

*"Watchman,  
what of the night?"*

"BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM!  
Come out to meet Him."

(Matt 25 6 RSV)



# WHERE GOD PLACES THE PERIOD

God will not place a period on salvation history until Jesus completes His work as High Priest of the Heavenly Sanctuary. In the earthly prototype when the High Priest had "made an end of reconciling the holy, and the tabernacle, and the altar," then the live goat was brought into the picture for disposition of judgment. (Lev. 16:20) Then and then only did God place a period on the year of services. They were finished. Throughout the time in which the gospel has been proclaimed, the objective and activities of Heaven have been directed to this point of time prefigured in the earthly services. Throughout this period proclamations have been given which either clearly set forth the relationship of grace and works, or which mingled grace and works in an unholy alliance. Various theological terms have been used to describe the outworking of the salvation provided by and through Jesus Christ - justification, sanctification, the "new birth" and in Adventist nomenclature, the final atonement.

Today as a result of the study of the book of Galatians and Romans in the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Sabbath Schools, the controversy over grace and works has again risen. The officers of the South Pacific Division of the Church deemed it necessary to issue a statement in their Record (Oct. 27, 1990, p. 5) on "The Plan of Salvation as Set Forth in the Epistle to the Romans." Further, the Division's Biblical Research Committee sent representations to the General Conference charging "confusion and bias" in "the Sabbath School Quarterlies, especially in the books of Galatians and Romans."

There is an ironical twist in this whole picture. The editor of the Sabbath School lessons, Dr. Erwin R. Gane, is a native son of Australia. However, what he has permitted to be placed in the Quarterlies is questioned by the leadership of the Division. Yet when Gane served in the Religion Department of Union College, he presented in a Supplement of the Ministry (October, 1970) a study on the doctrine of the Incarnation which sought to affirm the heresy in the book, Questions on

**Doctrine.** The question, simply put, is what kind of a yo-yo game is Gane playing? Has he been swinging on a pendulum, and how far has the pendulum swung?

In the mail this week, there came a publication - Thinking Outloud (#4) - in which a comparison was made between the teachings of Martin Luther, the present controversial Sabbath School lessons, Ellen G. White, the Bible, and the teachings from the Roman Catholic Council of Trent. The bottom line of this paper was that Roman Catholic doctrine as set forth at the Council of Trent was the same or similar to that which was taught in the questioned Sabbath School lessons. In the light of the drift toward Rome since 1974, which can be documented, this charge has merit. While the visible affinity during the years has been in association, there has also been modification of our prophetic understandings. It would be no small thing to assimilate their teachings in theological areas such as soteriology.

We could get bogged down in assessing details of this present controversy, but rather than approaching the subject from that angle, we shall look at the whole picture from the message of the sanctuary, the prototype of the ministry of Jesus Christ in Whom and through Whom we have redemption. To put the question clearly so that there be no misunderstanding, are we going to put the period where God puts the period, or are we going to place the period where men in their limited perceptions have placed their periods. That we may better perceive the salvation provided by God both in Christ and through Christ, we shall discuss in three phases, God's grace to usward who believe. This is Biblical to perceive of God's provision for salvation as both "in Christ" and "through Christ." Compare Ephesians 2:6-7 and I Corinthians 15:57. Keep in mind that salvation is ever God's initiative and solely a gift from Him. God's action in us is as it was in Jesus the Example who declared - "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." (John 14:10) Why? Because it is just as with Jesus who confessed - "I can of my own self do nothing." (John 5:30) To give structure to this study of God's work of grace, we shall borrow a sentence from the Writings. It reads:

Divine grace is needed at the beginning, divine grace at every step of advance, and divine grace alone can complete the work. (TM, p. 508)

"Divine Grace...at the Beginning"

No man can forgive himself of his sins. He may ignore them; he may even deny them, but they are still there, registered against him both in the records of Heaven and in his mind and body. (Rev. 20:12; Jer. 17:1) When a man does recognize the reality of himself as a sinner, he is overwhelmed with guilt. He cannot so much as lift his eyes unto heaven, but can only cry out - "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13) God stands ready to receive and to forgive. He had provided "the redemption... in Christ Jesus" by which "He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:24, 27) In what then can I rejoice? In my works? Absolutely not! They are as filthy rags. (Isa. 64:6) In what can I have confidence that the sense of guilt may pass from me? In God's word, and His word **only**. He declares me justified. By faith, I believe, "therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom. 3:20)

God declares a sinner justified. He stands approved, accepted of God, declared righteous. "But He does something which is far better: He **removes the guilt**, so that the one formerly guilty does not need to be cleared, - he is justified, and counted as though he had never sinned." (Christ and His Righteousness, p. 64, Waggoner's emphasis) I can arise from the foot of the cross, the source upon which this great salvation, this marvelous grace, is based and rejoice with exceeding great joy knowing that I am accepted again as a son of God.

Are there any conditions? Here is where the controversy begins. The work advocates say, yes; those who advocate, grace plus nothing say, no. Jesus was asked, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" He replied - "This is **the work of God**, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." (John 6:28-29) To Jairus who had just received the report of his only child's death, Jesus comforted him with these words - "Fear not, **only believe**, and she shall be saved." (Luke 8:50 Gr.) While the daughter would be physically restored by Jesus, the same faith in Jesus grants a restoration of life to the sinner. But the condition is "only believe" in Jesus.

This condition set down by Christ and mandated by the Father - "only believe" - is anathema to the "work" advocates for salvation. However, it was taught in the typical sanctuary services. The sinner who recognized his sin, "put his hand upon the head" of the prescribed sacrifice. This Hebrew word for "put" in Leviticus is the same word for "leaned" in Amos 5:19. The

force of the word is for one to put his full weight on, or dependence in. The sinner complied with the offering prescribed and depended upon that typical substitute for a forgiveness which would restore him once again to an at-one-ment with God. (Leviticus 1:4; 4:29-31) So we, by faith, accept the Offering provided and place our full dependence in Him. We accept the gift of God's grace. Because we change our mind - repent - of the way we lived which produced sinful acts, God accepts us anew in the Beloved

Jesus enlarged this concept further in His story of the Prodigal Son. Was there a condition? Yes, "when he came to himself," he said - "I will arise and go to my father" and admit my true situation that "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." (Luke 15:17-19) But did he change his clothes? No! - he had none into which to change. He came just as he was to confess his unworthiness, his destitution, and to throw himself upon the mercies of his father. "Works" here? Yes, but really not the "works" which the "work advocates" want, but the works which the "grace only" advocates wish to avoid. The genuine "work" - note the singular in John 6:29 - required of God - the cross - is still despised and rejected. Crucifixion with Christ, the just reward of our deeds, is unwelcome, because we want our deeds to count toward our salvation. But to want grace without the cross is equally as fatal. We will not recognize the Lord as "a just God and a Saviour," and that there is no other saviour or means of salvation except through Him, which in turn involves a cross. (Isa. 45:21-22; Acts 4:12; Luke 9:23) "Divine grace is needed at the beginning."

### "Divine Grace at Every Step of Advance"

Martin Luther restored in the Protestant Reformation the Pauline concept of justification by faith, that is, a man is not justified by the deeds of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. It is at this point that the advocates of grace plus nothing want to place a period. But neither God, nor Paul echoing the purposes of God, so place a period. Walking is but a series of progressive steps forward. Paul wrote plainly - "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." (Col. 2:6) Even as by grace, we are justified by faith, so we walk with God by faith because of grace. It is just as impossible to direct our steps and walk aright as it was for us to provide forgiveness for our sins. Jeremiah of old confessed - "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself:

it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23) Every forward step as sons and daughters of God would be impossible were it not for God's grace. He alone is able to keep us from falling, from reverting back into the old patterns of sin. (Jude 24)

The walk with Christ by faith is difficult. There are those, advocating righteousness by faith, who would have you believe that it is easy to be saved and difficult to be lost. Do not be deceived by them. "The evil tendencies of mankind are hard to overcome. The battles are tedious. Every soul in the strife knows how bitter, how severe, are these contests. Everything about growth in grace is difficult, because the standard and maxims of the world are constantly interposed between the soul and God's holy standard." (FILB, p. 135)

To walk as restored sons and daughters of God requires guidance. That guidance is supplied by the Spirit of truth because of the redemption which is in the Lamb as it had been slain. (Rev. 5:6) There is not a day that comes or goes but that we need to realize anew that first experience of crucifixion with Christ, The very daily dying to self requires the power of God's grace. To walk in the light that proceeds from the Throne rather in the sparks of our own kindling, requires grace. To sense this need and to respond to God's provision is what makes a practical Christian, one who lives his religion, exemplifying in his daily life the character of Jesus.

Often we stumble and fall; often we must plead anew God's mercy. The closer we come to Jesus, the more faulty will our lives appear, the more we will sense our unworthiness and our need to rely wholly upon the merits of our Divine Intercessor. Even as Paul we will confess, I have not attained, or am already perfect: "but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus... I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12, 14 ARV) "Divine grace [is needed] at every step of advance."

### "Divine Grace Alone Can Complete the Work"

We have reached the hour and the end when God intends to send Jesus forth to bring about the restitution of all things as proclaimed through "all His holy prophets" since the reign of sin began. (Acts 3:20-21) Whether, therefore, we sleep or live till that hour, something

must be done for us so as to live eternally in an environment where affliction will not arise a second time. If we should sleep, we cannot resurrect ourselves, or change the vile body of our human existence like unto the glorious body of our Lord. (See Phil. 3:20, 21) Divine grace **alone** will accomplish the objective in those who have walked with Him day by day in their earthly sojourn.

Those who are translated without tasting death will have lived in the sight of an Holy God a brief period of time after the Divine decree has fixed human destiny. There will be no Divine-human Mediator to minister the benefits of forgiving grace during that period, for He has stepped aside. (Rev. 15:8) A work will have been accomplished in them, and that work will have been by grace **alone**.

Herein lies the tragedy of the present theological confusion. Those who would place a period after justification reject the whole rationale of a final atonement. They believe that they will keep on sinning until Jesus comes. Those who place a period after sanctification believe that through their attainments in the process of sanctification - by their life style - will have fitted them for translation. It is divine grace **alone** that can complete the work. It is so humiliating to acknowledge our poverty, to accept the final "hand-out" of Heaven. But to fail to accept the garment woven in the loom of heaven which has **not one thread of human devising** will exclude us from the marriage feast!

The very ceremony connected with the typical Day of Atonement and the laws governing the conduct of the Children of Israel on that day should tell us something. Only the High Priest accomplished for the Congregation of Israel the typical cleansing. He **alone** went into the Most Holy Place to offer blood over which no confession of sin had been made - the blood of the bullock and the blood of the Lord's goat. (Lev. 16:11, 14-15, 17) While the High Priest was in the Most Holy Place, the people were to be afflicting their souls before God. Unique to the requirements of this day, the people were to do **no** work, even as in the observance of the Sabbath. Other feast days excluded only "servile work." (Lev. 23:27-31; cmp. 23:24-25) The failure to afflict one's soul, or to perform any work, meant their severance from the household of God. These regulations and service emphasize that the final work is indeed by grace alone. In their soul affliction, they could not rely on their works, human merit. Nothing they could do would cleanse. But a failure to

recognize themselves for what they were, unclean, denied to them a cleansing.

God has been gracious to His people. Realizing the direction the Movement He inaugurated was drifting, He sent Jones and Waggoner to call them to justification by faith. He told them through His messenger that "the message of justification by faith...is the third angel's message in verity." (Review, April 1, 1890) God even defined it for them. "It is the work of laying the glory of man in the dust and doing for man that which it is not in his own power to do for himself." ("Give Me Thine Heart," Adelaide, Oct. 12, 1896) Man can neither declare nor make himself righteous. Even the process of regeneration cannot begin until man senses "what is his own real nature, that in himself he is worthless." (ibid.)

There are those teaching that the message given in 1888 was some unique message entirely different than had ever been previously given. This is simply not true. It was a message to call the Church back to the Gospel perceptions given to Paul and which had been revived by Martin Luther. It was unique in that it was a preparatory revival of righteousness by faith with the objective of getting the Church prepared to receive the fulness of the Final Atonement. For unless God's called people could understand justification by faith - "Divine grace is needed at the beginning" - they would be unable to perceive that "divine grace **alone** can complete the work," and would through a salvation-by-works program seek to accomplish the objective. Sadly, most of the "many voices" heard today in the community of Adventism are echoing the stand and position of those who were opposed to Jones and Waggoner in 1888. These "voices" are merely repeating the Roman Catholic teaching as set forth in the Council of Trent. Well did Waggoner state the issue - though concerning another Catholic doctrine - "We need to settle, everyone of us, whether we are out of the church of Rome or not. There are a great many that have the marks yet." (1901 GC Bulletin, p. 404)

### Summary

The current theological conflict generated by the recent Sabbath School lessons can be summarized as follows: There are those who perceive the true Gospel as set forth by Paul and revived by Martin Luther, but who have lost the vision of what God's objective is in the final atonement. These reject the sanctuary message which was given to this

# ENROUTE TO CANBERRA

The Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches will meet in Canberra, capital of Australia, during the month of February, this year. The Assembly theme will be, "Come Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation." As at all Assemblies since Nairobi in Kenya, invited guests will include observers from other world religions.

A sub-unit of the WCC - Dialogue with People of Living Faiths - organized a multifaith consultation in Hong Kong in August of 1990 in preparation for the Seventh Assembly. Representatives from ten of the religions of the world attended, including Buddhists, Confucians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. Also participating was a Zoroastrian, a Shintoist and a scholar of Taoism. The emphasis of this consultation was "renewal" as it related to the theme of the Seventh Assembly. At the conclusion of the meeting in Hong Kong, the participants drafted a message to the up-coming Assembly in Canberra. From this message, we will excerpt certain concepts which should have meaning for us in the light of Bible prophecy. The source of all the direct quotes will be either from the Ecumenical Press Service (90.10.41), or the parallel account in One World (November, 1990, pp. 8-9)

Quoting a saying of Buddha - "When you have crossed the river it is foolish to carry the raft on your back" - a Buddhist participant commented, "the Buddha taught us this about carrying with us that which hinders our journey." The thrust of his viewpoint incorporated in this drafted message was that "we need to set aside those things that are not essential to our faith and that have stood in the way of creative relationships between peoples of faith." It is perceived that all religions of the world "have come to a moment of truth. The time to speak and act is now, for [all] share one life on one earth."

"At no time before in history has the image of a 'global village' been so evident. A Hindu participant told us, 'We are one family. The Supreme Being granted us this gift. We belong together.' A Muslim participant reminded us, 'Biologically we all belong to one single common species. Ecologically we are a part of the one

planet's biosphere. Historically we all drink and are fed from the same subterranean streams. Culturally we are becoming increasingly multinational. Spiritually we all sense that we are embarked on a common journey.' As a people of faith we hold that there is but one source of life nourishing and sustaining the whole inhabited world. The modern communications revolution makes our interdependence clearer day by day. We face a common future or a common extinction. Our life contexts are increasingly multireligious. Dialogue between people of many faiths is the basis of our common future."

"We must scrutinize the forms of religious education in all our traditions to see what has gone wrong and how it can be rectified. The time is ripe for what in the Jewish tradition is called Teshuvah, a radical turning - repentance and renewal. From the Japanese Shinto tradition we were challenged, 'We as religious people, I believe, should repent of our ignorance and negligence and apologize to Kami, Nature and Life Itself.' We need to recognize in our neighbors the sense of the divine, spoken of in different ways in different traditions: the Shekinah in the Jewish tradition, the Holy Spirit of the Trilune God to the Christians, the Atman to the Hindus and Sikhs, the Ruh to Muslims."

The drafted message concludes by stating, "We therefore call upon people of all religious traditions to open themselves to a new pattern of working together and living out our faiths. We must be true to our own tradition but in solidarity with one another, so that we can become bearers of hope for our time."

It should be obvious to any observer that the stance taken by the WCC enroute to Canberra nullifies the thrust of the Christian witness over the centuries. If the God of the various world religions is the same God with only a different name, then modern missions had a faulty objective. Instead of proclaiming Jesus Christ as the only way and the only hope, the missionaries sent to the areas where these world religions dominate should have taken only a "social gospel" by which the living standards and life style of the adherents to these faiths might be enhanced.

Herein is a warning. Let the concept of pluralism motivate a religious entity; let the conviction of the uniqueness of the message proclaimed by that movement be relegated to a "trash heap of history," and you will see substituted for that "form of doctrine" which

## LET'S TALK IT OVER

Several weeks ago at our midweek service here on campus, we were discussing the Sabbath. The fourth commandment begins - "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." (Ex. 20:8) How can we keep the day, holy, unless we ourselves are holy? We are called to holiness. God said to Israel - "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. 19:2) Interestingly, the very next words connected with this call to holiness are - "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God." Parental respect and the observance of the Sabbath are linked with holiness. In the proclamation of the gospel, the call to holiness in all manner of life was fundamental. (I Thess. 4:7) It evidenced the contrast between the former mode of life in lust and ignorance, and the new life reflecting the One who had called them in the gospel. (I Peter 1:14-16)

The Sabbath as a day to be kept holy, free from the profanations that mark the other days of the week, sets before the observer each week the challenge to holiness of life and a conviction of how far short one is of that holiness. Can it be that we have digressed so far in our convictions of that holiness that our observance of the Sabbath reflects that digression? Have we sought to substitute a style of worship which gives an emotional satisfaction yet leaves us in a life style removed from the holiness of God? Do we worship God as did Cain according to our own "Order of Worship," rather than as did Abel, according as commanded? Nothing short of true worship - worship in Spirit and in truth - is acceptable to God.

Before even assessing the style of worship celebrated on the Sabbath which involves, at most, only a few hours of the holy day, we must settle the question as to proper observance of the whole day. First, there must be an attitude toward the Sabbath. We must "call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable." (Isa. 58:13) What we find delight in, we look forward to with anticipation. We can hardly wait to experience that delight, and this delight the Sabbath brings does not begin in an emotional experience when we gather in corporate fellowship. It begins when the Sabbath begins in "the cool of the day" as the Lord God through His Spirit draws nigh to fellowship with us whether alone or in the family circle.

Do Pharisaical rules and regulations make the Sabbath a holy day? Hardly. While each day of creation was bound in time - "and there was evening, and there was morning" - no such time delineation marks the Sabbath. The command, "from even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbaths," is written concerning the ceremonial sabbaths, not the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. (See Lev. 23:32 and compare with Gen. 2:1-3) To keep the Sabbath holy, the fellowship with the Divine must begin before the sun sets, and linger after the set of sun the following evening. The "rat race" of modern existence to see how much can be done prior to, or to get everything done one wants to do, just before the minute of sunset with the plans all laid as to what one intends to do the moment the sun sets twenty-four hours later, means only a legalistic observance of the Sabbath. Tragically, many professed Sabbath keepers today do not even adhere to a strict recognition of the 24 hour period, infringing on both the beginning and the ending hours of the Sabbath. This is interpreted as "liberty" in the Gospel. How few are the families today who gather together in worship and the reading of the Word as the sun is setting on Friday evening and linger in worship after the sun has set on Saturday evening. Yet the call to holiness is tied to both keeping of the Sabbath and the family relationship.

I recall when the Sabbath truth first came to our home, I being only a teenager at the time. Instruction was given as to how to keep the Sabbath. It was to be different from the Sunday we had observed. Never did we arise at midnight to welcome the day of the Sun. But the retired Bible Worker, who was leading my mother, sister and me through the series of Bible Studies, brought an old Hymns and Tunes for us to use. She pointed out the hymn, "Safely Through Another Week," and suggested that we sing this as we gathered for family worship as the Sabbath arrived, and then another hymn to the same tune, "Closing Sabbath, O How Soon," to be sung as we closed the sacred day. I do recall as I look back over the years, that I didn't especially sing at all times - "O how soon, have the sacred moments passed" - with joyful meaning as I should have, because there were too many times I had other things more "delightful" scheduled for Saturday night. Such a response to the Sabbath is actually encouraged in the colleges and academies of the Church when Saturday night is made the time for the key "social" event of the week.

Consider eternity when all flesh comes to

people. Then on the other side are those whose perception of the Gospel includes the Roman Catholic concepts stemming from the Council of Trent. These but vaguely perceive that there is a final atonement, but because of their perceptions of their own righteousness, they believe that they can make a contribution to God's final work through Jesus Christ. Neither extreme permits a walking in the light of God's grace that is needed to advance so that true fellowship might be realized and through the blood of Jesus, we might all be cleansed. (I John 1:7) We put periods where God puts semi-colons. When God does place His period, sadly many will be found wanting, trusting either in their own goodness and human merit, or professing a faith that is mere presumption.

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Enroute to Canberra - from p. 5, col. 2

brings deliverance from the evil one, a "gospel" whereby we seek to cure the ills of society. As a concrete example, contrast the content of the Adventist Review under the editorship of Dr. W. G. Johnsson with the Review and Herald under the editorship of F. M. Wilcox, or even Kenneth Wood. The Church has gone a long way toward embracing in a modified form the concepts of the WCC. Thus while not a member of that body, nevertheless the Church can find fellowship with them and receive the warmest greetings from them as having so much in common with them.

The book of Revelation tells us that from three great religious forces, symbolized by the dragon, beast and false prophet, mankind will be drawn into a unified command for the battle of the great day of God Almighty. (Rev. 16:13-14) We even know who will head this command against the God of Heaven. Isn't it time to recognize who are symbolized in Revelation and see them gathering together on the world stage. I am no prophet, nor a son of a prophet, but you can be assured that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will have observers at the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra along with the observers from the religions of the world. What fellowship hath light with darkness, or has all become darkness, like attracting like?

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worship before the Lord. Will we be so anxious to get back to the activities of our daily lives - perfect and satisfying as they will be - that we will watch for the closing moment of the Sabbath, or will we be loathe to leave the presence and communion with the God of the universe the Sabbath afforded us? Should not our Sabbaths now be as in the words of the hymn - "Here afford us, Lord, a taste of our everlasting feast"? If we truly realized the proper meaning and observance of the Sabbath would we need on Sabbath morning an emotional jag to satisfy our sensual perceptions and quiet the "Voice of Gentle Stillness" which would call us to true worship. "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Hab. 2:20) "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. (Ps. 95:6) "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before Him all the earth." (Ps. 96:9)

"With reverence let the saints appear,  
And bow before the Lord;  
His high commands with reverence hear,  
And tremble at His word."

Such a worshipful experience begins when we welcome the Sabbath as a delight, holy of the Lord, honorable, as the sun is setting - not set - on Friday evening.

WHG

"The most profitable meetings for spiritual advancement, are those which are characterized with solemnity and deep searching of heart; each seeking to know himself, and earnestly, and in deep humility, seeking to learn of Christ." (SG, IV, p. 153)

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Elder Wm. H. Grotheer

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