live (sanctification), but on the burning issue of how a person becomes righteous before God (justification). His argumentation demonstrates the essential continuity of Christian and Hebrew faith regarding God's justifying grace (cf. Rom. 3:21).

In Christ

For Paul the essence of Christian faith is to be "in Christ," and no longer "in Adam" (1 Cor. 15:22). Paul's theology is determined by the Hebrew concept of corporate personality, one person representing many before God. As Adam represented the entire human race and thus decided its relation to God, so God appointed Jesus Christ to represent sinful humanity as the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:21, 22, 45-49; Rom. 5:12-21). Paul summarizes the message of his gospel as follows: "We are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again"

(2 Cor. 5:14, 15). For the apostle, in the reckoning of God the death of Christ meant the death of the entire human race corporately (see Rom. 5:12, 18, 19; cf. 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. . . . God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:19-21). Paul proclaimed that the forgiveness of our sins is based on God's act of reconciliation in the death of Christ. More precisely, God the Father ordained (Acts 2:23) that Christ be "made . . . sin for us" (cf. Gal. 3:13), which can be understood best in the light of Isaiah 53. In fact, Paul seems to have written 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 on the basis of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and 50:6-10.

The divine participation in Christ's death makes God the active reconciler; He reconciled us not by politely ignoring His condemnation of sinful man, but by absorbing men's sin in Himself—by not counting men's sins against them, thus restoring mankind into His favor in Christ. This divine purpose is expressed in these exceptional words: "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

The apostle thus declares that our reconciliation with God took place through an act of God in Christ. God counts Christ's death as ours and imputes His righteousness to us.

Paul's understanding of Christ's death can be explained best in terms of Hebrew thinking: Because Christ was free of sin (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21), His death was so meritorious before God that those who identify themselves with Him are free from the 'curse of the Law' (Gal. 3:13).² Through faith in Christ the believer accepts this identification with His body and seals his or her faith through baptism (Rom. 6:3-6). The believer is now reckoned as being in Christ, and he participates in the righteousness of God, both legally through justification and dynamically through a faith union with Christ.

Justification and sinning

From the start, some misunderstood Paul's gospel of justification by faith in Christ—as if justification were merely a change of legal status before God that left the life and character of the believer untouched. Their major objection was that Paul taught the error of antinomianism by his legal fiction of justification. Paul was therefore accused of encouraging

people to sin so that grace could abound (see Rom. 3:8; 6:1, 5). Many likewise object today, asking: If God justifies the wicked ones, what is the point of obeying the law of God?

Paul responds to the charge that his is an exclusively forensic doctrine of justification with a radical denial, "Absolutely not!" (Gal. 2:17; cf. Rom. 3:8; 6:2). If a Christian believer continues to sin after justification, he only proves to be a "law-breaker" (Gal. 2:18). He cannot blame Christ for that lifestyle. Paul then refutes the false charges by explaining that justification by faith implies the actual death of the old self so that Christ might live in us: "For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. . . . I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:19, 20, RSV).

Genuine faith in Christ is sealed in the sacramental act of baptism when God incorporates the individual believer "into Christ Jesus," which means specifically incorporation into the death of Christ. Paul explains: "We died to sin. . . . Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. . . . For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (Rom. 6:2-7).

The apostle roots the Christian's moral renewal in his or her faith union with Christ's historic death and burial. Through baptism the believer is incorporated into Christ's death and participates in the death of his or her own "body of sin." The sinful rule of self was put to an end on the cross of Christ. In baptism the believer "died with Christ" (Rom. 6:8) and thus "died to sin" (Rom. 6:2). God places the believer's new life under the lordship of the risen Christ; the same divine power, then, that resurrected Christ motivates that new life (see Rom. 8:11).

On the basis of this redemptive reality (the saving indicative) before God, Paul urges the Christian believer, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness." "The benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result

is eternal life" (Rom. 6:12, 18, 22). Paul urges Christians to consider themselves "dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11). This involves a faith that apprehends, appropriates, and applies to the believer the event of salvation in Christ.³ By sharing Christ's death and resurrection power, the believer has radically and permanently changed. He is a "new creation" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Paul focuses on this faith union with Christ as his conclusive argument that the justified believer will live a sanctified life before God and men. For the apostle, justification is not an abstract legal transaction. It is the reality of death to self and of new life with God. Paul complements his use of the legal metaphor with dramatic death-resurrection language (Rom. 5:17-19; 6:1-7; Gal. 3:16-29).

The apostle leaves no doubt about the moral righteousness of the new life lived by faith in Christ. Faith expresses itself in love (Gal. 5:6). He evaluates this living, fruitful faith as genuine fulfilment of the sacred law, acceptable and pleasing to God. He even concludes that this new obedience is the ultimate purpose of Christ's atoning death. He died and rose again that "the commandment of the law may find fulfilment in us, whose conduct, no longer under the control of our lower nature, is directed by the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4, NEB). Through the Spirit of Christ the New Covenant promise is more and more realized: the sacred law is inscribed and alive again in the hearts and minds of the children of God (Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 36:26, 27; Heb. 8:8-12). Because Christ is the embodiment of both the law and the grace of God, "we are transfigured into His likeness, from splendour to splendour; such is the influence of the Lord who is Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18, NEB).

Sanctification and judgment

Justification by grace brings the fruits of peace with God and of God's love in the heart and of new hope for future glorification. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and char-

(Continued on page 58)

Corporate repentance

George E. Rice

Do church leaders today need to repent for the sins of their predecessors? Does the church as a whole need to repent for what happened in 1888?



George E. Rice, Ph.D., is associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

With the arrival of 1988, the thoughts of many Seventh-day Adventists are turning back to the historic General Conference session held a century ago in Minneapolis. What happened at that meeting is yet to be fully understood, but Ellen White's letters and manuscripts indicate that a serious wrong was committed. For a number of years some church members have stressed the necessity of corporate repentance for the wrongs done by the generation of church leaders that was alive in 1888. They found their justification for the calling for corporate repentance on three assumptions: (1) the church committed a sin at the General Conference session of 1888 by rejecting the message of righteousness by faith, (2) the church has never repented of this sin, and (3) because the church is a corporate entity, the church today will not receive the latter rain until it enters into corporate repentance for the rebellion displayed at Minneapolis.

Other articles in this issue deal with the history of the Minneapolis General Conference session, so I will not repeat that history here. However, the implications of the corporate nature of the body of Christ deserve the church's careful consideration.

Is corporate identity a sound biblical teaching? And, if so, what contribution do the writings of Ellen White make to our understanding of it?

Perhaps the most obvious Old Testament example of corporate responsibility is found in the story of Achan. Joshua clearly instructed the army of Israel how

to conduct themselves during the capture of Jericho, "The city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. . . . But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction. . . . But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord" (Joshua 6:17-19).*

In spite of this strict proscription, Achan took some of the devoted things and hid them in his tent. Describing this one man's sin, the Bible speaks in corporate terms. "But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things; . . . and the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel" (Joshua 7:1). This anger was manifested in the defeat of Israel at Ai. When Joshua threw himself upon his face before God, God told him that the whole nation had sinned. "Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, and lied, and put them among their own stuff" (verse 11).

Corporate identity can also be seen in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (2 Chron. 6:24-39); in God's response to Solomon's corporate prayer, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face . . . then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin" (2 Chron. 7:14), and the corporate prayers of Daniel (Dan. 9) and Ezra (Neh. 9). Both Daniel and Ezra acknowledge that Judah's kings and princes, priests and Le-

*All texts in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

vites have sinned and rebelled against God; then these men of God go on to accept guilt with those who have rebelled. "We have sinned, we have done wickedly," Daniel says (Dan. 9:15). "Thou hast been just in all that has come upon us, for thou hast dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly," Ezra confesses (Neh. 9:33).

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Paul makes it clear that the church is the corporate body of Christ. "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (verse 26). Paul's statements on spiritual gifts in Romans 12:4-8 and Ephesians 4:1-16 are also set in the context of the corporate body.

Our doctrine of the nature of man and the nature of sin is also built upon the concept of corporate identity: "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Rom. 5:12). "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation of all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (verses 18, 19).

In defense of Jesus' high priesthood, Paul argues for the superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood over the Levitical priesthood on the basis of corporate identity: "One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him" (Heb. 7:9, 10).

Ellen White's understanding

In 1904 a series of 19 articles by Ellen White appeared in the *Southern Watchman* dealing with Nehemiah and the spiritual revival that occurred under his and Ezra's leadership. The very first words in the first article are a statement on corporate identity. "Among the children of Israel scattered in heathen lands as a result of the 70 years' captivity, there were Christian patriots—men who were true to principle; men who esteemed the service of God above every earthly advantage; men who would honor God at the loss of all things. These men had to suffer with the guilty."¹

In the last article of this series the following sentence appears, "Ezra and Nehemiah repeatedly humbled themselves before God, confessing the sins of their

people, and entreating pardon as if they themselves were offenders."² Throughout the series Ellen White portrays the responsibility of church leadership within the corporate body of Christ.

Thus the Bible and the writings of Ellen White picture God's people as a corporate group.

In our consideration of corporate repentance we must look at two more concepts: (1) divine punishment is shared by the corporate body, and (2) a later generation may share the guilt of a previous generation.

It is clear that the members of God's corporate people share punishment. Israelites of Achan's generation shared the displeasure of God for Achan's sin. "Christian patriots" like Daniel and his three friends were taken into Babylonian captivity because of the sins of Judah, both past and present. Ellen White says, "These men had to suffer with the guilty." But was it because they shared guilt with the rebellious that they suffered?

We must be careful not to confuse shared punishment and shared guilt. They are both corporate experiences, but they are two different things. Can the guilt of one generation be shared by another? Jesus accused the religious leaders of being the "sons of those who murdered the prophets" (Matt. 23:31), and indicated that they would be punished for the sins of their ancestors. He added, "that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation" (Matt. 23:35, 36). Obviously these men had not killed Abel, Zechariah, or any of the other martyrs. How could they be accounted guilty?

Regarding Christ's statement to the religious leaders, Ellen White says, "In like manner Christ declared the Jews of His time guilty of all the blood of holy men which had been shed since the days of Abel; for they possessed the same spirit and were seeking to do the same work with these murderers of the prophets."³ It was because the religious leaders sought the blood of Christ and shared the same spirit that drove previous generations to kill God's messengers that they shared the guilt of their ancestors.

Speaking of the reaction of the Jews to the preaching of the apostles after Jesus'

Discussion questions:

1. Can you list significant similarities between the sin of Achan and what happened at Minneapolis in 1888?

2. In what way do all members of a church suffer when one suffers?

3. Why do the innocent so often suffer with the guilty?

4. Why did Jesus say the guilt of previous generations rested on the religious leaders of His day? How could they avoid sharing this guilt?

5. What is the difference between shared guilt and shared responsibility for sin?

6. What must we do today to be sure we are not participating in the same sinful attitudes that made up the "spirit of Minneapolis"?

ascension, Ellen White says, "The children were not condemned for the sins of the parents; but when, with a knowledge of all the light given to their parents, the children rejected the additional light granted to themselves, they became partakers of the parents' sins, and filled up the measure of their iniquity."⁴

Notice that the last sentence of this statement has two parts. The main statement is "The children were not condemned for the sins of the parents." This is followed by a qualifying statement that expresses a condition under which the children did share the guilt of rejecting Jesus along with their parents—"when, with a knowledge of all the light given to their parents, the children rejected the additional light granted to themselves, they became partakers of the parents' iniquity."

Thus the guilt of one generation can be shared by a later generation, if the later generation clings to and perpetuates the sins of the former generation. If the religious leaders had accepted Jesus, they would not have shared the guilt of those who preceded them. If the Jews who heard the preaching of the apostles after Jesus' ascension had accepted Jesus as their Saviour, they would not have been guilty with their parents.

Corporate repentance

Is the church today, because of its corporate identity, required to repent for the sin that was committed at Minneapolis by our spiritual forefathers?

If, as Ellen White wrote, the children

We must be careful not to confuse shared punishment and shared guilt.

are not condemned for the sins of the parents, the children can hardly repent of a sin for which they are not accountable. But what about the corporate confessions in the prayers of Daniel and Ezra? A careful reading reveals that their prayers were prayers of intercession.

Notice the following in Daniel's prayer:

1. Daniel confesses the sins of his people, "We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from thy commandments and ordinances" (Dan. 9:5). "To us, O Lord, belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee" (verse 8).

2. Daniel intercedes for his people and asks forgiveness for them, "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive" (verse 19).

3. The burden of Daniel's prayer is an appeal to God to remove the punishment which he and his people share as a corporate group because of their sins as well as the sins of previous generations, "O Lord, according to all thy righteous acts, let thy anger and thy wrath turn away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy hill; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people have become a byword among all who are round about us" (verse 16).

Ezra's prayer is similar to Daniel's. He acknowledges the past and present sins of his people and asks God to remove the punishment Israel shares as a result of being a corporate body (Neh. 9). Neither of these prayers support the idea that one generation repents for the sins of another generation. Daniel does recognize shared guilt, "because of our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers" (Dan. 9:16), "While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel" (verse 20). These prayers do, however, illustrate that God deals with His people as a corporate body, and punishment is shared by the corporate group.

Neither can the Ellen White statement concerning the children's becom-

ing partakers of the parents' sins be used to support the idea that a later generation must repent for the sins of a former generation, for the later generation becomes partakers of the parents' sin only when they perpetuate the sins of the former generation. As partakers of these sins, they share the guilt but do not become responsible for the sins of the former generation. The children's responsibility is to repent of their own sins. When this is done, they no longer share the guilt of the former generation.

During the 1888 General Conference session, the debate over righteousness by faith and which law is called our schoolmaster in Galatians 3:24-26 (KJV) quickly deteriorated into a bitter struggle between the "old guard" and the supporters of Jones and Waggoner. Because Ellen White supported the position of Jones and Waggoner on righteousness by faith, she became the object of ridicule and scorn (see E. G. White manuscript 24, 1888). Her role as God's messenger and the integrity and truth of her testimonies were called into question.

The feelings of jealousy and hatred that led to the rejection of God's counsel is "the spirit of Minneapolis." Righteousness by faith is more than a doctrine; it is a living relationship with Jesus engendering love for God and for others. The spirit of Minneapolis is totally foreign to righteousness by faith.

That spirit of resistance and hostility prevented the Holy Spirit from doing the work that God intended. After the conference, the delegates carried the spirit of Minneapolis to their fields of labor.

If the church today demonstrates the spirit of Minneapolis—resistance and rebellion against the testimonies, and feelings of hostility and bitterness toward fellow believers—we share in the guilt of that former generation. But if we do not adopt these wrong attitudes, we remove ourselves from shared guilt, even though we still participate in the shared punishment—the delay of Jesus' return. While, by perpetuating their sins, a later generation may share in the guilt of a previous generation, each generation is responsible for only its own behavior; repentance belongs only to those who actually commit an offense. ■

¹ *Southern Watchman*, Mar. 1, 1904. Footnotes in this article refer to the writings of Ellen G. White.

² *Ibid.*, July 12, 1904.

³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 628.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

1888

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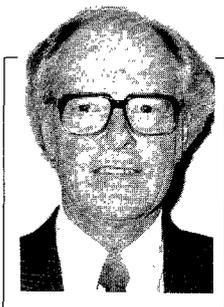
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Damnation or deliverance?

Eric Claude Webster

How does righteousness by faith relate to the messages of the three angels of Revelation 14—God's last warning to the world, the special commission of the Adventist Church?



Eric Claude Webster, Th.D., directs the Voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School, Cape Town, South Africa.

The three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 have formed a vital part of the lifeblood of the Advent movement. Their messages have been central to its struggles and its triumphs. In the light of the historic Minneapolis conference of 1888, how should we understand and relate to this threefold message now?

The pulsating throb of that Minneapolis conference was the question of the law in Galatians and its relationship to justification by faith in Christ alone. This becomes evident when one listens to the strident voice of the youthful Waggoner in his manifesto, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*.¹

In the aftermath of Minneapolis some of the brethren became fearful that Ellen White, E. J. Waggoner, and A. T. Jones were placing too much emphasis on justification by faith. They felt that this could detract from the proclamation of the third angel's message. Ellen White reports her response to their reaction as follows: "Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message in verity.'"²

How, then, does justification relate to the messages of the three angels?

The everlasting gospel

The first angel's message is very clearly built upon the foundation of the everlasting or eternal gospel (Rev. 14:6). This good news is the same in all ages. The gospel offered to the world in the first

angel's message is the same one that Paul offered to the Galatians in the first century. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

Waggoner sensed the similarity between Paul's gospel and the three angels' messages: "Now the question arises, Was this preaching of Paul's anything like the third angel's message, or the threefold message which is committed to us? Did his preaching differ from the preaching which we preach? If it differs, are we preaching what we ought to preach? In other words, should our preaching embrace anything more than what the apostle Paul did? If it does, then whatever it may be, we had better get rid of it as soon as we can."³

Many scholars believe that the heart of Paul's gospel lies in Romans 3:24-28. Briefly summarized, these verses tell this story: Humanity has sinned and falls short of God's glory. Jesus Christ came and through His death took all the penalty for sin upon Himself. Now God is just when He declares that the repentant, believing sinner is righteous, not on the basis of the sinner's own record, but on the basis of the perfect record of Another.

Justification by faith provides that at any stage the believer's entire life is covered by Another's perfect life and that God looks at the sinner as if he has never sinned. It reveals God's grace at its highest and best!

The glorious truth of salvation by substitution runs like a scarlet thread through both the Old and New Testa-

ments. It is highlighted in the contrast between Cain's offering of the product of his own labor and Abel's offering of the lamb. It is pictured in the ram that took Isaac's place upon the sacrificial altar. This truth was splashed on the doorposts of Israel as, at midnight, the homes that displayed the blood found salvation. Graphically, substitutionary salvation was traced in the sands of the desert as serpent-stung sinners turned their eyes in simple faith to the brazen serpent on the pole. Climaxing the Old Testament, Isaiah 53 stands out like a snowcapped alpine peak, reflecting its gospel radiance across all time.

The repentant thief on the cross provides a classic example of salvation by substitution. Despite whatever good might have been in the man's experience before the cross, and taking into account his few minutes of belief on the cross, we must realize that spiritually he stood naked and unworthy of heaven. He will be allowed into heaven not on the merits of his own record, but because he relied implicitly on Another's perfect record.

This same scarlet thread of salvation by substitution runs through the eternal gospel of Revelation 14:6.⁴ There it is interwoven with the judgment, and the call to worship and honor the Creator.

The Babylonian principle

The second angel of Revelation 14 warns against the Babylonian principle. What is this principle? To discover it, we must go back to ancient Babel, where we hear the sentiment expressed, "Let us make us a name" (Gen. 11:4). Later we hear Nebuchadnezzar say, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30).

The essence of the Babylonian principle is bound up in self-glorification and reliance on human merit. The sin of pride originated in Lucifer's heart (see Isa. 14:12-14) and became the dominant trait of apostate religion. "The principle that man can save himself by his own works lay at the foundation of every heathen religion."⁵

Justification by faith is God's answer to the Babylonian principle. It is the very antithesis of salvation by achievement, by human merit and works. "What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself."⁶

Whenever we are tempted to look to our own works for salvation, to depend on the merits of our health-reform program, to take pride in our maintaining the standards, or to trust partly in ourselves and partly in Christ for eternal life, we must beware of the Babylonian principle. At such times we need the Minneapolis thrust: "No works that the sinner can do will be efficacious in saving his soul. Obedience was always due to the Creator; for he endowed man with attributes for his service. God requires good works from man always; but good works cannot avail to earn salvation. It is impossible for man to save himself. He may deceive himself in regard to this matter; but he cannot save himself. Christ's righteousness alone can avail for his salvation, and this is the gift of God."⁷

The law of God certainly has a place in the three angels' messages, for it is connected to the judgment and is featured in the description of the characteristics of those who respond to the message: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God" (Rev. 14:12).

At the time of the Minneapolis session, controversy raged around the law and its role in salvation. Some were emphasizing the Ten Commandments to such an extent that Ellen White wrote: "As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain."⁸

Many feared that the idea that the moral law was part of the Galatian problem would undermine the whole Adventist message. For years after the conference they resisted this interpretation.⁹ They believed that Christians attained righteousness as they cooperated with God by keeping the moral law.¹⁰

One hundred years this side of Minneapolis we should give the trumpet a certain sound regarding the law and salvation. The moral law must be upheld as the standard of righteousness, not as the means to righteousness. Perfect obedience to the law remains the condition of eternal life—but because sinful man cannot meet this condition, God provided one Man who could. Through this Man's obedience many are made righteous; in justification by faith the believer is declared righteous and is enabled to live a life of obedience. This obedience is made perfect by the merit of Christ's righteousness.

Ellen White has beautifully summarized the process: "Righteousness is obe-

dience to the law. The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. . . . By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness."¹¹

Justification by faith

If we accept Ellen White's famous statement that justification by faith is the third angel's message in verity, then we need to look a little more closely at the ramifications of justification by faith in the light of the third angel's message. Let us consider the following aspects of justification by faith: (1) its importance, (2) its fruitage, (3) its relationship to sanctification, and (4) its relationship to the judgment.

1. *Importance.* What about the message of the third angel? Would it not be more logical to confine justification by faith to the "everlasting gospel" of the first angel and to speak of sanctification or character development or perfection in connection with the third angel's message? Could we not regard justification as an important, necessary initial step in the Christian life, but believe that by the time we reach the third angel's message, the capstone of God's final message to mankind, we should have eclipsed justification by faith and passed on to something higher?

Does not the very nature of the third angel's message seem to demand something other than justification? That message deals with the beast power, its image, and mark. It emphasizes the importance of obedience to God; the Sabbath becomes a burning issue. Does not the Sabbath fit in well with sanctification, the very sign of the God who sanctifies? In view of the contents of this message, how can justification by faith be equated with it?

Ellen White's statement must mean that those who accept the third angel's message will always need the substitution of Christ's righteous life to make them acceptable to God. No matter how glorious our obedience, we will never in this life be able to stand before God without the merits of a Saviour.

2. *Fruitage.* It has been aptly stated

that man is justified by faith alone, but that the faith that justifies is never alone. As the third angel's message in verity, that justification by faith clearly produces the fruits of sanctification and obedience is evidenced by the response of God's people toward the beast, his image, and his mark (see Rev. 14:9-12).

True faith works by love, and faith without corresponding works is dead (see Gal. 5:6; James 2:20). Where there is no fruitage of love and obedience in the life, one must question the reality of justification by faith. When sinners understand and accept the marvelous gift of God's righteousness, they will experience regeneration and growth in sanctification. God's law will be written in the hearts of those who enter the new-covenant relationship, and the fruitage of harmony with God will be seen in their lives.

Note how beautifully Ellen White expresses the relationship between faith and works: "In His divine arrangement, through His unmerited favor, the Lord has ordained that good works shall be rewarded. We are accepted through Christ's merit alone; and the acts of mercy, the deeds of charity, which we perform, are the fruits of faith; and they become a blessing to us; for men are to be rewarded according to their works. It is the fragrance of the merit of Christ that makes our good works acceptable to God, and it is grace that enables us to do the works for which He rewards us. Our works in and of themselves have no merit."¹²

How better could this relationship between justification by faith alone and its corresponding works of obedience be summed up than by these lines? "We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith."¹³

3. *Relationship to sanctification.* "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). This blessed state of justification does not simply last for a short time at conversion. The one justified is accepted in the beloved on the merits of Christ, and the process of sanctification parallels justification rather than superseding it.¹⁴ Christ is our justification and our sanctification; He provides both our title and our fitness for heaven.

We must beware lest we view our salvation through justification as a gift and through sanctification as partly earned.

Our salvation is all of grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

The biblical parable of the laborers in the vineyard (see Matt. 20:1-16) helps us to realize that the reward is based not on man's works, but on the kindness of God. "By the use of this parable He [Christ] teaches them that the reward is not of works, lest any man should boast, but it is all of grace."¹⁵

The Sabbath truth is an integral part of the third angel's message. As a sign of loyalty to the Creator of heaven and earth, it is to be restored to its rightful place in heaven's final message to men.

The Sabbath can be a beautiful symbol of both justification by faith and of sanctification through Christ. As a sign of justification, the Sabbath reminds us that we have entered into God's rest and have ceased to rely upon our own works for salvation (see Heb. 4:1-10), that we are resting with Christ in His finished work.¹⁶

The Sabbath is likewise a sign of sanctification and indicates that our righteousness comes from the Lord (see Eze. 20:12, 20). Every week the true Sabbath-keeper is reminded that Christ is his righteousness. "Apart from Christ we have no merit, no righteousness."¹⁷

4. *Relationship to the judgment.* Even when their names come up for review in the judgment, God's people will need justification by faith. After describing the experience of the high priest Joshua, Ellen White discusses Christ's work for His people in the heavenly sanctuary: "Through His *imputed* righteousness, they are accepted of God, as those who are manifesting to the world that they acknowledge allegiance to God, keeping all His commandments."¹⁸

Here are God's people keeping His commandments in a rebellious world, bravely upholding His covenant, and yet finding their eternal security and salvation in Christ's imputed righteousness. What a beautiful illustration of the truth that justification by faith is the third angel's message in verity!

Applying the illustration of Joshua and the high priest to the judgment, Ellen White wrote: "In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he [man] stands before God. But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to

Discussion questions:

1. Does the eternal gospel of Revelation 14:6 differ essentially from Paul's gospel?
2. In what way does Cain's offering represent the Babylonian principle?
3. Is righteousness developed by obedience to the law, or is it granted as a gift?
4. Does sanctification parallel or supersede justification by faith?
5. Can the Sabbath be a symbol of justification by faith as well as of sanctification?
6. What are the roles of man's and Christ's characters in the judgment of the saints?
7. In what way will justification by faith be needed in the judgment?
8. Is there a difference between living without sin and victorious Christian living?
9. How do you react to Waggoner's contention that the everlasting gospel was the sum and total of the three angels' messages?

Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. . . . We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own."¹⁹

In the judgment does Christ silence the accuser by pointing to the beautiful exhibition of the lives of God's commandment-keeping people? No, He uses a mightier argument—the argument of Calvary, the argument of a righteousness outside of man, the merits of His own spotless life.

When we gather around the great white throne we will see that our patience and our obedience to the law of God has been entirely the fruitage of Calvary. Listen to one who in vision has been in heaven: "I have, as it were, been brought before the great white throne, and have seen my life as it will there appear. I can find nothing of which to boast, no merit that I can plead. 'Unworthy, unworthy of the least of Thy favors, O my God,' is my cry. My only hope is in a crucified and risen Saviour. I claim the merits of the blood of Christ. Jesus will

save to the uttermost all who put their trust in Him.”²⁰

The centrality of Christ

One of the dominant themes of the presentations made to Adventist ministers and churches after the Minneapolis conference was Christ our righteousness. In fact, the book Waggoner published at this time (in 1890) carried a similar phrase as its title.

Ellen White joined in this emphasis on Christ's centrality to the Advent message. In 1889 she spoke of members seeing “new beauty in the third angel's message.”²¹ She also linked the message of justification by faith with the new emphasis on Christ. After stating that “the doctrine of justification by faith has been lost sight of by many who have professed to believe the third angel's message” she spoke of the task of ministers: “Their work is . . . to preach the truth for this time—the Lord our righteousness.”²²

The third angel calls out a people who have “the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). Should Adventists therefore not be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world in 1988? If justification by faith is “the third angel's message in verity,” will not a correct proclamation of this message depend on a Christocentric emphasis?

The doctrine of justification by faith declares that man is righteous on the basis of his faith in the perfect life and sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the most marvelous exchange in all the world. Christ takes our sins upon Himself and gives us His righteousness (see 2 Cor. 5:21). The whole thrust of justification by faith is thus Christocentric rather than anthropocentric. Christ is emphasized over against man. His perfect life, His matchless charms, His atoning death, and His merits are upheld; the accomplishment of man is submerged in His grace. “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

If the third angel's message concerning the law of God and the true Sabbath is to triumph, it must be bathed in the grace of God poured out through Jesus. Christ must be the very heart of the message. Christ must be seen and experienced in the Sabbath. When Christ and His righteousness are made the great center of attraction, those who accept the message will be loyal to God's moral law and to God's special sign, the true Sabbath.

“If we would have the spirit and power of the third angel's message, we must

present the law and the gospel together, for they go hand in hand.”²³

Let us beware of preaching Christless sermons and thus imitating Cain's sacrifice. “Lift up Jesus before the people. Strike the doorposts with the blood of Calvary's Lamb, and you are safe.”²⁴

E. J. Waggoner stated that the everlasting gospel was the sum and total of the three angels' messages. “The first angel proclaims the everlasting gospel; the second proclaims the fall of every one who does not obey that gospel; and the third proclaims the punishment that will follow that fall. . . . So the third is all in the first—the everlasting gospel.”²⁵

Ellen White emphasized the role the proclamation of Christ's righteousness will have in finishing the work: “Light is to shine forth from God's people in clear, distinct rays, bringing Jesus before the churches and before the world. . . . One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other—Christ our righteousness.”²⁶

“The law of God is to be magnified. . . . Yet the work will be cut short in righteousness. The message of Christ's righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel.”²⁷

The convocation in Minneapolis sounded forth the message of justification by faith in Christ alone. Ellen White took up the refrain, combining the melody of justification by faith with that of the third angel's message. She was convinced that their harmony made good theology.

Let us sing the song of hope and glory! It is a song whose dominant theme is Christ. “When we realize that our hope of glory is Christ, that we are complete in Him, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”²⁸

Let the message heard in Minneapolis ring forth! Let the sweet melodies of justification by faith and righteousness in Christ sound! Let the merits of Christ and the cross of Calvary be lifted high! Let Christ be set forth as the sinner's only hope, as the One who is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). And then we will have a people prepared for the coming of the Lord. ■

¹ E. J. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians* (Oakland, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1888). The booklet is written in the form of a letter addressed to General Conference president G. I. Butler, who had published a booklet entitled *The Law in the Book of Galatians: Is It the Moral*

Law, or Does It Refer to That System of Laws Peculiarly Jewish? (Bartle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1886). Waggoner's letter is dated February 10, 1887, but was sent out “nearly two years” later. This would be in proximity to Minneapolis and no doubt reflected his thinking of that time. See also E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), pp. 91, 92, for emphasis on the Minneapolis message as “justification through faith in the Surety.”

² E. G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Apr. 1, 1890, p. 193.

³ E. J. Waggoner, in *Review and Herald Extra: Daily Bulletin of the General Conference*, Mar. 25, 1891, p. 239.

⁴ For a sampling of this truth see John E. Ford, in *Ministry*, May 1935, pp. 6-8; and Carlyle B. Haynes, in *Ministry*, May 1986, pp. 4-7, 10.

⁵ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 35.

⁶ _____, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 456.
⁷ _____, in *Review and Herald*, Dec. 20, 1892, p. 786. For further amplification of this concept see E. G. White manuscript 36, 1890.

⁸ _____, in *Review and Herald*, Mar. 11, 1890, p. 146. See also E. G. White manuscript 10, 1890.

⁹ For material evidence of Uriah Smith's role in this resistance, see Eugene F. Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), pp. 247-270.

¹⁰ As evidence, see Uriah Smith, in *Review and Herald*, June 11, 1889. He writes: “Perfect obedience to it [the law] will develop perfect righteousness, and that is the only way any one can attain to righteousness” (p. 376).

¹¹ E. G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Nov. 4, 1890, p. 673. See also the sermon A. T. Jones preached at Ottawa, Kansas, May 11, 1889. Among other things, he said: “Now Isaiah 61:10, that is the song we are to sing, therefore righteousness is a gift of God as surely as is life, and if we try to get it in any other way we shall fail. . . . It is Christ's obedience that avails and not ours that brings righteousness to us.” Ellen White says that it is “because Christ has satisfied the demands of the law” that we may find the approval of God (*Review and Herald*, Mar. 10, 1891, p. 145).

¹² _____, in *Review and Herald*, Jan. 29, 1895, p. 65.

¹³ _____, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 61.

¹⁴ For amplification of this thought see Norman H. Young's paper, “Righteousness by Faith and Sanctification: A Personal Point of View.”

¹⁵ E. G. White, in *Review and Herald*, July 10, 1894, p. 433.

¹⁶ Ellen White speaks of Christ reverently presenting “at the mercy seat His finished redemption for His people” (*Review and Herald*, Oct. 17, 1893, p. 645). For another example of her use of the term “the finished work” of Christ, see *Review and Herald*, May 17, 1892, p. 305.

¹⁷ E. G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Dec. 20, 1892, p. 785.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Aug. 22, 1893, p. 531. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁹ _____, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, pp. 471, 472.

²⁰ _____, in *Review and Herald*, Nov. 1, 1881, p. 273.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 13, 1889, p. 513.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 514.

²³ *Ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1889, p. 546.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Waggoner, in *Review and Herald Extra*, Mar. 25, 1891, p. 240.

²⁶ E. G. White, in *Review and Herald Extra*, Dec. 23, 1890, p. 2.

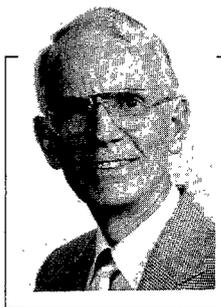
²⁷ _____, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 19.

²⁸ _____, in *Review and Herald*, Apr. 4, 1893, p. 210.

Have we delayed the Advent?

Ralph E. Neall

While Ellen G. White wrote that we can hasten or delay the Lord's return, she also wrote that Jesus would come "at the appointed time." What did she mean?



Ralph E. Neall, Ph.D., heads the Religion Department at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

More than 14 decades have passed since William Miller predicted that Jesus would come in 1844, and many Adventists are wondering why He still has not come. On one hand, sobering signs point to the end. There is the nuclear threat, the AIDS epidemic that is decimating Africa and threatening the West, drugs, demonism, and the decay destroying our political institutions.

But on the other hand, some signs are not being fulfilled. Sunday laws are not an issue. The Religious Right speaks of them, but has lost credibility because of the PTL debacle. No Sabbathkeeper now sits in jail because he worked on Sunday. Many denominations have united, but their influence in the legislatures is small. The great challenge today is not religious fanaticism, but secularism and worldly unbelief.

The feeling that the church has lost its sense of the imminency of Christ's return is widespread, and many are making strenuous efforts to move the church off dead center. Some are reapplying to the future a number of prophecies fulfilled in the past, believing that this will awaken God's people and lead to the final events. In 1980 one such expositor wrote a 1,400-page document predicting great things would happen in 1982 and 1983. Another is confident that the present pope will lead the world to enact Sunday laws. Some are sure that the judgment in heaven reached the cases of the living in 1986. Another predicted that probation would close for Adventists in July 1987,

and for the rest of the world in August 1987. For some the ancient jubilee cycles lend special significance to the year 1987.

While no one is mentioning the day and the hour, many are speaking of the month and the year. These people generally say that the Lord is waiting for the church to repent of sin and accept the beliefs and lifestyle they promote. They are sure that the time of Christ's return depends on the readiness of His people.

Ellen White lived for seven decades after 1844. Her attitude toward the passing years can give us balanced guidance now.

Has Jesus delayed His coming?

Many Seventh-day Adventists believe that Jesus has delayed His coming and refer to a statement Ellen White made in 1883. She said that if all Adventists had held fast their faith after the disappointment in 1844 and united in proclaiming the third angel's message, the Lord would have "wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward."¹

"It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed," she continued, comparing the Advent believers to ancient Israel, who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. The same sins—unbelief, worldliness, lack of consecration, and strife—had delayed the events both groups were anticipating.

In this statement, Ellen White also wrote that "the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional." The

Ellen White was very clear in saying that Jesus has delayed His coming, and that by holy living and diligent witnessing we can hasten it.

conditions she mentioned were that the people of God must purify their souls through obedience to the truth and proclaim the three angels' messages.

While this was the first time Ellen White spoke so fully of the delay, as the years passed she repeated these ideas many times. She said that just as soon as the people of God were sealed in their foreheads and thus prepared for the shaking, Christ would come.² At times she compared the believers to soldiers who had not done their duty, or plants that should have been bearing fruit. If they had been faithful, they would have quickly sown the world with the seed of the gospel, but because they had not done their duty the work was far behind where it should have been.³

In 1892 Ellen White wrote that the final events are tied to the revelation of Christ's righteousness that began in 1888: "The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth."⁴

Many have concluded from this latter statement that the time of Christ's return depends on this one condition—the revelation of the righteousness of Christ. But this statement should be read in the

context of the whole article, and in connection with everything else she wrote on the loud cry. In 1858, for instance, she wrote of the loud cry going to the poor slaves.⁵ In 1888 she connected the loud cry with the second and third angels' messages, with special emphasis on the Sabbath.⁶ And in 1909 she said that during the loud cry, love would triumph over race prejudice.⁷

It is clear, then, that the 1892 statement is part of a larger picture and should not be taken by itself. We must remember that Ellen White wrote as if all the final events were either beginning or immediately impending. None of her statements can be used to set dates. In 1891 she preached a sermon entitled "It Is Not for You to Know the Times and the Seasons." In this sermon she said, "I have no specific time of which to speak when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will take place, when the mighty angel will come down from heaven, and unite with the third angel in closing up the work for this world; my message is that our only safety is in being ready for the heavenly refreshing, having our lamps trimmed and burning."⁸

In *Christ's Object Lessons*, we find the oft-quoted statement "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.

"It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain."⁹

Along similar lines, Ellen White said that if the young of the church were a well-trained army, the Lord would come soon; and that when the members do their work at home and abroad, the world will soon be warned and the Lord will come.¹⁰

So Ellen White was very clear in saying that Jesus has delayed His coming, and that by holy living and diligent witnessing we can hasten it.

Implications of the delayed Advent

But as the decades pass, questions come to our minds. Since God must know when Jesus will come, how can we speak of delay? How can we harmonize His sovereignty—His control of the time

of the Advent—with our free will—our part in hastening or delaying the Advent? How long will He allow us to hinder the climax of His plans?

If He is waiting for us to attain a level of holiness never seen before, will we ever meet that prerequisite? And as to preaching the gospel to all the world, how can we do it when people keep dying—and giving birth? Is only Adventist preaching of the gospel acceptable?

We hear many answers to these questions. Some focus on repentance and righteousness by faith, particularly during this year's centennial anniversary of the 1888 General Conference. Others emphasize behavior and standards; and yet others point to the task to be done for the world.

Every reformer says, "I have the answer! Follow me, and the Lord will come!" While their answers vary, all seem to agree that translation-righteousness is greater than resurrection-righteousness, and that Adventists must therefore do something never done before. Some are in despair because they do not see Adventists doing it. The Laodicean church is still the Laodicean church!¹¹

What would Ellen White say about all this? Did she intend to destroy our hope with her exhortations? Did she set up standards that God's people cannot meet? Did she blame faithful believers for others' unfaithfulness? Did she make the return of Christ contingent on holiness or the witness of His people?

The answer is that so far we have examined only one side of what she wrote on this question, and thus have drawn a skewed picture. Ellen White did say that Christ has delayed His coming, but that is not all she said. Let us consider the other side of her thought.

Is the time of Jesus' coming fixed?

While Ellen White wrote often of delay, she mentioned even more frequently the certainty and nearness of Jesus' coming. In 1888 she indicated that though it seemed that Jesus was tarrying, He really wasn't. "We are not impatient. If the vision tarry, wait for it, for it will surely come, it will not tarry. Although disappointed, our faith has not failed, and we have not drawn back to perdition. The apparent tarrying is not so in reality, for at the appointed time our Lord will come."¹²

God does have a day and hour. Ellen White heard it in her first vision,¹³ al-

though the Lord did not allow her to reveal it. The same letter quoted above explains, "I have not the slightest knowledge as to the time spoken by the voice of God. I heard the hour proclaimed, but had no remembrance of that hour after I came out of vision."¹⁴

In 1888 there was an attempt to get Congress to pass a national Sunday law. Adventists saw this attempt as fulfilling what they had been proclaiming for 40 years. The final crisis seemed to be at hand, but the church was not ready—neither in the members' personal experience nor in their work for the world. Ellen White urged Adventists to pray for a respite so they would have time to do

Discussion questions:

1. What did Ellen White write in 1883 about a delay in Jesus' coming?

2. In 1892 Ellen White wrote that the loud cry of the third angel had begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ. Why should we be cautious in making this revelation the only condition of Christ's coming?

3. Is it possible that the sins of God's people could absolutely prevent the coming of Christ?

4. Name some of those besides Adventists who are preaching the gospel to the world today.

5. How does the teaching that the last generation must reach a higher level of righteousness than previous generations have reached conflict with the truth of righteousness by faith in Christ?

6. What evidence is there in Mrs. White's writings that the time of Christ's coming is fixed and known to God?

7. How do Ellen White's exhortations harmonize her thoughts on nearness and delay?

8. How does the analogy of a runner throw light on her attitudes toward Jesus' coming?

9. What is God's part in making us perfect?

10. What is our part in becoming perfect, ready to stand before God?

their neglected work. She did not believe it was the right time for their liberties to be restricted.¹⁵ What she wrote in this chapter casts a different light upon the 1883 statements that suggest that the end will not come until the church has finished its work. In 1889 the final events seemed to have started even though the church had *not* done its work.

Another evidence of a fixed time for Christ's coming is found in Ellen White's view of God's sovereignty. The great prophecies of the Bible show His control over all things. "Like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God's purposes know no haste and no delay."¹⁶ When God's great clock indicated the hour appointed in Daniel 9:24-27, Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

In Ezekiel's vision of God's glory, Mrs. White saw symbols of God's power over earthly rulers. The hand under the wings of the cherubim showed that human events are under divine control. God works out His purposes through the movements of the nations.¹⁷

God is also sovereign in the church. He guarantees that the church will be successful in its mission to the world: "The cause of present truth . . . is destined to triumph gloriously."¹⁸ In the last generation the parable of the mustard seed will reach "a signal and triumphant fulfillment," and the warning message will go to all the world to "take out of them a people for his name (Acts 15:14)."¹⁹

Reformers who are discouraged at the state of the church can take heart from Ellen White's faith in God's power: "It is divine power that gives success. Those whom God employs as His messengers are not to feel that His work is dependent on them. Finite beings are not left to carry this burden of responsibility. He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His work."²⁰

So the sovereignty of God is our assurance. If necessary, He will finish His work Himself. But if we think *only* of His sovereignty, we may sink into sinful apathy. If God has a schedule and we can neither hasten nor delay it, why should we do anything at all? Thus taking either stream of Ellen White's thought by itself poses dangers.

Harmonizing delay and nearness

How could Ellen White write of delay in 1883 but say it was "not so in reality"

In 1888 Ellen White indicated that though it seemed that Jesus was tarrying, He really wasn't.

in 1888? How can we harmonize delay and nearness?

Here we have two ways of looking at the same event. From our viewpoint, there has been a delay because we have not done the work we should have. But from God's viewpoint, there is no delay. He has not put His plans entirely in our hands. He is sovereign; He is in control; He has His "appointed time."

Ellen White certainly taught that Christ was coming soon. In 1888 she wrote: "The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional."²¹

Here we see both nearness and delay. But we see something more. In the following paragraphs Sister White says more about conditions to be met than about time. She never refers to time as a bare piece of information. *Delay* takes second place to exhortations. She speaks of the third angel's message and Sabbath reform, and then calls God's people to purify their souls through obedience to the truth. She says it is the unbelief, worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept them in the world so many years.²²

The one who believes in the soon coming of Christ shows it by holy living and diligent witnessing. The one who believes His coming is delayed shows it by his sins. It is the *wicked* servant who says in his heart that the master is delayed.

Ellen White once rebuked a worker's wife: "I saw that for some time past, Sister J has had a rebellious spirit, has been self-willed. . . . I saw that she did not bring the coming of the Lord as near as she should, and that her mind, instead of being at Rochester, should be all swallowed up in the work of God, and she should be seeking opportunities to help her husband, to hold up his hands, and to labor wherever there was an opportunity."²³

When Ellen White wrote of the true Advent spirit and of the woman who did not "bring the coming of the Lord as near as she should," she was speaking more about preparation than about time.

A people will be ready when the Lord comes. Their spots and stains will be removed beforehand—pride, passion, slothfulness, envy, evil-surmisings, and evil-speaking.²⁴ These "spots" bring all Ellen White's exhortations. She insisted that the work of overcoming sin must be done in this life: not one error of character will be removed when Christ comes.²⁵

When we turn to the "nearness" stream of Ellen White's writings, we find that here also the question of time took second place to exhortation. In fact, she complements her statements that unbelief and sin have delayed Christ's coming with statements that we must overcome unbelief and sin because He is coming soon. Whether we think of nearness or delay, our duties are the same: We should "live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of man."²⁶ We are to be so filled with the spirit of Christ's advent that whether we are found working in the field, building a house, or preaching the Word, we shall be ready for Him.²⁷

Those who expect Jesus to come soon will wait, watch, work, and pray. Waiting and watching show that we are strangers and pilgrims on earth; while others seek earthly treasure and live as though the time is long, we are seeking the better, heavenly country.²⁸ Working means improving our talents for Christ and working for souls. By waiting, watching, praying, and working we cultivate heart-holiness.²⁹

While those Adventists who brood over last-day events rely heavily on Mrs. White's writings, she herself made no charts of the future. Such charts are usually based on compilations of quotations, and always vary with the compiler. They stir up excitement; they increase prayer meeting attendance—but things may

not work out as predicted. There is danger in crying "Wolf! Wolf!" too often. Ellen White did not say we should watch the signs of the times. Rather, she counseled us to watch for the least unholy promptings of our natures.³⁰ We are to watch and pray as though each day were our last; we are to be sober, but "not to cherish sadness and gloom."³¹

As to our duty to witness, we find Ellen White exhorting us to speak to everyone we meet because our time for work will soon be past; we have only a little while to urge the warfare.³² In 1904 she wrote

that because the Lord will very soon arise to shake the earth, there is not time for trivial things.³³

Repeatedly she said that the end is near, but there is a great work to be done: how diligently we must do it! Vigilance and fidelity have always been required, but because the end is near, Ellen White urges us to double diligence. The message must be given: "We have warnings now which we may give, a work now which we may do; but soon it will be more difficult than we can imagine."³⁴ (How truly this 1900 prediction has been



Drawing after a Byzantine-Christian manuscript depicting Ezra at work in front of a book closet.

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While the soon coming of Christ lends new urgency to Christian duties, the way of salvation is not different in these last days.

fulfilled in this century!)

The nearness of Christ's coming is also the motivation underlying our publishing houses, sanitariums, schools, food factories, and restaurants. Institutions are long-range projects, but they give standing to the work and help proclaim the three angels' messages. We must work until the Lord bids us "make no further effort to build meeting-houses and establish schools, sanitariums, and publishing institutions. . . .

"[We must] increase the facilities, that a great work may be done in a short time."³⁵

We must be constantly at our task until the Lord says it is done. We will not be ready for His coming if we are not. Ellen White emphasized doing the work and living the life rather than calculating the time. Only God knows when the end will be, but we must always work and live in the belief that it is near. To ask "When?" is to ask the wrong question; rather, we ought to ask how to be ready whenever it will be.

What about end-time perfection?

Will the church ever reach the point where it will be without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," ready "to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator"?³⁶ This seems to imply sinless perfection. How is it to be done?

Ellen White never claimed to be perfect herself. Shortly before she died she said, "I do not say that I am perfect, but I am trying to be perfect. I do not expect

others to be perfect; and if I could not associate with my brothers and sisters who are not perfect, I do not know what I should do.

"I try to treat the matter the best that I can, and am thankful that I have a spirit of uplifting and not a spirit of crushing down. . . . No one is perfect. If one were perfect, he would be prepared for heaven. As long as we are not perfect, we have a work to do to get ready to be perfect. We have a mighty Saviour. . . .

"I rejoice that I have that faith that takes hold of the promises of God, that works by love and sanctifies the soul."³⁷

"We have a mighty Saviour." That is the secret of being ready for His coming. He is our righteousness, just as He was the righteousness of all our fathers who died in faith.

God's part in preparing me for translation is to forgive my sins and impute Christ's righteousness to me, and then to cause me to grow from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character.³⁸ My part is to believe His promises, confess my sins, give myself to Him, and will to serve Him. As I believe that I am cleansed, God supplies the fact—Christ binds up my wounds and cleanses me from all impurity.

These blessings that give us our title and fitness for heaven are beautifully described in *Steps to Christ*, pages 50 and 51. There Ellen White says that we must will to serve Christ and believe His promise of forgiveness and cleansing—"It is so if you believe it." It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children and enable us to live a holy life. "So we may ask for these blessings, and believe that we receive them, and thank God that we have received them."

We can summarize Ellen White's exhortations by likening her to someone running a race. In the Millerite movement of 1842-1844 she was a sprinter in a hundred-yard dash. She put everything she had into the revival—her money, her efforts, her prayers—everything.

After the Disappointment she found herself running a marathon rather than a sprint. Nevertheless, she always maintained the zeal, force, and dedication of the dash. She urged us to give sacrificially, to dedicate ourselves to the Lord as though each day were our last, to love Christ rather than the world, to make sure our sins are confessed before we go to bed every night, and, as the Advent believers did in 1844, to live in peace and harmony. In every way she urged us to

continue the drive of the dash throughout the marathon. Christ's soon coming always urges us to holiness and witness.

In this way we live in preparation for the coming of Christ. This is how the apostles and, for that matter, how the Christians of all ages have lived. While the soon coming of Christ lends new urgency to Christian duties, the way of salvation is not different in these last days. Thank God, many have reached the standard in Christ and many are reaching it today. May we be among them! ■

¹ Manuscript 4, 1883 (see *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 59-73, especially pp. 66-69). All footnotes in this article refer to the writings of Ellen G. White.

² *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 4, p. 1161.

³ *General Conference Bulletin*, 1893, p. 419; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

⁴ *Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 363.

⁵ *Early Writings*, p. 278.

⁶ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603-612.

⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 209.

⁸ *Review and Herald*, Mar. 29, 1892, p. 193; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White comments, vol. 7, p. 984.

⁹ Page 69.

¹⁰ *Education*, p. 271; *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 111.

¹¹ The conviction that the last-day saints must reach a higher level of righteousness than their fathers does not agree with the doctrine of righteousness by faith. While we must indeed keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, we cannot speak of levels of righteousness before God. Only one righteousness can gain us entrance into heaven—the righteousness of Christ. However righteous we may claim to be, we are still only unprofitable servants. "Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling" must be our song forever.

¹² Letter 38, 1888.

¹³ *Early Writings*, p. 15.

¹⁴ *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 76; see also *Early Writings*, pp. 34, 285.

¹⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 714-718.

¹⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 32.

¹⁷ See *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 535-537.

¹⁸ *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1913, p. 515.

¹⁹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 79.

²⁰ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 176; see also *The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

²¹ *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 67.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 69.

²³ Manuscript 3, 1867. (Italics supplied.)

²⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 214-216; *Review and Herald*, Oct. 6, 1896, p. 629.

²⁵ Manuscript 5, 1874.

²⁶ *Early Writings*, p. 58.

²⁷ Letter 25, 1902.

²⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 194.

²⁹ *Review and Herald*, Oct. 2, 1900, p. 625.

³⁰ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 532.

³¹ "That I May Know Him," p. 141.

³² *Review and Herald*, Oct. 25, 1881, p. 257.

³³ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 36, 37, 252.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 22.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

³⁶ *The Great Controversy*, p. 425.

³⁷ *Review and Herald*, July 23, 1970, p. 3.

³⁸ See *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 350-400.

Judgment or justification?

Roy Adams

Many have rejected the idea of an investigative judgment. Why? Is this Adventist doctrine biblical?



Roy Adams, Th.D., is the associate secretary of the Canadian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Historically, Adventists have understood the investigative judgment to represent the second and final phase of Christ's priestly ministry for mankind. This judgment, currently in session, involves the individual examination of God's professed people, dead and alive.

Probably no other doctrine taught by Seventh-day Adventists has occasioned more ridicule and contempt than that of the investigative judgment. Virtually all non-Adventist theologians react negatively. Even within the Adventist Church, prominent leaders have from time to time expressed strong misgivings about the concept.¹

This negative reaction seems to arise from a perception that an investigative judgment flies in the face of righteousness by faith and Christian assurance. This was clearly the case with defrocked Adventist minister-evangelist, Albion Fox Ballenger (1861-1921).²

Ballenger's experience is interesting for this anniversary year. For one thing, he began his ministry in the Adventist Church in the 1880s. And although it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which he was influenced by the righteousness debate of 1888, it is beyond question that it was this doctrine that eventually came to dominate his theology.³

But whereas the 1888 debate had to do with conflicting or competing emphases on law versus grace, Ballenger's concern for righteousness by faith had little, if anything, to do with an Adventist over-emphasis on law. "The basis of his indict

ment was, rather, Adventism's understanding of the doctrine of the sanctuary." For him, this was the heart of Adventist legalism.⁴

Accordingly, when he undertook his radical reinterpretation of the Adventist sanctuary doctrine, it was to weed out all elements of legalism. Curiously, with just one exception, he retained every major component of traditional Adventist sanctuary theology. The exception: the investigative judgment. This teaching he completely repudiated.⁵ Like other critics of this Adventist doctrine, he found it utterly inimical to righteousness by faith and Christian assurance.

Initial assessment of criticism

Seventh-day Adventists are veterans of opposition and disdain; and critics have repeatedly been frustrated by our ability to absorb their theological contumely. Especially does the church lend a deaf ear when the criticism is fundamentally flawed, as it is in this case. For if the notion of an *investigative* judgment is inimical to righteousness by faith and Christian assurance, then ipso facto, the notion of judgment, per se, must be also.

But how can anyone credibly deny that judgment is a fundamental New Testament teaching? Notice how clearly the concept emerges from these texts: "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. . . . For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people' " (Heb. 10:26-30).*

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, . . . whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

"For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

If our need for assurance or our emphasis on righteousness by faith, as valid as these are, obscures the biblical teaching of judgment, then we have allowed it to become an obsession. Righteousness by faith and Christian assurance are indeed fundamental New Testament teachings. But so is judgment. We gain nothing, either theologically or experientially, by attempting to negate or neutralize any one of them.

As theologians and Bible students, we do not create theology, we discover it. This implies that we stand (or perhaps better, kneel) before the Word, without prejudice, and listen. To allow any one biblical emphasis to so dominate our thinking as to become a litmus test of the

*The New American Standard Bible is used throughout this article unless otherwise noted.

Discussion questions:

1. Why do some believe the Adventist concept of an investigative judgment is incompatible with righteousness by faith?

2. How would you relate righteousness by faith and the judgment?

3. What biblical support is there for an investigative or pre-Advent judgment?

4. As Adams points out, early Adventists thought only of those people who professed allegiance to God at sometime in their lives as the defendants in the investigative judgment. Recently, Adventist publications and preaching have suggested that in this judgment, God Himself must be vindicated as well. Should we limit our doctrinal beliefs to those held by Adventist pioneers—or are development and a changing emphasis legitimate? If you think changes are legitimate, what controls would you place on such changes?

5. How is the investigative judgment related to the sanctuary?

validity of all others is to short-circuit the listening process. This was the mind-set that led Martin Luther, that towering Reformer, to repudiate the book of James.

Theological maturity seeks to hold in balance (sometimes in tension) the various fundamental biblical themes. So, however important righteousness by faith, and however desirable Christian assurance, we cannot neglect the judgment and remain faithful to Scripture.

Understanding our critics

In the light of the unequivocal New Testament affirmation of the judgment, why the continued vigorous criticism of the Adventist position? Our observation at this point suggests two possible reasons, both essentially psychological.

The first has to do with the contemporaneous nature of the investigative judgment. Veteran attorney Louis Nizer remembers that "on the morning of the trial all the physical indicia of unbearable trepidation are evident. Hands are clammy, brows . . . wet, cheeks . . . flushed or sickly pale, eyes . . . red-rimmed, voices . . . froggy, there are artificial yawns, dry lips, and . . . frequent visits to the toilet."⁶

Adventists have always taught that the judgment is *now in session*, an announcement potentially unnerving for anyone who has ever been summoned to appear in a human courtroom and who still remembers the shrill voice of the clerk calling all to rise as the judge enters. A judgment at the end of all time or after the millennium does not have the same psychological impact. Distance tends to minimize its terror. Even less disturbing is the theological contrivance that puts this judgment at the cross—long ago and far away.

But a judgment in session now! That's ominous!

The second reason is essentially tied up with the first, and revolves around the word *investigative*. Linked to the contemporary nature of the event, this buzzword conjures up the image of Christians under surveillance by a celestial, cloak-and-dagger, round-the-clock investigative unit.⁷

To heighten the tension even further, some Adventist preachers have suggested that at whatever moment this heavenly assize takes up the case of any living person, it passes a final judgment, and there and then closes the probation of that individual. Should this happen at

Their preoccupation with righteousness by faith blinds some to the biblical emphasis on judgment.

a moment when there was the indulgence of the slightest sin or mischief in the life, the person is lost forever.⁸ It is instructive to note that it was this view of the investigative judgment that Ballenger espoused before he repudiated the doctrine entirely.⁹

It has not always been easy to provide from Scripture a straightforward demonstration of the notion of an *investigative* judgment. However, the concept of a pre-Advent decision fairly permeates biblical apocalypse.

For example, in Daniel 12:1, we are informed of an eschatological time of crisis from which only those "found written in the book" will be rescued. And in the apocalyptic account of Matthew we learn that, at the time of the Parousia, a loud trumpet call gathers together the "elect from the four winds" (Matt. 24:30, 31). The contexts of these two passages clearly imply a prior determination of the spiritual standing of these individuals.

In Revelation 16, the seven last plagues, like guided missiles, pursue only those who have "the mark of the beast" (RSV). Obviously, there has been a prior assessment in order to "legally" affix the mark to some and not to others.

The locus classicus of a pre-Advent judgment is Daniel 7. In this apocalyptic passage, the prophet observes in vision the little horn's nefarious activities on earth and simultaneously views a judgment scene in heaven. He switches back and forth from earth to heaven, studying these two arresting scenes, until the notorious little horn is destroyed and judgment given in favor of the saints (see Dan. 7:22). In his recent dissertation, Arthur Ferch successfully demonstrated that these two activities transpire within historical time and, therefore, the judgment of Daniel 7 is pre-Advent.¹⁰

One must not advance the useless argument that since God knows everything, the concept of a pre-Advent judgment is theoretical and unnecessary. Such an approach, carried to its logical

conclusion, repudiates the whole biblical notion of judgment. It arises from a theological shallowness that cannot conceive of worlds and systems of created intelligences beyond our own, who, if the universe is to be secure, must be satisfied with the integrity of God's election. And the great controversy revolves around the fact that not all such intelligences are friendly.

Enlarging the judgment's scope

Early Adventists may well have found the term *investigative judgment* sufficient in part because of their own restricted conception of the nature and scope of the activity involved. They perceived only the *subjective* aspect of this judgment's having to do with our personal standing before God. And, their preoccupation with this aspect of the judgment blinded them to its other important components, just as the preoccupation with righteousness by faith blinds some to the biblical emphasis on judgment.

Standing as they do on the shoulders of these pioneers, contemporary Adventist theologians have grown increasingly conscious of the universal scope of this judgment activity. This consciousness has led them to question whether the word *investigative* is sufficiently comprehensive to describe it.

Especially does this become evident from a consideration of Daniel 7. Clearly, in this chapter the little horn is a major target of the judgment. This fact alone suffices to show that this judgment has a much broader frame of reference than our pioneers were able to see in their time.

The dimensions expand even further as one compares the activities described in Daniel 7 with those of Revelation 12-14.¹¹ Such a comparison makes it clear: (1) that this judgment is post-cross, coming, as it does, after the end of the 42 months or 1,260 years mentioned in the two accounts; and (2) that its scope is universal.

Revelation 12 and 13 unmask the power behind the beast (the little horn of Daniel 7), portraying it as the dragon, that "ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Rev. 12:7-9, RSV; cf. Rev. 13:1-3). Through his operatives, this evil genius utters blasphemies against God, His name, His sanctuary, and the inhabitants of heaven (see Rev. 13:6). In other words, God Himself stands accused! And herein lies the side

of this judgment that our pioneers did not clearly see—the *objective* side.

To be sure, this judgment does separate God's true saints from the multitudes who falsely claim His name, and in this sense, can be called *investigative*. Keep in mind that in this great assize books are opened. Whatever else this means, the idea of evaluation, of scrutiny, of *investigation*, if you please, cannot be ignored. "Not everyone who says . . . , 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Evaluation is an essential part of this judgment, and it is this aspect that impressed our pioneers. Unnerving? Yes. But that's what the afflicting of the soul at Yom Kippur was all about (see Lev. 23:26-32).

But the scope of this judgment is much broader. Vindication is its fundamental concern—vindication of God's sanctuary, vindication of God's name, vindication of God's people.

We cannot visualize all the ramifications of this judgment, of course. But certainly its focus is the heavenly sanctuary, the seat of God's law and government, the nerve center of human salvation. Upon its vindication hangs the security of the universe. Hence, the theological significance of that cryptic statement in Daniel 8:14: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (KJV).

This judgment-day message is a far cry from the foot-stomping, amen-'rousing pabulum of much that passes for gospel theology today. But it is a message that takes the fullest account of reality as we know it through experience and revelation.

Prior to the Second Advent, the judgment now in session settles the question of God's love and justice. It confirms the validity and legality of the plan of salvation, and carries in its verdict the final vindication of God's people. It is in this context that we understand the jubilant cry of the heavenly messenger, "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her" (Rev. 18:20).

What assurance! What security! ■

¹ Desmond Ford has listed a whole catalog of Adventist workers he alleges have had serious reservations about the doctrine. See Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement, and Investigative Judgment" (unpublished manuscript, 1980), pp. 47-147. Ford himself says flatly that the doctrine is not in the Bible (*Ibid.*, p. 14).

² Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary Doctrine: Three Approaches in the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1981), pp. 104-107, 135-140. Cf. Ford, p. 42.

³ Adams, pp. 104-107.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁶ Louis Nizer, *My Life in Court* (New York: Pyramid Publications, Inc., 1944), p. 39.

⁷ Is the term expendable? This is a sensitive question. It sounds so much like tampering with the fundamentals. But the term *investigative* is not absolutely indispensable to making the case for the doctrine—for several years the pioneers were able to do so without it.

The term *investigative judgment* was apparently first used by Elon Everts in a letter to the *Review* editor, dated December 17, 1856, and published in the issue of January 1, 1857 (Paul Gordon, *The Sanctuary, 1844, and the Pioneers* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983], p. 87). Four weeks later, James White used the terminology in an article, and it soon came into general use among early Adventists, including, of course, Ellen G. White. It was essentially a convenience term, and not all were satisfied with it. Uriah Smith implied he would switch to more appropriate language if such could be found (Adams, p. 81).

The expression *pre-Advent* would make a good substitute (*ibid.*, pp. 260-262). Four reasons are:

1. *Acceptance within the church.* *Pre-Advent* has already been bug-tested—the expression has been in use in Adventist circles for at least 27 years (see W. E. Read, in *Doctrinal Discussions* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, n.d.], Chaps. III, IV) and is finding growing acceptance within contemporary Adventism.

2. *Apologetics.* *Pre-Advent* avoids the unnecessary red-flagging of our critics that *investigative* seems to involve. Yet, it makes an essential point: this special judgment precedes the *parousia*.

3. *Facility of demonstration.* It has not always been easy to provide from Scripture a straightforward demonstration of the particular notion of an investigative judgment. However, as my article points out, the concept of a pre-Advent decision fairly permeates biblical apocalypse.

4. *Adequacy of language.* As my article suggests, *investigative* may be too narrow a term for this judgment. *Pre-Advent* allows a broader scope that can include concepts built on the foundation the pioneers' investigative judgment laid.

⁸ This frightful interpretation, which we heard from the pulpit as recently as last summer's camp meeting, fortunately cannot be substantiated in authentic Adventism.

⁹ Adams, pp. 135, 136.

¹⁰ For a summary of this finding, see Arthur J. Ferch, in *Adventist Review*, Oct. 30, 1980, pp. 4-7.

¹¹ That these two apocalyptic sections of Scripture are parallel and complementary is beyond question. For example:

a. In Daniel 7:25, God's saints are persecuted "for a time, two times, and half a time" (RSV). Correspondingly, Revelation 12:14 portrays the woman, because of persecution, going underground "for a time, and times, and half a time" (RSV).

b. In Daniel 7:25, the little horn speaks "words against the Most High" and continues for three and a half times (or 42 months). In Revelation 13:5, the beast speaks "arrogant words and blasphemies" against God and continues "for forty-two months" (RSV).

c. In Daniel 7:25, the little horn attempts to change times and the law. In Revelation 12:17, the dragon rages against those who keep God's law.

d. In Daniel 7:22, 25-27, the persecution of God's people is followed by judgment against their persecutor and a ruling in their favor. In Revelation 14:6ff, judgment is announced against the persecutors, and a ruling (verses 12, 13) is rendered in favor of the saints.

1844

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Must we agree?

Alden Thompson

Ellen White favored a certain amount of debate in the church. And she believed church unity was to be maintained by other means than legislation or pronouncements by the church's authority figures.



Alden Thompson, Ph.D., is the academic dean at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

The year 1888 rivals 1844 as the most interesting date in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. In that year powerful crosscurrents and deceptive undercurrents swirled together in a manner that has captivated laity, clergy, and scholars alike.

Then, as now, the church faced a bewildering array of challenges. Whether or not it learned the right lessons from the 1888 experience is much debated. On the negative side of the ledger, the years following the 1888 conference witnessed some stunning setbacks. Key leaders in the church, including J. H. Kellogg, A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner, eventually departed the ranks of denominational workers. For good measure, Kellogg took along with him the denomination's showcase health institution, Battle Creek Sanitarium.

Even among the leaders who remained faithful, attitudes and practices were far from exemplary. In 1901 Ellen White returned from Australia and attended her first General Conference session in 10 years. Standing before the assembled delegates, she exclaimed: "I would rather lay a child of mine in his grave" than to have him go to the Review and Herald Publishing House to see the principles of heaven "mangled and perverted." Then speaking specifically of the church's leadership, she declared: "That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people, as we once believed the General Conference to be—that is past."¹

The institutions of the church had their troubles too. After abandoning its Battle Creek College for a site in rural Berrien County, the church also moved its headquarters and publishing house out of Battle Creek, nudged along by spectacular fires at the press and sanitarium.

On the positive side, however, these same difficult years witnessed phenomenal growth in the church's educational and mission work. Even the General Conference session of 1901, where Ellen White had spoken such strong words about the denomination's leaders, witnessed a transformation of attitudes and some significant steps toward reorganization. It was also during these years that Ellen White was producing some of her richest literature on the life of Christ: *Steps to Christ* (1892), *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (1896), *The Desire of Ages* (1898), *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900), and *The Ministry of Healing* (1905).

The checkered history of the church in the aftermath of the 1888 General Conference session invites careful analysis. Whether or not the church learned its lessons at the time, the 1888 experience can yield to us today helpful suggestions that can point us toward renewal and unity as a people. This article explores some of those suggestions, paying particular attention to Ellen White's commentary on the events of the day.

The Adventist Church in the 1880s

The tensions that spilled out into the open at the 1888 General Conference session had been building for some years. A superficial serenity, however, may

have masked the problem from the church in general.

In Ellen White's view, such serenity should have been a warning. Peace and quiet in the church can be symptomatic of spiritual laziness. After the conference Ellen White noted, "Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word."² By contrast, a decline in spiritual life is marked by a tendency for believers to "rest satisfied with the light already received from God's Word and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative and seek to avoid discussion."³ So the absence of "controversy or agitation" among God's people is not necessarily a healthy sign. "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."⁴

In the 1880s the idea that healthy church life should be marked by a certain lively ferment was not universally accepted by Adventist leadership. From California, through the pages of the *Signs of the Times*, Jones and Waggoner had been propounding fresh perspectives on righteousness by faith. Back East, the editor of the *Review and Herald*, Uriah Smith, was not convinced by their articles, and said so in print. And the General Conference president, Elder George I. Butler, was unsettled by the developments in the West. Because of illness, Butler could not attend the 1888 conference, where Jones and Waggoner presented their messages in person. But he showed his hand in a telegram to the delegates, urging them to "stand by the landmarks."

At the conference itself the reactionary tendency was strong enough to call forth a resolution that would have forbidden teachers at Battle Creek College to present in their classrooms anything new that hadn't been approved by the General Conference Committee. It seems that Jones was under appointment to teach at Battle Creek; the resolution was an attempt to restrict the spread of his "righteousness by faith" dogma.

Ellen White was present when the resolution surfaced. As LeRoy Froom tells the story, she reacted with alarm, questioning the resolution in a "very decided

tone" of voice. The resolution was defeated, but even Ellen White's presence and vocal opposition did not hinder one brother from voting for the restriction with both hands.⁵

Addressing the ministers on October 21, 1888, Ellen White explained why the church must constantly be growing and adapting. The nature of her comments suggests that both Butler's "landmark" telegram and the restrictive teaching resolution were very much on her mind. She urged, "The varying circumstances taking place in our world call for labor which will meet these peculiar developments. . . . Instructors in our schools should never be bound about by being told that they are to teach only what has been taught hitherto. Away with these restrictions."⁶

Then, reaching back into the arsenal of Adventist slogans, she picked up a phrase that could provide the proper counterpoint to Butler's "landmarks." "Present truth," a phrase lifted from the King James Version of 2 Peter 1:12, was Adventist shorthand for the dynamic, cutting edge of truth as applied to the contemporary needs of the church and the world. "That which God gives His servants to speak today," she affirmed, "would not perhaps have been present truth 20 years ago, but it is God's message for this time."⁷

In sum, then, Adventism in the 1880s apparently had become satisfied with itself and its understanding of truth; the church had become complacent. A changing world, however, demanded that the church develop fresh insights and emphases. "Landmarks" were not enough. The church needed "present truth." But how should the church go about finding it?

Handling controversy and change

Not all change in the church is controversial. When developments are gradual and almost imperceptible, the church can undergo great changes without ever having made a clear-cut decision to do so. Under such circumstances, controversy is likely to erupt only if and when the church awakes and tries to decide whether and how to return to what it once was.

On the surface, Adventists ran into difficulties in the 1880s, not because of imperceptible changes, but because of a refusal to change. In its methods of approach and its doctrinal corpus, the church had slipped into a rut. Ellen

White put it this way: "As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain."⁸

But by refusing to grow (or change) in its understanding of Scripture and doctrine, the church had indeed changed where it mattered most, namely, in the dynamic quality of its spiritual life. Jones and Waggoner were recovering the "old" experience through new insights into Scripture. But when they attempted to share the doctrinal and scriptural insights that had transformed their own experience, they met stiff resistance. Since their detractors were not sensitive to the diminished quality of the church's spiritual life, they simply reacted against changes in the old interpretations of Scripture.

During the course of the 1888 controversy, several potential methods of handling the threat to church unity surfaced. Analysis of these methods can be instructive for the church today in the face of similar circumstances.

1. *Legislation: the passing of resolutions.* Hints scattered throughout the records of the 1888 conference suggest that many of the brethren wanted to resolve their differences, especially the one involving the understanding of the law in Galatians 3, by bringing the matter to a vote. In Ellen White's address to the delegates on November 1 she observed, "There are some who desire to have a decision made at once as to what is the correct view on the point under discussion. As this would please Elder B, it is advised that this question be settled at once. But are minds prepared for such a decision? I could not sanction this course, because our brethren are exercised by a spirit which moves their feelings, and stirs their impulses, so as to control their judgment. While under so much excitement as now exists, they are not prepared to make safe decisions."⁹

A few years later, with the 1888 experience still forming the backdrop for her remarks, Ellen White commented further on the dangers involved when one attempts to vote on the interpretation of Scripture: "The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement."¹⁰

While it may be necessary to bring certain matters to a vote so that the church can proceed on an agreed basis, Ellen White made it quite clear that voting was not the appropriate way to handle the interpretation of Scripture. Actually, as far as she was concerned, the unity of the church did not depend on unity in the interpretation of Scripture anyway. The 1892 manuscript cited above explicitly makes that point: "We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light."

How much diversity can be tolerated is an issue addressed below. Too much diversity can destroy unity; not allowing enough diversity has an equally deadly effect. But regardless of which way the church may lean, legislation is not the way to handle threats to church unity.

2. *A decision by those in authority.* Another way of handling controversy in the church is to ask those in authority to settle the issue. In 1888 the church could have relied on the elder statesmen among them, on the elected church officials, or on Ellen White's charismatic authority. Ellen White herself supported none of those options.

Elder statesmen. Some at the conference apparently resented the youth of Jones, 38, and Waggoner, 33. Ellen White did not. As she addressed the delegates on October 21, she argued that it was time for the "aged standard-bearers" to "act as worthy counselors and living witnesses," but that "their younger and stronger brethren should bear the heavy burdens." It was the younger workers who should "plan, devise, and execute" while looking to the older workers as "counselors and guides."¹¹

Elected officials. Ellen White seemed genuinely alarmed by the tendency of some to rely on the church's elected officials to resolve matters of faith and biblical interpretation. From Australia in 1896 she wrote, "I have been shown that it is a mistake to suppose that the men in positions of special responsibility at Battle Creek have wisdom which is far superior to that of ordinary men. Those who think that they have, supposing them to have divine enlightenment, rely upon the human judgment of these men, taking their counsel as the voice of God."¹²

In the 1893 edition of *Gospel Workers* she had written something very similar: "Those who have not been in the habit of searching the Bible for themselves, or weighing evidence, have confidence in

the leading men, and accept the decisions they make; and thus many will reject the very messages God sends to His people, if these leading brethren do not accept them."¹³

At the conference, on October 24, Ellen White expressed her amazement at the position Elder R. M. Kilgore had taken, namely, that the controverted topics could not be discussed because the General Conference president was not there. She said, "Had Brother Kilgore been walking closely with God he never would have walked onto the ground as he did yesterday and made the statement he did in regard to the investigation that is going on."¹⁴ A few moments later she reiterated the point: "These truths that we have been handling for years—must Elder Butler come and tell us what they are? Now, do let us have common sense. Don't let us leave such an impression on this people."¹⁵

Charismatic leader. In view of the tendency of modern Adventists to rely on Ellen White's writings to interpret Scripture, the position she expressed in 1888 regarding her own role is remarkable. Her November 1 address to the delegates is the most enlightening in this respect. She wants "to be instructed as a child," she says. While "the Lord has been pleased to give me great light, yet I know that He leads other minds, and opens to them the mysteries of His Word, and I want to receive every ray of light that God shall send me, though it should come through the humblest of His servants."¹⁶

She supported Waggoner enthusiastically because his overall message "harmonizes perfectly with the light which God has been pleased to give me during all the years of my experience." While agreeing with the overall thrust of his message, however, she still disagreed with some of his views of Scripture: "Some interpretations of Scripture given by Dr. Waggoner I do not regard as correct." Nevertheless, "the fact that he honestly holds some views of Scripture differing from yours or mine is no reason why we should treat him as an offender, or as a dangerous man."¹⁷

So Brother Waggoner could safely disagree with Sister White? Indeed. As she herself put it: "I have no reason to think that he is not as much esteemed of God as are any of my brethren, and I shall regard him as a Christian brother, so long as there is no evidence that he is unworthy."¹⁸

In short, Ellen White did not consider it her role to be the Bible student for the church. She would guide and admonish, but she would not intervene to cut short the study of the Word.

If unity in the church cannot be restored either by legislation or by pronouncement from the community's authority figures, how does the church arrive at a common basis for action? That is the point to which we now turn.

Unity in Christ

In the unpublished 1892 manuscript dealing with the unity of the church, Ellen White points out two sidetracks and then the main line on which we may proceed.

The sidetracks are: (1) believing that the unity of the church consists "in viewing every text of Scripture in the same light" and (2) voted resolutions, which may "conceal the discord, but . . . cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement."

The course she recommends is straightforward but rather intangible: "Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance." She counsels the believer to "sit down in Christ's school and learn of Christ." If we learn of Him, "worries will cease and we shall find rest to our souls."

That is helpful, but difficult to put in concrete form. The next paragraph, however, offers a suggestion that we can use as an organizing principle. There she simplifies the essence of the Christian's faith and practice: "The great truths of the Word of God are so clearly stated that none need make a mistake in understanding them. When as individual members of the church, you love God supremely and your neighbor as yourself, there will be no need of labored efforts to be in unity, for there will be oneness in Christ as a natural result."

In other words, Jesus' two great commands (Matt. 22:37-40) form the touchstone by which we test all our actions, doctrine, and interpretations of Scripture. Wholehearted attention to the two great commands will allow our minor differences to fall into perspective. We will be one in Christ because we all are committed to a simple, clearly defined goal.

Such a position allows for diversity, but does not allow diversity to detract from the primary goal. In fact, diversity may very well be essential for reaching that primary goal; it is not simply an irritant to be kept at minimal levels. In

Counsels to Parents and Teachers Ellen White argues that diversity, even in our interpretation of Scripture, is essential if the church is to work effectively. She says it is because the minds of men differ that we have four Gospel writers instead of one.

For that same reason, our youth should not have the same Bible teacher year after year. "Different teachers should have a part in the work, even though they may not all have so full an understanding of the Scriptures."¹⁹ Then in a rather stunning statement, she says: "So today the Lord does not impress all minds in the same way. Often through unusual experiences, under special circumstances, He gives to some Bible students views of truth that others do not grasp. It is possible for the most learned teacher to fall far short of teaching all that should be taught."²⁰

Our task is not done once we have established the principle of unity through diversity. We still must address the question of the limits of diversity and the methods by which those limits are set. Those are matters to which we now turn.

A model for the church

I believe that the church needs two sets of limits, represented in diagram form through two concentric circles (see figure). The inner circle represents those

crucial points of faith and practice that all Adventists hold in common. This is the essence of Adventism, the glue that holds us together. It is the hub of the wheel.

The outer circle represents the limits beyond which a person may not go and still be a part of the community—the rim of the wheel, so to speak.

Free and lively discussion can take place in the area between the essential core (the hub) and the outer limit (the rim). This discussion enables the church to adapt its message to the world's needs.

What topics are in that discussable area? Vegetarianism, Sabbath behavior, the wedding ring, certain aspects of the nature of Christ, and even how we understand justification and sanctification. Those are all topics Adventists love to discuss. And we need to discuss them, remembering that we may not all agree—and don't have to.

But we also need to ask what kinds of things are in the hub, the core that all Adventists accept. We can answer that question in a variety of ways. First, from a practical point of view, the Sabbath and the Advent are really the two rock-solid elements that keep Adventists together around the world. I would guess that there are already millions of Adventists, including some American college students, who do not appreciate the fine points of the doctrinal statement voted

in Dallas in 1980. Yet they are faithful Adventists.

If we move back in history to the founding of our denomination, we find an inner circle consisting of a concise covenant agreement: We the undersigned hereby associate ourselves together "as a church, taking the name of Seventh-day Adventist, covenanting to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ."²¹

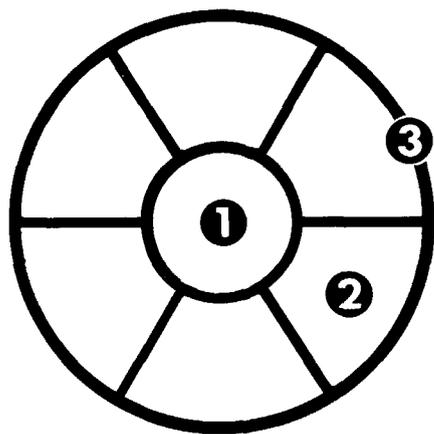
Stepping back to the New Testament era, we may put the two great commands in the core—all the law and the prophets depend on these two (Matt. 22:37-40). Matthew 7:12 and Galatians 5:14 provide a similar focus.

In a sense the brethren raised the issue of the core in 1888 when they portrayed themselves as defending the "landmarks." A year after the conference Ellen White addressed that very question, writing that some of the brothers had closed their minds to light from God's Word because "they had decided it was a dangerous error removing the 'old landmarks' when it was not moving a peg of the old landmarks, but they had perverted ideas of what constituted the old landmarks."²²

The paragraph that follows that statement is worth quoting in full because it so nicely illuminates the relationship between Adventist history and the central focus on the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus: "The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, 'The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.' One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The nonimmortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary."²³

In short, in addition to what we've mentioned, then, the doctrines of the state of the dead and of the sanctuary are seen to be firmly rooted in the core of Adventism. The doctrine of the sanctuary was the means of bringing conviction

The Two Circles of the Church: The Core and the Outer Limits



1. **The Hub**—the center core containing the essential beliefs and practices held in common by all members of the community.

2. **The Spokes**—the broad area containing discussable aspects of doctrine and practice, the area where differences of opinion within the community are permissible.

3. **The Rim**—the line marking the limits beyond which a person may not go and still be a member of the community.

Discussion questions:

1. What kind of "serenity" should characterize church life—and what kind should not?

2. What kinds of controversy, agitation, and differences of opinion should and should not be part of church life?

3. In *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, pages 706, 707, Ellen White warned that as spiritual life declines, people become conservative. What did she mean?

4. What kind of control should the church retain over what those teaching in its schools are presenting in the classrooms?

5. What is present truth now? Why do you say so?

6. How important to church unity is having similar views of scriptural passages? Is there a difference in importance between "viewing every text of Scripture in the same light" and agreeing on major passages or biblical doctrines? How would you define that difference?

7. Who holds authority in the church? What kind of authority do they hold? Over what areas of church life? Who decides the church's doctrines?

8. What role and authority do Ellen White's writings have in interpreting Scripture?

9. How would you apply "love God supremely and your neighbor as yourself" to church unity?

10. Should the church teach different doctrines to people of different cultures in order to win as many as possible?

11. What do you see as constituting the essential core of Adventism, and where would you draw the outer limits beyond which no Adventist should go? What support can you give for the positions you have taken?

12. Is everything the church believes ultimately up for discussion and acceptance or rejection by the church as a body?

13. Does the church need both conservatives and liberals?

about the Sabbath to the pioneers. The debate on the precise meaning of the sanctuary will be lively and ongoing, an event taking place between the two circles, but the doctrine is firmly rooted in the core, illuminating "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

In every age the core must be relatively simple if it is to meet the needs of the world. And even the core will always include strands that extend out into the discussable area. The church must accept as an ongoing task the defining of the limits set by the inner and outer circles.

The Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 offers a fine biblical model of the defining process at work. After lively debate, the council placed circumcision, one of Judaism's core practices, in Christianity's optional category.

That same conference placed the prohibition against eating food offered to idols in the center core. But 1 Corinthians 8 shows Paul pushing the issue out of the core into the discussable area. In Western countries of our day the issue has become completely moot. When was the last time you saw an Adventist check a label at the grocery store to see if the food was offered to idols? Times have changed; the issues have changed; the church has changed.

That is why the church must continually be aware of its world and be about the task of defining and redefining its limits. It will be a constant struggle, for liberals and conservatives demonstrate opposite tendencies. Conservatives struggle with diversity, and may want to push the inner circle all the way to the outer limit—until there is only one circle, not two. Liberals, on the other hand, are inclined to push the outer limits until they disappear—at which point the church ceases to be a church. A community of any kind needs boundaries. A community of believers is hardly an exception.

To be effective, the church will need to strike a balance between the conservatives and the liberals. With full sympathy for all and in full awareness of the needs of the world, the church must set the limits for its two circles—its core beliefs and its outer limits.

So how does the church go about defining its two circles? Through individual and corporate study, through thoughtful discussion and prayer, through the guidance of the Spirit. Acts 15 shows us the way. From within our own heritage, Ellen White's counsel throughout the 1888

controversy underscores the need for coming together in the Lord, caring for each other, praying for each other, earnestly searching for a clearer understanding of the Lord's will.

In conclusion, it would be appropriate to cite a paragraph from *Counsels to Parents and Teachers* outlining Ellen White's view of how unity is established. After writing of the necessity of diversity among Bible teachers, she counsels: "It would greatly benefit our schools if regular meetings were held frequently in which all the teachers could unite in the study of the Word of God. They should search the Scriptures as did the noble Bereans. They should subordinate all preconceived opinions, and taking the Bible as their lesson book, comparing scripture with scripture, they should learn what to teach their students, and how to train them for acceptable service."²⁴

That is a model for the church. Our discussions may be lively, our arguments intense, but if our devotional experience is equally lively and intense, the Spirit will fulfill Jesus' prayer of John 17—we will be one in Him. ■

¹ E. G. White, in *General Conference Bulletin*, Apr. 3, 1901, p. 25.

² _____, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 706.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 706, 707.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 707.

⁵ LeRoy Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1971), pp. 253, 254.

⁶ Cited from Appendix A in A. V. Olson, *Thirteen Crisis Years* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), p. 282.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ E. G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Mar. 11, 1890, p. 146.

⁹ Olson, p. 304.

¹⁰ E. G. White manuscript 24, 1892 (included in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* [Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987], vol. 3, pp. 1087-1095).

¹¹ Olson, p. 288.

¹² E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1944), p. 374.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 107.

¹⁴ Olson, p. 300.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 304. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ E. G. White, *Counsels to Parents and Teachers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), p. 432.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 432, 433.

²¹ See Richard Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1979), p. 96.

²² E. G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 30.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31.

²⁴ _____, *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 433.

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Reviving your church in 1988

Mark Finley

A century ago those who accepted the message of righteousness by faith experienced a revival. How can your church experience a revival?



Mark Finley served for many years as the director of the North American Division Evangelism Institute. He is currently the ministerial secretary of the Trans-European Division.

A revival “signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death.”¹

How can the Seventh-day Adventist Church experience revival? What practical steps can you, as an Adventist pastor, take to initiate revival in your church?

Newspapermen traveled from London to Wales to report firsthand on the marvelous happenings of the great Welsh revival at the turn of the century. On his arrival in Wales, one of them asked a policeman where the Welsh revival was being held. Drawing himself to his full height, the policeman laid his hand over his heart and proudly proclaimed: “Sir, the Welsh revival is in this uniform.”

If my church is going to be revived, I must be revived. Unless something happens in me, not much will happen through me! Unless God does something for me, He will do little with me. Revival will begin in our churches when we as preachers cry out, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). When our hearts are polluted by sin, we are not prepared to participate in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that God longs to send us.

Biblical calls for revival

In Bible times, when Israel drifted away from God’s ideal, He sent prophets with straightforward, burning messages calling for revival. At a time of external piety but inner rebellion, the prophet Isaiah cried out, “Wash you, make you

clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isa. 1:16, 17).

Each prophet’s call for revival had similar elements. It contained an urgent appeal for a return to God combined with a practical call to repentance for the specific sins that had severed that relationship. Hosea lovingly appealed, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he has smitten, and he will bind us up” (Hosea 6:1).

The prophet Joel earnestly called his people to an inward spiritual revolution that would lead to an outer joyful obedience to the will of God. “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil” (Joel 2:12, 13).

Joel’s appeal was for wholehearted, not simulated or halfhearted, service. In contrast to an external form, Joel called his people to turn to God with their inmost souls and to fix all their affections on Him. As Gregory of old put it: “In whatever degree our affections are scattered among created things, so far is the conversion of the heart impaired.”

Latter-day calls

Once again in the latter days God’s people allowed the outer husks of religion to replace the kernel of living faith. During the years prior to the Minneapo-

lis conference in October 1888, God powerfully called His people to revival. Once again God used the agency of the gift of prophecy. Through Ellen White this call for revival pointedly addressed the church's need. God's voice spoke to God's people. Notice these clear statements penned in 1887, listed here in chronological order:

"The observance of external forms will never meet the great want of the human soul. A mere profession of Christ is not enough to prepare one to stand the test of the judgment."²

"There is too much formality in the church. . . . Those who profess to be guided by the word of God may be familiar with the evidences of their faith, and yet be like the pretentious fig tree, which flaunted its foliage in the face of the world, but when searched by the Master, was found destitute of fruit."³

"We want by living faith to grasp the promise, and say, God has said the blessing is mine; I must have it, and I believe I shall have it; and keeping the mind on Christ, holding firmly to Him, and at the same time surrendering ourselves to Him, we shall find that Christ will come in. We shall have His presence abiding with us."⁴

One of Ellen White's strongest appeals for revival and reformation was published in the *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887, under the title "The Church's Great Need." This article has been reprinted in *Selected Messages*, Book 1,

Discussion questions:

1. Does my church need revival?
2. What symptoms would indicate to me that my church was experiencing a revival?
3. What is the pastor's role in bringing revival to the church?
4. Would I be willing to endure persecution as the prophets did if I knew my suffering would bring revival to my church?
5. What do you think are the "outer husks of religion"?
6. How can we "control wrong feelings" toward others in the church?
7. What is the basis of genuine revival?
8. What part does health reform play in helping bring about revival?
9. Could being a part of a small prayer group help me to experience personal revival?

pages 121-127. "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work."⁵ "We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world."⁶ "Divisions, and even bitter dissensions which would disgrace any worldly community, are common in the churches, because there is so little effort to control wrong feelings, and to repress every word Satan can take advantage of."⁷ "There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation. If Satan had his way, there would never be another awakening, great or small, to the end of time."⁸ "Let the church arise, and repent of her backslidings before God. . . . We have not the first reason for self-congratulation and self-exaltation."⁹

Recognizing the spiritual impotency that had resulted from widespread pride, formality, and a love of the world, Ellen White called the church back to a living experience with Christ. She particularly appealed to the ministry. Ministers were powerless to lead God's people to the fountains of living water when their own hearts were as a parched desert. If their own spiritual baskets were empty, how could they possibly share the bread of life with a hungry world? Many of our ministers were argumentative. They were able defenders of the faith, but lacked deep spirituality.

The church needed a revival. One month before the October Council in Minneapolis, Ellen White wrote, "They [ministers] cannot rely upon old sermons to present to their congregations; for these set discourses may not be appropriate to meet the occasion, or the wants of the people. There are subjects sadly neglected, that should be largely dwelt upon."¹⁰

What were these sadly neglected subjects? "Show to your hearers Jesus in His condescension to save fallen man. Show them that He who was their surety had to take human nature, and carry it through the darkness and fearfulness of the malediction of His Father, because of man's transgression of His law; for the Saviour was found in fashion as a man."¹¹ Jesus was to be the focal point of all revival. Without a fresh view of the living Christ, revival was impossible. Jesus said, "I, if I

"It is our work . . . to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing."

be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

Not everyone present at Minneapolis that autumn experienced revival. Many were content to cling to the external forms of Christianity. But there were those who were willing to listen as the message of righteousness in Christ was proclaimed. As Jesus was lifted up, they were drawn to Him. Hearts were touched. Sins were renounced. Lives were changed. Repentance, confession, and earnest prayer prepared the way for revival. The Spirit was poured out, and the ripples of that revival are still felt today!

Prescription for revival

The prescription for revival is clearly outlined in 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." When on my knees I see the perfect sinless righteousness of Jesus, I realize how wretched I am. "What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself."¹² In the light of His perfection, my lack of commitment, my love of the world, my attachment to things earthly, my human way of viewing circumstances is all the more apparent. In deep repentance, I exclaim, "Jesus, cover my deformity by your spotless righteousness. Do for me what I could never do for myself. Change me! Lift my mind above the earthly! Turn my thoughts into heavenly currents!"

Genuine revival is not rooted in the impulses of the moment. It is not based on a short-lived, sensational emotionalism. Genuine revival is based on heartfelt prayer and earnest Bible study. In 1887 Ellen White wrote: "Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their

children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer."¹³

We cannot expect revival when our hearts are more inclined to television comedians than prayer. We cannot expect revival when we are more interested in the morning sports page than morning devotions. We cannot expect revival when our violation of the message of health reform has clogged our brains so that we cannot discern the voice of the Spirit. We cannot expect revival when our minds are filled with thoughts of fashion rather than with thoughts of the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness.

When church socials with sugar-laden cakes attract a full house and prayer meetings attract two or three faithful, can we expect a revival? When our church board meetings degenerate into power struggles between opposing factions rather than strategy sessions for winning the lost to Christ, can we expect revival? When our sermons cost little in Bible study and prayer and are prepared between phone calls on Friday night, can we expect revival?

We cannot expect revival unless we honestly face the fact that there are inconsistencies between the church's preaching and its practices. We cannot have revival unless we recognize that both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy call for a surrender to the living Christ, who will totally revolutionize our lives.

We cannot expect revival if we as individuals or as a corporate body follow practices that are clearly contrary to what God has revealed through His inspired prophets.

There is a price for revival—not because God is unwilling to give it to us freely, but because we are unprepared to receive it. The price of revival is the same today as it has been in all ages: repentance! earnest prayer! confession of known sin! a reemphasis on Bible study! time in the presence of our Lord! There are no shortcuts. There are no easy solutions. The price of revival is intimate, living, daily fellowship with Jesus. Spending time in His presence, we shall rejoice to do His will.

Revival will come! All heaven is ready to do great things in behalf of the church that hears God's last call of mercy to a dying world. "Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there

will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children."¹⁴

When God has a fully dedicated people, He will pour out unlimited power. The Spirit will descend. The latter rain will fall! The loud cry of the third angel, which began in the revelation of Christ, our sin-pardoning Redeemer, will illuminate the earth with the glory of God.

Reorder your priorities! Nonessentials can wait. Without further delay, dedicate a portion of your time each day to fellowship with Christ. Ask God to reveal attitudes in your life that are not in harmony with His will. Ask the Holy Spirit to impress you with specific areas in which you are violating His counsel. In genuine repentance, surrender those areas. By faith, claim His pardon. Believe He accepts you now! Receive His power for victory. Make a new commitment to using the gifts He has given you in service. Plead with God for latter rain power for effectual, convincing, and loving witness.

If you want your church to experience revival, organize prayer groups of five to seven people. Together seek God for spiritual renewal. Read together the section in *Selected Messages*, book 1, entitled "Revival and Reformation" (pp. 119-152). Invite all the members of the prayer group to spend time on their knees alone meditating on the closing scenes of Christ's life. There are six chapters in the Bible especially on the death of our Lord: Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19. Combine this thoughtful meditation with studies from the last 28 chapters of *The Desire of Ages*, beginning with the chapter entitled "The Law of the New Kingdom."

Through a vital connection with the living Christ, you and your church can experience revival. Jesus was the Way in 1888. He is the Way today. There is no other. ■

¹ *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 128. Footnotes in this article refer to the writings of Ellen G. White.

² *Review and Herald*, Jan. 25, 1887, p. 491.

³ *Ibid.*, Feb. 15, 1887, p. 97.

⁴ *Ibid.*, July 12, 1887, p. 433.

⁵ *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁰ *Review and Herald*, Sept. 11, 1888, p. 578.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Special Testimonies*, Series A. No. 9, p. 62.

¹³ *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121.

¹⁴ *The Great Controversy*, p. 464.

The biblical gospel of salvation

From page 33

acter, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Rom. 5:1-5).

Divine justification brings immediate peace and reconciliation with God. This assurance of salvation is described also as the cleansing of our conscience that now knows the "full assurance of faith" and the unshakable hope for the promised inheritance (Heb. 9:14, 15; 10:22, 23). It is true, however, that Paul can also speak of justification as a future divine verdict in the last judgment. Some theologians have ignored or denied this eschatological aspect of Paul's theology, yet it forms a fundamental part of the New Testament message of salvation. In continuity with the Hebrew Scriptures, Paul declares concerning the last judgment: "God will give to each person according to what he has done" (Rom. 2:6; cf. Ps. 62:12). "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous" (Rom. 2:13).

The apostle is dealing here not with merely external law observance but with the internal commitment of grateful obedience; not with works of the law, but with the fruits of faith that are pleasing in God's sight.⁴ Paul's idea of a future justification as the ultimate verdict of God is in harmony with Christ's declarations in Matthew 7:21; 25:34-40, and with those of James in James 1:22, 25; 2:12. Paul points to the Christian's future justification again in his letter to the Galatians: "But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope" (Gal. 5:5); or, translated more literally: "For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness" (RSV).

The righteousness Paul waits for with assurance is the final ratification or verdict of acquittal in the divine judgment.⁵ What will count in that day is not works done to comply externally with the law, but works done in Christ; that is, works of faith through the Holy Spirit. Paul explains that faith in Christ is not ethically indifferent but is fruitful in love: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing

Discussion questions:

1. Why must full salvation include more than pardon of sins?
2. In what way does the Old Testament priest's judgment on presented offerings help us understand the concept of imputed righteousness?
3. How does God's message delivered by Zechariah link sanctification with justification?
4. Were the righteous ones in Israel absolutely sinless? If not, why were they called righteous?
5. What does the Sabbath have to do with sanctification?
6. Does God credit us with righteousness because of our works?
7. How can human beings "become the righteousness of God"?
8. What is the significance of baptism in relation to justification and sanctification?
9. What does it mean to "work out your own salvation" (Phil. 2:12, KJV)?

self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23). Paul finally places the whole sanctified life in the scrutinizing light of the final judgment: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap *destruction*; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap *eternal life*. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Gal. 6:7-9).

Paul is saying that the coming harvest—God's final verdict—will correspond to our moral sowing.

According to Paul, God will ultimately judge us according to the harvest of our appropriation and application of the gospel. Our thinking and acting shape our individual characters—for which we are held responsible. Growth in holiness and well-doing is the Christian's sacred responsibility (see Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13; Titus 2:11-13; 2 Pet. 1:4-11; 3:11, 18). The sanctified life will be taken as evidence of saving faith on the day of judgment (Rom. 2:7).

Consequently, present justification does not exempt the Christian from the final judgment. The justified believer is called to continue to "work out," that is, to actualize salvation in holy "fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Working out salvation does not mean working for salvation, but making salvation practical. Justification must be demonstrated by a

sanctified life that reveals deliverance from the bondage of sin and self.

The statement that Paul makes immediately following what he says about working out our salvation reveals that God generates in the believer both the will to live right and the effective power to do so: "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13). Because God energizes true believers constantly, they can respond to Him with moral rectitude. While the Christian's life will be "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:11), we need to realize that these fruits of good works are generated by God Himself: "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6; cf. Eph. 2:8-10). ■

¹ See in H. LaRondelle, *Deliverance in the Psalms* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: First Impressions, 1985), pp. 149-156.

² See H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 151.

³ See Ivan T. Blazen, *Death to Sin According to Romans 6:1-14* (Princeton, N.J., 1979), p. 383.

⁴ See C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans, International Critical Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 155; H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), p. 180.

⁵ H. N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia, New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1965), p. 189.

itself through love" (Gal. 5:6). "Keeping God's commands is what counts" (1 Cor. 7:19).

"A new creation" (Gal. 6:15) proves itself in the fruit of the Spirit, expressed as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and

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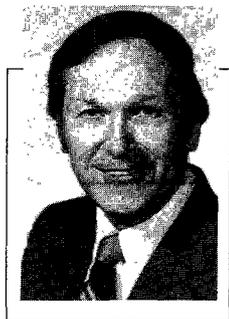
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Lessons from 1888 for 1988 leaders

Floyd Bresee

**What does 1888
have to say to us
about relationship
and obedience, the
cognitive and the
affective, conflicts
between the young
and the old,
reformers and the
church?**



Floyd Bresee, Ph.D., is the secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association.

Church leaders of 100 years ago have often been accused of failing to lead the church as it should have been led in 1888. There is a far more important question, however. Will 1988 church leaders learn the lessons from a century ago and lead the church now as God wanted it led then?

And whom do we mean when we speak of leaders? We must go beyond administrators and include pastors, local elders, and church board members. If the local congregation is the heart of the church, then surely the pastor and local leaders are the principal leaders in the church. Here are some suggested lessons from 1888 for 1988 church leaders. Most are based on articles in this issue of *Ministry*.

Lessons about theology

Righteousness by faith is basic to Adventism. Any modern Adventist leader who has given righteousness by faith only cursory attention, thinking it dealt just with our past or was merely something for the more cerebral to split hairs over, misunderstands Adventism. Ellen White has said Justification by faith "is the third angel's message in verity."¹ She surely did not consider it peripheral.

When theological waters get too deep or too tempestuous, we do well to go to her succinct definition of what righteousness by faith is all about: "Righteousness is obedience to the law. The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in

which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness."²

True Adventism balances the cognitive and affective, knowledge and feeling, theory and experience. Prior to 1888 the *Review* was devoted almost exclusively to proving doctrine. Many church leaders considered Bible study as merely the means of making certain they had the doctrines right and could prove them forcefully.

We had become a denomination of debaters. Nobody could prove his doctrines better than the Adventists. Yet our debaters were winning their debates and losing their Christian experience. For them, proof had replaced prayer. Argument had overshadowed experience.

Some today seem to teach that an understanding of righteousness by faith will guarantee revival in the church. Not necessarily. It takes more than an argument to revive a church. The real issue of 1888 was whether or not the church could move beyond argument to experience. The church of 1988 must succeed where the church of 1888 failed—in striking a balance between those two.

True Adventism balances relationship and obedience. In 1888 Adventism was part of a society where, on the whole, law was respected and obedience was expected. No wonder law and obedience were

emphasized in the church. In 1988 Adventism is part of a society emphasizing loving relationships and individual freedom, a society that tends to wink at permissive behavior. No wonder relationships have become more important and permissiveness more acceptable in the church.

It is terribly dangerous to concentrate on obedience to Christ and neglect relationship with Him. It is equally dangerous to concentrate on relationship and neglect obedience. The devil doesn't care one bit whether the Advent movement goes into the ditch on the right side of the road or the left. But he is bound and determined to get us off the center. Ellen White pulls us toward that center by insisting, "We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith."³

Righteousness by faith will always be difficult to teach, because society programs people against it. Righteousness by faith teaches that when we accept Christ, He saves us before we've done anything to deserve it—*reward precedes work*. Adventists aren't the only ones who find this sequence difficult to comprehend. All of society operates on the completely opposite assumption that *work precedes reward*. At home, mother gave us the cookie *after* we had been good. In school, we got the grade *after* we finished the course. On the job, we get paid *after* we do our work.

Like it or not, our theology tends to grow out of our sociology. Most Christians will tend to revert back to believing that work precedes reward. It's the way just about everything else in life operates. Others, reacting against life and their "works" background or reflecting their permissive upbringing, will always want to presume that righteousness by faith teaches that *reward eliminates work*.

Lessons about group relationships

Our effectiveness as leaders depends less on what we say than on how we say it. Teaching the right message with the wrong methods gets wrong results. The two young proponents of righteousness by faith in 1888 illustrate this lesson.

E. J. Waggoner was a physician turned preacher. He was short in stature, scholarly, and refined. But he was seldom accused of being humble. A. T. Jones was a former Army sergeant. He was tall and Lincoln-esque in build, self-educated, and highly opinionated. He tended to be

a bit abrupt and even harsh with people.

Some who opposed their message later admitted they had felt they were being "clubbed," especially by Jones. How different might the story of 1888 be if the methods and personalities of Jones and Waggoner had not interfered with their presentations—or if their listeners had been more successful in looking beyond the messengers to their message.

The amount of truth a group discovers depends less on the arguments presented than on the climate in which they are presented. The climate of 1888 was one of disunity and argument. The institute opened with an argument over whether it was the Alemanni or the Huns that were represented by the tenth horn in Daniel. The righteousness by faith doctrine grew out of studies from Galatians, but there was strong disagreement over whether the law referred to in Galatians 3 was the ceremonial law, as the old guard claimed, or the moral law, as Waggoner argued. In addition, Waggoner insisted that Christ was "all the fulness of the Godhead," while many of the pioneers believed Christ's life was actually a "derived life."

Like a fog, an argumentative spirit settled over the beautiful doctrine of righteousness by faith, obscuring it to such an extent that many simply could not see it. Members of a group must learn to like each other before they can learn much of anything from each other.

Young and old workers need each other. At the 1888 conference the most powerful opposition to Jones and Waggoner came from Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review*, and G. I. Butler, president of the General Conference, who was absent but let his stand be known via telegraph. It wouldn't have been easy for Smith and Butler, who were 56 and 53, respectively, to take instruction from the 38- and 33-year-old Jones and Waggoner. But the fact remains that the proud, opinionated, younger men were basically right.

It is still hard for older workers to take instruction from the younger. But it is important. Young ministers are usually in pastoral positions. Older leaders may not have been as close to the local church and its needs for many years, and the wisest ones know that the younger men are worth listening to.

Youth needs the wisdom of age, but age needs the vitality and idealism of youth. A young man can grasp a new truth with excitement and enthusiasm. If an older man is to espouse new truth, he

must first reject the old error he's taught for years—and that's hard to do. Butler and Smith testify to that.

O. A. Olsen, who was elected at the 1888 conference to replace Butler as General Conference president, later quoted Ellen White as saying that it was the younger workers who should "plan, devise, and execute" while looking to the older workers as "counselors and guides."

The higher we rise and the older we grow, the more defensive we become of the status quo. Of course, not all leaders are guilty. The temptation and tendency, however, are very real. Those who successfully resist are especially to be admired and respected.

G. I. Butler, as president of the General Conference, and Uriah Smith, as editor of the *Review* for nearly 25 years, instantly and instinctively defended the status quo. They were both honest and astute men dedicated to the church. Both later accepted righteousness by faith. At first, however, both were so busy defending orthodoxy that they failed to grasp new truth.

This is the temptation for all leaders, whether in 1888 or 1988, whether in a conference/mission office or in the local church. The present state of things has brought us our position and a certain degree of power. Change threatens these. And so, although we tend to deny these reasons, those of us who are leaders often find it hardest to accept new ideas. There is a time to defend. But our church does take a firm stand in favor of progressive truth. Leaders now, like leaders in 1888, will actually hurt the church if they spend so much effort defending what is that they cannot hear what *ought to be*.

Lessons about the nature of reform

Reformers are seldom completely right—or wrong. Reformers need to remember they are seldom completely right. It is a mistake to insist that the 1888 teaching of Jones and Waggoner on righteousness by faith contains all the 1988 church needs on the subject. While they made a distinct contribution, theirs was only a beginning, and not without problems. Ellen White agreed with their overall emphasis, but not with all their theology or every scriptural interpretation. They tended to emphasize righteousness as subjective and infused within the individual. This paved the way for their later acceptance of pantheism.

Leaders need to remember, however,

that reformers are seldom completely wrong. Anyone able to gain the attention and support of sizable groups over a considerable period of time, whether or not he has the truth, has something people want. Leaders who feel the reformer is wrong must find a right way to meet the need the reformer is meeting.

Reformers tend to have tunnel vision. Fundamental and all-encompassing as righteousness by faith is, those who look on it as everything and the only thing should be warned by the eventual apostasy of Waggoner and Jones. It is possible to concentrate on even the most beautiful doctrine and emphasize it so exclusively that our Christianity becomes unbalanced. This kind of singular emphasis led Martin Luther to reject the book of James.

Waggoner eventually developed a permissive theology that excused his romantic relationship with a woman other than his wife, the dissolution of his marriage, and his wedding the other woman. Both Jones and Waggoner sided with Kellogg in the Battle Creek schism of 1903.

Being a reformer is terribly dangerous. The natural thing is to become engrossed in the one area you're reforming to the neglect of everything else. Overemphasizing even the very best can be very bad. It's like the one-eyed deer who, because of her handicap, was frightfully nervous about being surprised by an enemy. She found a large meadow protected by a river and two high cliffs. She was sure that if she kept her good eye turned toward the opening between the cliffs, she would be watching the only place danger could come from. One day a hunter drifted down the river in his canoe and shot her. She had been so certain that she knew where the danger lay, and had concentrated so exclusively on that one area, that the enemy easily slipped up on her blind side.

Trust Ellen White. Years of time and countless researchers have proved that hers was the most perfect balance between argument and experience, between defending the old landmarks and stepping out for new light. Only she seems to have had a full understanding of what was happening in 1888.

Where did she gain such exceptional insight? Not from counseling with other leaders, for at first most were wrong. Not from reading a book, for the book hadn't been written. God was at work.

The church has not completely failed. Critics of the church are right in saying

that it has not done all it should do or been all it should be since 1888. But shame on them for implying that it has known only failure since then.

The church has surely grown in size. There were fewer than 100 delegates to that General Conference session. Today delegations are so large we can no longer meet in a little church, but seek out the world's largest arenas for our General Conference sessions. In 1890 there were fewer than 30,000 Seventh-day Adventists in the world. Today there are more than 5 million. The church is praying that God will lead us into baptizing 2 million precious souls between 1985 and 1990, and I invite those who say the church is failing to become a part of that success.

Now, size isn't everything, but surely no one would say God has not been blessing His church. And would we not agree that Adventist theology and Adventist preaching are much more Christ-centered today than before 1888? The church has not succeeded as it should in awakening from its Laodiceanism, and that is not to be taken lightly. The church has not completely succeeded, but neither has it completely failed.

Lessons about personal renewal

What the church needs most is not more proofs or plans, but more power. With all its admirable organization and institutions, the church today is tempted to rely on its own plans for doing God's business. It does need plans, programs, and an expanded understanding of truth. The Holy Spirit does not replace plans. But we must never allow a reliance on plans to replace our reliance on the Holy Spirit. Depending more on our own plans than on Holy Spirit power for fulfilling the gospel commission violates the very principle on which salvation by faith is based. It leaves the church engrossed in works.

Leaders must not merely understand righteousness by faith. They must experience it. Those who say that the church rejected righteousness by faith 100 years ago and that what the church needs now is to accept it are only partially right. Some church leaders did accept it in 1888. And among those who remained as leaders, nearly all accepted it in the years just following. Most of those who did not, gradually faded out of the leadership picture.

The movement toward support began with such leaders as S. N. Haskell, G. B.

Discussion question:

Look through the lessons emphasized in this article. How are you relating to those that apply most directly to you?

Starr, A. T. Robinson, M. C. Wilcox, W. W. Prescott, and W. C. White. It eventually broadened to include those who had at first been so vocal in opposition—J. H. Morrison, Smith, and Butler.

Jones, Waggoner, and Ellen White were invited by the church to travel far and wide sharing the message, especially between 1888 and 1891. Both men were given considerable responsibility in the church. Jones eventually became editor of the *Review*, with Uriah Smith as his assistant. A. V. Olsen, elected General Conference president in 1888, served until 1897 and enthusiastically fostered ministerial institutes emphasizing righteousness by faith.

The problem following the 1888 meeting was not so much those who refused to accept righteousness by faith, but those who accepted it without experiencing it or who experienced it but failed to continue in that experience. The question for leaders today is not so much whether or not we have accepted righteousness by faith, but whether or not we are experiencing it. It must become, for each of us, not a theory to ponder, but a closeness with Christ to experience.

Ministers must lead the way to revival. How is it with you, my fellow minister? As you lead out in the 1988 commemoration of 1888, are you experiencing what you're teaching? Are you practicing what you're preaching? Are you coming closer to Christ?

Our relationship with Him grows in the same way as does a relationship with anyone else—through time spent together. We must stop pretending we don't have time. Of course we're busy. A minister never gets everything done. But remember, we nearly always find time for things most important to us and almost never find time for things least important. Our first priority must be a closer love relationship with Christ, and love takes time.

¹ *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890. Footnotes in this article refer to the writings of Ellen G. White.

² *Ibid.*, Nov. 4, 1890.

³ *Steps to Christ*, p. 61.

From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones

George R. Knight, *Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1987, 288 pages, \$16.95, hardback. Reviewed by Lyndon McDowell, a pastor in the Washington, D.C., area.*

It has been a long time since I have enjoyed reading a book on denominational history as much as I enjoyed this one. The book is one of the 1888 centennial series published by Review and Herald. It reads like a novel.

Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the names of Waggoner and Jones have been linked inseparably with the doctrine of righteousness by faith. Various groups appeal to these men's writings to support a wide variety of emphases. But very little detail has been known or published about their lives. George Knight has brought Jones out of the shadows of history and into the light. He correctly portrays him as "one of the most fascinating personalities ever to grace a Seventh-day Adventist pulpit." Jones was also one of the most controversial preachers the church has had.

But George Knight has done more than bring Alonzo Jones out into the limelight of history. He has brought into focus many issues in Adventist theology that are still with us today. He lists them in the preface to the book: "the meaning of the 1888 General Conference session, the problem of 1893 and the delay of Christ's return, the nature of sanctification, the Adventist holiness movement, charismatic gifts, the role of Ellen White, the human nature of Christ, the Adventist crusade against a Christian America, church and state relationships, and the proper function of church organization." As the author remarks, "the biography of A. T. Jones is not merely a fascinating story, but is pregnant with contemporary meaning."

Every minister who aspires to join in contemporary discussions should read this book to understand the setting of the issues. A careful reading should make the dogmatic more tolerant and awaken the indifferent to the root causes of the issues discussed today. It may also persuade some who have a flair for independence that what they regard as God-given zeal for reform may actually be only a personality aberration!

1888 Re-examined: 1888-1988, the Story of a Century of Confrontation Between God and His People.

Revised by the original authors, Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short, *The 1888 Message Study Committee, 2067 Combie Road,*

Meadow Vista, California 95722, 1987, 213 pages, \$7, paper. Reviewed by C. Mervyn Maxwell, Andrews University.

You may not agree with everything in it, but this book deals with an important topic. It is a crusading book. The original edition was almost too intense to read. But the new edition speaks lovingly of wayward brethren, hopefully of an erring church, and thankfully of God's invitations to repent.

Mercifully, no mention is made of "corporate repentance" and very little of the "sinful nature of Christ," terms that have been stumbling blocks to many erstwhile Wieland and Short admirers.

In order to understand what people say, we need to know where they're "coming from." This is especially true when people say crusading things.

So where are the authors of this crusading book coming from? Robert Wieland and Donald Short prepared the manuscript that became the original edition of 1888 *Re-examined* for review by a General Conference study committee. The occasion was the dismay they felt over certain features of the 1950 General Conference session, which they had attended as career missionaries on furlough from Africa. What bothered them at the 1950 session was what they perceived as a contrast to what had happened in 1888 and a similarity to what had happened in 1893.

Wieland in particular had been immersing himself in the writings of E. J. Waggoner and the sermons of A. T. Jones, and digging into what Ellen White had said about Waggoner's 1888 messages and about Waggoner and Jones themselves.

At the 1950 General Conference session Wieland and Short heard a newly elected official urge the delegates to "double our membership" during the upcoming quadrennium—and to receive latter-rain power to accomplish this worthy goal by simply believing that they received the latter rain. This sounded all too similar to what the young missionaries knew W. W. Prescott had urged the delegates at the 1893 session to believe.

But merely believing that they had received the latter rain had not given the 1893 Adventists power to preach the "loud cry" that was to enlighten the world with God's glory, and the authors saw no reason to expect anything different in 1950. Rather, Wieland and Short urged the leaders, we should go back to the 1888 session.

At the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session, they said, a message was presented that Ellen White had specifically alluded to as the beginning of the loud cry of

Revelation 18:1-4—just the thing the General Conference officer was looking for. She had called it "the third angel's message," and had pointed out that it presented "justification through faith in the Surety" in a way that led to "obedience to all the commandments of God." It was an intensely Christ-centered message that exalted the cross and led to heartfelt repentance for sin, thus helping people meet a principal condition for receiving the latter rain.

Wieland and Short mimeographed only 17 copies of their 204 page study, intending it only for the eyes of leadership. But someone shared a copy with someone else, and soon people here, there, and everywhere were typing full-length copies for themselves and for their friends. In time, first one printer and then another distributed copies by the thousand.

The circulation of the first edition of 1888 *Re-examined*, plus the circulation of the books written to refute it, and of news about the committees that met from time to time to discuss the situation, along with the career of Robert Brinsmead, who made his own use of 1888 *Re-examined*, contributed so much to today's interest in 1888 that it seems correct to say that Wieland and Short are responsible more than anyone else now living for current interest in 1888.

Wieland and Short assert emphatically that the 1888 message is not the same message of righteousness by faith taught by Luther, Wesley, the Keswick confreres, Hannah Whitall Smith, or the Victorious Life people, all of which, they say, have been preached by Seventh-day Adventists. It cannot be so, they insist, if it is the third angel's message and combines the faith of Jesus with obedience to all the commandments of God.

Another of the authors' concerns is that many Adventist leaders and writers have tried to prove that 1888 was a grand triumph, that only a few leaders opposed the message, and that even they soon accepted it.

In reply, 1888 *Re-examined* marshals documentation to show that in 1902 Ellen White reported that she had been "instructed that the terrible experience [not the glorious message!] at the Minneapolis Conference is one of the saddest chapters in the history of the believers in present truth." Elsewhere she said that the spirit that prevailed among church leadership at the 1888 meeting was one of rejecting the message, that the denominational leadership there revealed the spirit of those who drove Jesus out of Nazareth, indeed, the spirit of Satan himself. She regretfully observed that some of the principal con-

fessions made by leaders after Minneapolis were not deep enough to expunge their roots of bitterness.

In the early 1970s Emmett K. Vande Vere, Richard W. Schwarz, and I were appointed by a General Conference committee to look into the historical aspects of Wieland and Short's position. We concluded unanimously that though we didn't like the way these men sometimes said things, their analysis of history was quite accurate. But their perception of the content of the 1888 message was not as accurate.

The book has its weaknesses. It is less gloomy than the first edition, but it is hardly sunny. *Testimonies to Ministers* seems sunnier even though it is just as serious. Wieland and Short defend Waggoner and Jones too much, I think. Compared with some of the brethren they were gentlemanly, I'm sure, but I doubt that I would have been comfortable discussing things with the sharp debater (Waggoner) who wrote *The Law in the Book of Galatians*.

One inaccuracy shows up when Wieland and Short refer repeatedly to the 1888 message as the beginning of "the latter rain and of the loud cry." The loud cry is understandably a message, and there is Ellen White's authority for applying the term to the 1888 message. But I don't understand how a message could be the latter rain. In support of this concept, they have only the words of A. T. Jones.

At the 1893 General Conference session an Ellen White statement promised that the 1888 experience will "sometime" "be seen in its true bearing with all the burden of woe that has resulted from it." Wieland and Short hope that that "sometime" is near at hand. They hope that the revised 1888 *Re-examined* will prove to be a contribution in due season.

The Unknown Prophet

Delbert W. Baker, *Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1987, 160 pages, \$12.95, hardback. Reviewed by Ella M. Rydzewski, editorial secretary of MINISTRY magazine.*

This is a book that deserves close attention in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Five years of thorough research have gone into this biography of a remarkable pioneer in the Advent movement. The life of William Foy, a young Black minister from New England, has been little understood by church members. He has frequently been confused with Hazen Foss, who rejected God's calling as a prophet. William Foy did not reject his calling, but between the years of 1842 and 1844 faithfully filled his special role as a messenger to God's people. Though Foy was a humble man, he proved a powerful and insightful preacher as he spoke in various churches about his experience. He received his first vision at a racially integrated prayer meeting in Boston on January 18, 1842. What is known of this and his following visions is movingly described. (According to Ellen White, Foy had four visions, but nothing is known of the last one.) It is felt

that had people understood the implications of the visions, they may have been spared, or at least prepared for, the great disappointment of 1844.

After the Disappointment Foy heard Ellen White speak, and the two shared their experiences. Shortly after this, Foy dropped out of the public eye, possibly fearful of detracting from the work that had passed to Ellen White. His later years were spent quietly in pastoral work in rural areas.

This is a story that should be read and reflected upon by Seventh-day Adventists. It represents assurance of God's personal interest in His people and can motivate them to needed revival and preparation for the awesome times ahead.

The Lord's Day

Compiled by James P. Westberry, *Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 287 pages, \$8.95, paper. Reviewed by Clifford Goldstein, editor of Shabbat Shalom.*

The year 1888 is important in Adventism, but another group is celebrating that centennial too. The Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, the "only national organization whose sole purpose is the maintenance and cultivation of the first day of the week as a time for rest, worship, Christian education, and spiritual renewal," in commemoration of their 100-year anniversary, has published *The Lord's Day*. Compiled by the executive director of the Lord's Day Alliance, Dr. James P. Westberry, the book is composed of 30 articles, sermons, and talks given by pastors and laymen over the years on the "Christian" Sabbath.

It is fascinating reading for Seventh-day Adventists. Despite the small technicality of having chosen the wrong day, the book makes good points about Sabbath observance. Fredrick Harris, talking about a person who hoed corn on the "Sabbath," wrote: "There is a penalty for planting and hoeing corn on Sunday, but it does not show in the corn; it shows in the person."

Unfortunately, the book is filled with the usual polemics for Sundaykeeping—the same tired texts, reasoning, and arguments about the resurrection, the breaking of bread on the first day of the week, etc. In one of the shorter chapters, "Evidence for Sunday Worship," Richard W. DeHaan assures his readers that a small minority in Christendom insists "upon keeping Saturday as the weekly Sabbath." Of all his arguments, the most meaningless was that at the "conclusion of that church council [Acts 15], the Gentile Christians were advised to abstain from certain things—but not one word was said about keeping the Sabbath." Obviously the same could be said of any of the other commandments.

More than once, the idea comes through that Sunday is the Lord's day, and that America needs laws to protect it. Said one contributor, "I may have 'blue laws' embedded into my veins, but I can't help it."

The Lord's Day may be comical in places, but it can be chilling in others.

Be My Witnesses: The Church's Mission, Message, and Messengers

Darrell L. Guder, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1985, 236 pages, \$10.95, paper. Reviewed by Dr. DeWitt S. Williams, associate director, Health and Temperance Department, General Conference.

The author of *Be My Witnesses* has served as college administrator, pastor, and professor in the United States and Europe. From this broad experience he brings us an image of the church as a blemished and disappointing movement, but one that God is not finished with yet. It can still reveal who Christ is and what He does. Scripture is the written witness, and human beings His visible witnesses.

The saints who make up the church within the grand sweep of salvation history are agents by whom the message of God's reconciling actions will be made known to the world. At Pentecost His church was empowered, and is still empowered, to carry out its assigned mission. This is in spite of the vast institutions of today, characterized by their familiar drawbacks: complexity, bureaucracy, power brokering, politics, resistance to change, commitment to status quo, etc.

Guder points out that the church should be more like the tabernacle than the temple of the old covenant. The temple is unmovable, a center for religious activity. It tends to be an end in itself, a massive, expensive, complex institution whose commitment is to its own continuation. Tabernacles, however, are unique as an expression of faith. The tent of the old covenant was not permanent, but moved with the people wherever they followed God's leading into new territory. The tabernacle constantly focused people upon God's actions, His presence in their midst, His will and direction.

Emphasizing the church's need to be in the world but not of the world, Guder looks at that strategic comma (Eph. 4:11, 12). The comma indicates that the organizational chart of the church should be an inverted pyramid, with the broader section at the top representing members, while the specialized ministers should be servants of the servants of God. The hope, too, is that members will come to understand themselves, not as consumers of religious services, but as partners in ministry.

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