

“Watchman, what of the night ?”



“The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!” Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

► THIS ISSUE'S READING

“THE PERSISTENT BELIEF IN A FORM OF 'CORPORATE CALVINISM' THAT CONTINUES TO EXIST WITHIN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MOVEMENT ” Pg. 2

Editor's Preface

During the last few months, the Iowa Foundation has been in the process of updating our office computers and associated equipment. This has proved to be a somewhat laborious and time consuming task thereby hindering the projected preparation of this bimonthly's issue of WWN. Accordingly, this editor decided that now would be an excellent time to present some material gleaned from past issues of the thought paper written by Elder William H. Grotheer on a topic that still agitates consternation and concern among many in the S.D.A. community. This involves the question of whether or not the remnant church - meaning and near universally defined as the S.D.A. institutional organizational church structure - is unconditionally going through to the end. I personally have observed, in a number of settings and circles, that an increasingly growing number of our brethren that hold membership in the Adventist denominational church structure appear to more adamantly believe this presently than previously. And to be perfectly frank and clear, practically all seem to be honest, sincere, and even confident that their position on this matter is actually biblical.

Disturbingly, what many, if not most, in the Adventist community fail to discern is that this thinking forms the basis for a theoretical understanding of soteriological (salvational) theology that is known as Calvinism. Seventh-day Adventists, for the most part throughout their history, have rejected the Calvinistic model of how salvation



works as unscriptural. Yet, elements of this soteriological reasoning have been making substantial inroads into our theological orientation for quite some time now. The view that, supposedly, God has a special, irrevocable covenant with the S.D.A. church (again meaning the denominational structure) that He cannot break, nor will He disavow that (essentially unconditional) covenant, no matter what falsehood, evil, or sin is accepted, practiced and supported within the Adventist church structure, is fundamentally a type of corporate Calvinism. Moreover, it appears to be foundational in allowing other Calvinistic teachings penetration into our doctrinal paradigm, thereby adversely influencing our more biblical overview of what constitutes truth. The scriptural proverbial injunction: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Galatians 5: 9) is an appropriate observation in this regard.

The following articles, sourced primarily from material written by Elder Grotheer, are being re-presented with the hope and prayer that the truly faithful among us, by God's grace, will cease being caught up in this highly deceptive and dangerous falsehood. Comments of the present editor interspersed throughout the text are italicized within brackets.

“ Is Corporate Calvinism Biblically Sound? ”

[Definitions] —

The question - "Can the Church Fail?" - answered in the light of Scripture, is a resounding - "No!" Why? It has been built "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." (Ephesians 2: 20). But when we seek to define the Church at any one period in human history in the terms of "a visible organization" charged with a God-given responsibility, the answer to the question changes. It can fail.

Calvinism, the name given to a theological

concept, dominates, with more or less rigidity, the doctrine of a large section of Protestant churches. It has become synonymous with the notion of "once saved - always saved," a perception rejected by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as unbiblical. John Calvin asserted that God had from eternity foreordained all things that should come to pass, so that some individuals were predestined, or "elected", to eternal salvation and others predestined, or "reprobated" to eternal punishment. The elect were made willing to be saved by God's grace which was irresistible. They were regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and once saved always saved. The saved ones could not finally fall away from a state of grace.

[In contrast] The Bible teaches that God, prior to creation, foreordained the divine provision for man's redemption, and that He desires that all men should be saved (2 Timothy 1: 9; Titus 1: 2). This is Biblical predestination. God does foresee each individual's choice that will be made, but His foreknowledge does not determine what that choice shall be. All who choose to believe in Christ shall be saved, with human choice *[aided by God's (prevenient) grace which empowers them to make the choice, but does not make it for them]* being the determining factor (Deuteronomy 30: 15-19; John 1: 12).

Frankly ... it (is) quite contradictory and strange for the Church and most of the "historic" independent ministries, to reject the Calvinistic concept of unconditional election and predestination (also known as "once saved, always saved"), as applied to the individual Christian, but then turn around and apply the "once saved, always saved" concept to the institutional S.D.A. church. It is absurd and ridiculous for S.D.A.'s to contend that, while an individual Christian may fall from God's grace and eventually be lost without true repentance, a church structure can never fall from God's favor and grace, no matter what is corporately allowed.

“ Can The Church Fail? ”

This question was asked and an answer was attempted by Dr. Robert W. Olson in a [*then*] recent Adventist Review (Oct. 3, 1991, pp. 11-13).¹ The whole thrust of the article was to assure the readers of the church paper that the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a corporate, visible structure would not fail. That there be no misunderstanding that he was talking about a corporate, visible Church, Olson plainly stated in his first footnote - "It therefore must be a visible organization"² - referring to the "remnant" of Revelation 12: 17; and that "visible organization" will go "safely into the heavenly port"² was his final conclusion.

The body of this article consisted of "an analysis of Ellen White's statements about the church and its leaders." Before noting Olson's distortions and misuse of the Writings - and he should have known better having served as secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate - let us take a good look at the message found in the Scriptures.

Nowhere in the Bible is it taught that once saved, always saved. Neither is it taught, once called, always called. If ever a people were called of God, the children of Israel were. For centuries, God bore long with the rebellion and apostasy of His chosen people. Finally after sending prophets and wise men, He sent His only begotten Son. This Son came unto His "own things" - so close was the attachment perceived - but His "own people" (John 1: 11, Greek)³ by their deliberate decision and choice received Him not. To that people, Jesus had to finally say - "Your house is left unto you desolate." (Matthew 23: 38). The temple was the centerpiece of the "visible organization" of the Jewish Church. The Lord of glory could not save the temple, nor turn the Jewish Church around.

In the prophetic picture of Laodicea, Jesus

is ever pictured as standing outside the door, knocking. He never gains entrance. Only to the individual (Greek: *tis, tis* - "anyone") who opens the door does Jesus come in to "sup with him." (Revelation 3: 20). Corporate Laodicea never opens the door.

Ellen G. White in a letter to Elders Butler and Haskell, dated December 8, 1886, wrote very pointedly concerning the relationship between the Jewish Church of Christ's day, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The letter read:

"I think of His great sorrow as He wept over Jerusalem, exclaiming, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth her brood under her wings, and ye would not!' (Luke 13: 34). God forbid that these words shall apply to those who have had great light and blessings. In the rejecting of Jerusalem it was because great privileges were abused, which brought the denunciation upon all who lightly regarded the great opportunities and precious light that were entrusted to their keeping. Privileges do not commend us to God, but they commend God to us. No people are saved because they have great light and special advantages, for these high and heavenly favors only increase their responsibility.

"The more and increased light God has given make the receiver more responsible. It does not place the receiver in any safer position unless the privileges are wisely improved, prized, and used to advance God's glory. Christ said, 'Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.' (Matthew 11: 21).

"When Jerusalem was divorced from God it was because of her sins. She fell from an exalted height that Tyre and Sidon had never

reached. And when an angel falls he becomes a fiend. The depth of our ruin is measured by the exalted light to which God has raised us in His great goodness and unspeakable mercy. Oh, what privileges are granted to us as a people! And if God spared not His people that He loved because they refused to walk in the light, how can He spare the people whom He has blessed with the light of heaven in having opened to them the most exalted truth ever entrusted to mortal man to give to the world?" (Letter 55, 1886).⁴

The first thing one needs to note concerning the above quotation from this Letter 55, 1886, is that the essential parts of the letter are *supposedly* reproduced in Selected Messages, Book 2, pgs. 376-383.⁵ But the above, which we have quoted is the section of the letter omitted after the first deletion marks on page 377. Here is a prime example of the manipulated compilations produced by the Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate since the death of Ellen White.

Secondly, it is from this letter that the oft-used quotation is to be found - "The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out - the chaff separated from the precious wheat." But the context in which this statement is made in the letter is ignored. Olson also ignores it in his article. It is talking about the Church when "Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme." It is stated in the setting when "the decree of national councils" and "the national laws" shall seek to enforce the observance of the false Sabbath. (*Ibid.*, pg. 380).⁵ That time is not now. When it does come, we will then be able better "to measure the strength of Israel."⁶ It will come as a shock to many to see how few really "concerned" Adventists there are, and how the "many voices" are merely the voices of individuals on "ego-trips," let alone the rank and file of the unconcerned Laodiceans.

Olson in his article alludes to a comment of

Ellen G. White written soon after the 1888 debacle which expressed her hope "that there would not be the necessity for another coming out." Then he comments - "This is the only known statement from the pen of Ellen White indicating she might have lost confidence in the Seventh-day Adventist Church."¹ Is he totally unaware of the above quoted omission from Letter 55, 1886? Re-read for yourself this section of the letter. What is the last sentence saying concerning the Church? Note further in the first sentence of this last paragraph - "When Jerusalem was divorced from God, it was because of her sins."⁴ Observe another reference to "the Jewish people...divorced from God." It reads:

"When Christ saw in the Jewish people a nation divorced from God, He saw also a professed Christian church united to the world and the Papacy. And as He stood upon Mount Olivet, weeping over Jerusalem till the sun sank behind the western hills, so He is watching over and pleading with sinners in these last moments of time. Soon He will say to the angels who are holding the four winds, 'Let the plagues loose; let darkness, destruction, and death come upon the transgressors of My law.' Will He be obliged to say to those who have had great light and great knowledge, as He said to the Jews, 'O that thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace. But now they are hid from thine eyes?'" (The Kress Collection, pg. 153).⁷

We need to ask ourselves, when "the plagues" are loosed, where will they fall first? The answer is plainly stated - "the church - the Lord's sanctuary - was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God." And in this pouring out of God's wrath - "Men, maidens, and little children all perish together." (5T: 211).⁸ How does this answer the question - "Can the Church Fail?"

When in 1889, Ellen White hoped that there would not be a necessity for another

coming out, she did not say there would not be. In fact, Jesus Christ Himself indicated there would be! In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, there are two "coming outs": (1) The assembling of the "ten virgins" in a unit. They (all ten) "went forth (*exelthon*) to meet the bridegroom." (Matthew 25: 1) and, (2) The cry at midnight: "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out (*exerchesthe*) to meet him." (Ibid. 25: 6). In this second "coming out," only five go out to meet the Bridegroom and go with Him "to the marriage." (Ibid. 25: 10).⁹ According to Olson, in his misapplication of the Writings, the wise virgins are "the chaff", and the foolish virgins, "the wheat," for according to him, those who separate are "chaff." This merely illustrates to what extent "blind zeal" will color the thinking of a Laodicean bent on taking the church which God has spued out through to the Kingdom. (Revelation 3: 16). This blindness is not merely limited to one man, or the present corporate leadership of the Church, but some of the major voices on the periphery of Adventism give evidence that they, too, are afflicted with this same blindness.

Olson emphasizes heavily the one statement, he uses out of context from Letter 55, 1886, about the "chaff" being separate from the "wheat" and indicates that the "wheat" remains in the "visible organization." He should know, having served as secretary of the White Estate, that there are other statements where the reverse is stated under the same figure of speech, as well as another figure. One reads - one of the earliest testimonies -

"I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, 'Fearful is his work. Awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention.'" (Early Writings, pg. 118).¹⁰

Here it clearly states - "the wheat from the tares" and *not* "the tares from the wheat." It also indicates this to be the "work" of the "third angel." By using an interpretive key which Ellen G. White indicated should be applied in studying her writings, namely, "The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture" (Selected Messages, Book 1, pg. 42),¹¹ we discover more fully the work of the third angel. This indicates that:

"The first, second, and third angels' messages are to be repeated. The call is to be given to [not, 'by'] the church [singular]: ... 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.'" (R&H, October 31, 1899).¹²

Interestingly, this statement is found in an article on "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," and harmonizes with the two "coming outs" as indicated by the Greek in Matthew 25. [*As indicated above and in footnote # 9*].

Another testimony using a different figure of speech in describing the separation, but in the same contextual setting as the statement in Letter 55, 1886, reads:

"The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. ... In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church." (5T: 81).⁸

While some may wish to quibble over the "time" indicated in this reference, a careful reading of the rest of the testimony is very apropos to the point we are considering. One challenge reads:

"God's watchmen will not cry, 'Peace, peace,' when God has not spoken peace. The voice of the faithful watchmen will be heard: 'Go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.'" (Ibid., pg. 83).⁸

Olson's article, and the description of the message which God indicates His "watchmen" will be sounding just do not coincide.

There is another amazing paragraph in the Adventist Review article by Olson. It reads:

"Already, before leaving Battle Creek for Australia, she [Ellen White] had written: '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.'" (pg. 12).¹

This statement was not written by Ellen White, but spoken by her when she addressed the 1901 General Conference session.¹³ Further, she had just returned from Australia a few months before. These historical errors are too obvious for one, who has served as Secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, to make. [The editors of the Adventist Review didn't even catch it.] We might ask, "Does this indicate the confusion of mind that God permits one to have who seeks to mitigate truth and support falsehood through manipulation of the Writings?" Is this not a warning flag that God permitted to be placed in the article so that the sincere and knowledgeable could be alerted that there was danger ahead? Should we not [*heed the words of the prophet?*]:

"My people are cut off for lack of knowledge ... " (Hosea 4: 6a, marginal reading).

[**Concluding Inspired Statements**]—

"At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it

obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." (Jeremiah 18: 7-10).

"The church cannot measure herself by the world nor by the opinion of men nor by what she once was. Her faith and her position in the world as they now are, must be compared with what they would have been if her course had been continually onward and upward. The church will be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. If her moral character and spiritual state do not correspond with the benefits and blessings God has conferred upon her, she will be found wanting. ... If her talents are unimproved, if her fruit is not perfect before God, if her light has become darkness, she is indeed found wanting. The knowledge of our state as God views it, seems to be hidden from us. We see, but perceive not; we hear, but do not understand; and we rest as unconcerned as if the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, rested upon our sanctuary. We profess to know God, and to believe the truth; but in works deny him." (5T, 83-84).¹⁴

"In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be weighed. She will be judged by the privileges and advantages that she has had. If her spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be pronounced the sentence: 'Found wanting.' By the light bestowed, the opportunities given, will she be judged." (8T, 247).¹⁵ ❖

WHG (GLP)

1. Robert W. Olson, *Adventist Review* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, October 3, 1991 - "Can the Church Fail?"), 11-13, 11, 12. <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19911003-V168-40.pdf>

2. Olson, (*Ibid.*), 13.
3. Robert Young, *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, March 1, 1989), 1390.
4. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases, vol. 12* (Silver Spring, MD: E.G. Estate, 1993 - Letter 55, 1886), 319-320, 319.
5. White, *Selected Messages, Book 2* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 376-383, 380.
6. White, *Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles, vol. 2, 1886-1892* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, "Our Present Duty and the Coming Crisis" - January 11, 1887), 105.
7. White, *The Kress Collection* (Special Testimonies: Compiled by Dr. Daniel H. Kress, Serving mammon, D.E.R. August 22, 1900), 153.
8. White, *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 211, 81, 83.
9. (Note: The two Greek verbs used come from *exerchomai*, ἐξέρχομαι, compounded from *ek* a preposition meaning, "out of," and *erchomai*, ἔρχομαι, "I come" or "I go." the first verb, *exelthon*, ἐξήλθον, is a 2nd aorist, or past tense, while the second verb, *exerchesthe*, ἐξέρχεσθε, is in the present tense, "be going out" to meet the Bridegroom).
10. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 118.
11. White, *Selected Messages, Book 1* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 42.
12. White, *Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles, vol. 4, 1899-1903* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins" - October 31, 1899), 109.
13. *1901 General Conference Daily Bulletins* (Payson, AZ: Leaves of Autumn Books, Inc., Ellen G. White, Address to Delegates at Opening Session of the 1901 G.C. Conference: "On Organization and What Was Needed" - April 2, 1901), 25.
14. Ellen G. White *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, "The Testimonies Slighted" - June 20, 1882), 83-84.
15. White, *Ibid.*, vol. 8 ("Shall We Be Found Wanting?" - April 21, 1903), 247.

*All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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