

“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

“DIVINE SALVATION PURVIEW: THE 'HEART' OF THE MATTER”

Editor's Preface

While contemplating the topic for this edition of WWN, writing an article on soteriology was decided. Soteriology is simply the doctrine of salvation; in Christianity it is particularly how salvation works through Jesus Christ. This decision became especially focused as the deadline for the release of this bimonthly's issue of the thought paper approached.

At the Wednesday evening Bible study, held at the local area Adventist church which this editor has been attending regularly, a new discussion centering on our 'Protestant Heritage' has just recently been introduced. Entitled Protestant University and made available through the Iowa-Missouri Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' website under the "Resources" tab, the presentations ("Modules") consist of a series of videos along with corresponding 'class discussion' study guides. The primary points under consideration are the five solas of Protestantism: 1.) Sola Scriptura ("Scripture Alone"), 2.) Sola Gratia ("Grace Alone"), 3.) Sola Fide ("Faith Alone"), 4.) Solus Christus ("Christ Alone"), 5.) Soli Deo Gloria ("To the Glory of God Alone").

Upon completion of the first Module's video presentation on Sola Scriptura, the issues raised and the pointed and penetrating questions asked by the video's moderator put forward to determine whether one's personal stance on this matter was in line with the Protestant position or the Roman Catholic position regarding Scripture, it was apparent that the view of some in the 'class' was



more sympathetic toward the Catholic position. After dismissal, I had a brief one to one talk with the local pastor regarding this first study and its impact on the group. I made mention of the fact that, based on my own experiences with a growing number of our own brethren both within and outside of the denominational structure, it should not be too surprising to find that quite a few Seventh-day Adventists that think they are believing and teaching the "everlasting gospel" of Revelation 14: 6 (which is the one and only true gospel set in the end-time context), are actually believing and teaching the Tridentine gospel of Roman Catholicism (or a modified version of it)!

Accordingly, the write-ups in this issue of WWN are all centered in an important area of soteriological inquiry, the condition of the human heart. The first article is a succinct biblical overview of this condition. The second article, written by sister Terrie Lambert, also shows how the carnal state of the heart relates to the "Laodicean condition." At the time that this article was written (back in the mid-1990's) Terrie, along with her husband Darren, maintained the office operations of the Adventist Laymen's Foundation in Australia.

“RIGHTEOUSNESS: Getting To The ‘Heart’ Of The Matter”

Concise Biblical Observations –

The heart. Literally, this refers anatomically to the muscular organ that pumps blood through the physical body. In the Bible, the Hebrew and Greek words translated as "heart" occur approximately 800 times. However, seldom (comparatively speaking) are they used in this literal manner. Rather the terms are used figuratively to denote the

affective center of our being and the capacity of moral preference; volitional desire, choice (attitudes, emotions, feelings, intelligence, etc.). Accordingly, Scripture makes the following declaration:

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piecing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, *and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" (Hebrews: 4: 12, emphasis added).

It is God's Word that "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Thayer, commenting on the Greek term translated "discerner" says: (κριτικός: *kritikos* - "relating to judging, fit for judging, skilled in judging: with the genitive of the object, tracing out and passing judgment on the thoughts of the mind, Hebrews 4:12).¹ *The Good News Bible* renders this phrase:

"It judges the desires and thoughts of the heart." (GNB).²

This is highly significant as that same Word testifies that:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins (mind), even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." (Jeremiah 17: 9-10).

While in context this is describing Judah's rebellious departure from the nation's covenant relationship with God in the 7th century B.C., the condition of their heart at that time, "deceitful above all things," (crooked, insidious); "and desperately wicked," (very weak / frail, incurably sick), is indicative of all humanity's "heart" problem since our fall into sin as declared by the Lord shortly after the Noachian flood:

" ... and the LORD said in his heart, I will not

again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of *man's heart is evil from his youth ...* " (Genesis 8: 21, emph. added).

Originally, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." Genesis 5: 1-2). At that time, the Lord "crowned him with glory and honour. [And] madest him to have dominion over the works of [God's] hands; [and] ... put all things under his feet." (Psalm 8: 5-6; compare with Genesis 1: 26-28). "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was *very good*." (Ibid. 1: 31, emph. added). However, when "Adam" sinned (i.e., violated a direct command of God by deliberately going contrary to His expressed will for them), "the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Ibid. 3: 7). Through this transgression, innocence gave way to guilt, shame, fear, and condemnation. The entire nature of humankind's first two parents, physically, mentally, and spiritually, became corrupted. The divine nature, with the propensities and tendencies toward goodness and righteousness (which reflected the "image" and "likeness" of the Creator), had now been contaminated, through defilement, into a carnal nature with the propensities and tendencies toward evil and wickedness (which now reflected the "image" and "likeness" of mankind's depraved self). This fallen condition spread so progressively and quickly among all the descendants of Adam that by the time of Noah the biblical text records:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his *heart* was only

evil continually ...

"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." (Genesis 6: 5, 11-12, emph. added).

The evil that resides in the heart of fallen humanity is like a pervading, crooked, incurable disease that affects our entire well being. Though the great flood did serve the Lord's purpose to put a check on the rapid spread of sin, this corrective measure was not designed to halt its progress altogether. As the descendants of Noah's three sons spread out and began repopulating the world, Holy Writ also testifies of the continuance of sin and the problem underlying it up to God's call of the patriarch Abraham (Genesis, chapters 9-11), and beyond. Centuries later, the prophet Isaiah, in speaking to the wayward people of God in his time, states:

" ... the whole head is sick, and the *whole heart is faint*. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (Isaiah 1: 5-6, emph. added).

And again, this condition of the heart, which leads to the question, "who can know it?," inspired Jeremiah to write:

"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps ...

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." (Jeremiah 10: 23; 13: 23).

Finally, in the New Testament, the apostle Paul tersely bears witness to the same truth:

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Romans 7: 18).

"Therefore (in matters of the heart) judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who ... will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Corinthians 4: 5). ❖

GLP

LAODICEA'S NEED

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1: 16-17).

The gospel is a power which saves all who believe it, or it is the Word that is powerful to rescue all who put their trust in it. The gospel is called the power of God in contradistinction to the power of man. The power of man is the ability by which man, according to his carnal opinion, obtains salvation by his own strength and performs the things which are of the flesh. This ability, God, by the cross of Christ, has utterly declared useless. He now gives us His own power by which the believer is empowered unto salvation. Man's own power must be laid in the dust, otherwise the power of God cannot operate in him. The rich and the mighty do not receive the gospel for it is written: "to the poor [in spirit] the gospel is preached." (Luke 7: 22).

It is true that whoever does not believe will be ashamed of the Gospel and contradict it in his heart and conduct, for he who finds pleasure in that which is of the flesh, cannot find pleasure in that which is spiritual. He is

not only ashamed of the preaching of the Gospel, but personally fights against it, refusing to be converted. He hates the light and loves darkness even considering the gospel to be downright stupidity for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2: 14). Therefore, he who believes the Gospel must become weak and foolish before men, in order that he might be strong and wise in the power and wisdom of God. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men ... not many wise men after the flesh ... are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and ... the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1: 25-27).

If a man has faith in his own power and strength it is nothing less than pure idolatry and heathenism. The worldly perception of a heathen is an incorrect one. The heathen is the man who doesn't know the power of God. He may be a religious person, but God is not the source of his wisdom. This is the general condition of those professing truth in these last days. They will be "lovers of their own selves," but having only "a form of godliness," they deny "the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3: 2, 5). To have a form of godliness, but to deny its power is to hold the truth in unrighteousness. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1: 18).

The sin of omitting that which is good leads to the sin of committing that which is positively evil. After showing how the heathen sinned by neglecting the power of the

true God, Paul reveals how they sinned by establishing the worship of false gods or idols. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Ibid. 1: 21-22).

Observe in the text the steps of heathen perversion: The first step in idolatry was ingratitude; he was not thankful. Whoever enjoys God's gifts as though he had not graciously received them, thus forgetting the Donor, will soon find himself filled with self-complacency. The next step is vanity: he "became vain in [his] imaginations" which caused him to delight in himself, enjoying only that which brought satisfaction to him. All his plans, efforts and endeavors expressed vanity. The third step is blindness; for deprived of truth and steeped in vanity, a man naturally becomes blind, void of feeling and perverted in thinking. The fourth step is total departure from God. This is the worst; for when a man turns totally from God, there remains nothing else for God to do but to give him up to all manner of shame and vice according to the will of Satan. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Romans 1: 28).

In the same way also, man sinks into spiritual idolatry, but of a more sophisticated kind, known as the Laodicean condition. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3: 17). Ingratitude and vanity (of one's own wisdom and righteousness) perverts a man so thoroughly that he refuses

to be reproved, thinking that his conduct is good and pleasing to God. This produces blindness, and blindness produces idolatry, and idolatry leads to a whole deluge of vices.

God, in His great mercy, has provided a Divine remedy: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." (Revelation 3: 18). Just as there are certain steps on the downward path to idolatry, so God has provided a sure path to Christ. The Laodicean needs gold tried in the fire. He needs something to restore his gratitude to God. He needs a revelation of the Cross of Christ. "If sinners can be led to give one earnest look at the cross, if they can obtain a full view of the crucified Saviour, they will realize the depth of God's compassion and the sinfulness of sin." (AA, pg. 209).³

One need look only at the evangelistic approach of the Apostles. It was twofold: 1) They emphasized the terrible crime of men in putting to death the One who so clearly demonstrated in His life that He was the Son of God. And 2) they exalted the Crucified One as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, thus holding out to repentant sinners the offer of mercy and pardon through the shed blood of Jesus. This is the precious gold which restores gratitude in the heart of the lukewarm Laodicean.

"Without the cross, man could have no union with the Father. On it depends our every hope. From it shines the light of the Saviour's love, and when at the foot of the cross the sinner looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy, for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling in faith at the cross, he has reached the highest place to

which man can attain." (AA, pgs. 209-210).³

Though the Apostle Paul did not witness the crucifixion of Christ, it is evident that the revelation on the Damascus way, together with information received from eyewitnesses, made it absolutely real to him. The cross was ever the center of his teaching and the recognized source of his power to win men. He exalted the knowledge of Christ crucified as the one supreme and indispensable truth. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2: 2).

Not only should we be grateful that the Son of God suffered and died for us, but that He was resurrected. Because of this, at the throne of God is One who understands all the feelings of our infirmities having been tempted in all points as we are. He is able through His intercession to save to the uttermost all that return to God by Him.

"We cannot appreciate our Redeemer in the highest sense until we can see Him by the eye of faith reaching to the very depths of human wretchedness, taking upon Himself the nature of man, the capacity to suffer, and by suffering putting forth His divine power to save and lift sinners up to companionship with Himself." (TMK, pg. 287).⁴

Once gratitude is restored in the heart of the Laodicean, is it possible for him to remain vain?

"Looking upon the crucified Redeemer, we more fully comprehend the magnitude and meaning of the sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven. The plan of salvation is glorified before us, and the thought of Calvary awakens living and sacred emotions in our hearts. Praise to God and the Lamb will be in our hearts and on our lips; for pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps fresh in memory the scenes of Calva-

ry." (DA, pg. 661).⁵

Our appreciation of the redemption wrought for us by the Saviour on the cross will be proportion to our realization of the depths from which we are rescued.

The Laodicean is counseled to "buy of me (Christ) ... white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed" (Revelation 3: 18). Jesus Christ "took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin." (4BC, pg. 1147),⁶ and condemning sin in the flesh, He provided for us a robe of righteousness. This the believer accepts by faith only if there is felt a need to be clothed. The Laodicean senses no need for the Righteousness of Christ so long as his vanity tells him he is in need of nothing. A look at Calvary reveals how deceitful and desperately wicked the heart of man is (Jeremiah 17: 9), how filthy our righteousnesses are (Isaiah 64: 6). It uncovers the nakedness of the Laodicean, who realizing his shame, reaches out the hand of faith and claims the white raiment so freely offered him.

'When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.'

The third step to idolatry was blindness. The eyesalve offered in the message to Laodicea is that spiritual discernment that enables him to see the wiles and deceptions of the enemy so that he can shun them; to detect sin and abhor it; and to see truth and obey it. It is the Holy Spirit that opens blind eyes to the light of truth and guides therein. The Lord in His great mercy, sent a most precious light to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones in 1888. "This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world [gold tried in the

fire]. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ [white raiment], which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. 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 [heavenly eyesalve]." (TM, pgs. 91-92).⁷

This was the Third Angel's Message in verity. Jesus was pleading with His people to leave the pathway of idolatry and return to Him. But that precious message was despised, ridiculed and rejected, which has led to a total departure from God. Corporate Laodicea is now given over to the perversions of the heathen as listed in Romans 1: 22-32. However, to the individual Laodicean, "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1: 24), stands at the door and knocks. The Gospel of Christ that is to lighten the whole earth with God's glory is calling for all to come off the pathway of idolatry to walk as did Enoch with the God who made the heavens and earth.

'O sinful man! how canst thou e'er repay

That love so deep, so infinite, so free?
Yield up to Him thy life, thy love, thine all,
In grateful homage bow thy stubborn knee. '

Terrie Lambert

1. Joseph Henry Thayer, D.D., *The New Thayer's Greek - English Lexicon Of The New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979, 1981 by Jay P. Green, Sr. - Strong's # 2924), 362.
2. *Good News Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: American Bible Society, January 1976).
3. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 209, 209-210.
4. White, *That I May Know Him* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1964), 287.
5. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 661.
6. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957; Supplementary Materials - Ellen G. White Comments), 1147.
7. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1962), 91-92.

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

"Watchman, what of the night?" is published by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc., P.O. Box 665, Nora Springs, IA 50458-0665, USA.

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