

"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)*

LAST GENERATION THEOLOGY – BIBLICAL FACT OR FANCIFUL "FICTION" ?

Editor's Preface

The concept of "Last Generation Theology" (L.G.T.) is a subject that Seventh-day Adventists have contemplated throughout most of their history. As a body of systematized doctrine, it particularly took shape in the 1930's thru the 1940's under the influence and leadership of the late Milian L. Andreassen. During this time, he was one of the Adventist Church's most prestigious theologians and a highly respected administrator, pastor, and author. He was also perhaps the most prominent denominational scholar on the sanctuary / atonement and related teachings. The belief that Christians can completely overcome sin in this life (i.e., acts of willful sin) is the core idea behind L.G.T. This notion is certainly not unique with Elder Andreassen. He drew heavily upon perceptions made by earlier Adventists, especially Elders A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner, and believed he was simply advancing these ideas to their logical conclusions. In turn, it needs to be understood that Seventh-day Adventist "pioneers" were themselves, in fact, progressing the implications of Arminianism - a soteriological (how salvation works) theology.

The two major Protestant soteriological schools of thought that have come down to our time are the "Calvinist," named after the French reformer John Calvin (1509-1564), and the "Arminianist," named after the Dutch reformer Jacob Arminius (1560-1609). Generally speaking, the root question concerning *how* God "saves" us (and ultimately all of His creation) through Jesus Christ involves a correlation and subsequent under-



standing of the relationship between God's sovereignty on the one hand, and human responsibility/freedom of will on the other. Roughly, Calvinism stresses a *monergistic* manner of salvation which believes that God's sovereignty can only be maintained through an absolute non-resistance of His will. Practically, this means that humans, in the entire salvific process, are totally passive. Any response on their part is simply the irresistible carrying out of God's already pre-determined will on the matter (whether saved or lost), which He *solely decided* before creation. Arminianism, in contrast, stresses a *synergistic* manner of salvation which believes that God's sovereignty can be maintained without sacrificing genuine human libertarian freedom. Effectively, this is accomplished by God's grace which, conditionally, empowers humans to actively exercise the choice to either follow or resist His will, which choice He *foresaw* before all creation. Both of these methods, while not necessarily opposed on every point of salvational insight, are nevertheless basically incompatible with one another.

It is not within the range of this issue of WWN to pursue the implications of these two theological approaches any further. We must be aware, however, that Calvinistic principles have been increasingly introduced into Adventist doctrinal thought for quite some time now through the advancing of "new theology." This has largely "colored" our perception of present truth (including L.G.T.) to a degree widely undetected by many within the movement. We, therefore, strongly urge our readers to do their own research on this topic for themselves.

The following article outlines a concise, biblical introduction to L.G.T.

THE BASIS FOR LAST GENERATION THEOLOGY FROM THE BIBLICAL TEXT

"In the beginning" when God "laid the foundations of the earth (and) ... When (at that time) the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God (angelic host) shouted for joy" ... "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Genesis 1: 1a, 27; Job 38: 4, 7). Other created intelligences, who had been in existence prior to and thus were present to witness God's creative activity as stated in Genesis, chapters 1-2, had themselves been created previously by God. After bringing them into existence earlier, all was harmonious with God's purpose for them within the governmental universe He had established. At some point afterwards, however, this changed. An angel (cherub) who was made to occupy a place of highest authority that a created being could administer in God's government - next to the Deity (the divine "Father" and the divine "Word" - See John 1: 1-3) - became dissatisfied with his position. "Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty ... Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God (next to the throne of God - Exodus 25: 21-22; Psalms 99: 1) ... Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." (Ezekiel 28: 12, 14-15). It was when God revealed His intention to exercise His creative power again, and bring a being into existence made in His own image as the crowning act of this further creative action, that jealousy, ambition, and self centeredness, manifested pride in the heart of this cherub. Though "perfect ... till" *this juncture*,

thereafter "iniquity (lawlessness) was found in [him]." This led to open rebellion against God and His governmental authority which resulted in an attempt to set up a rival "seat" (throne, i.e., government) in heaven (Ibid. 28: 2a). "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! ... For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars (angels) of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." (Isaiah 14: 12-14). With a "third part of the stars (angels) of heaven" joining Lucifer's cause, inevitably "there was war in heaven: Michael (the archangel - the divine "Word" / pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan ... he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Revelation 12: 4a, 7-9). Thus it was that Lucifer, the "light bearer," became Satan, the "adversary," the originator and introducer of sin into the universe, along with his angels - no longer "sons of God" but "demons."

When God created the first humans (Adam and Eve - Genesis 3: 20) "in His own image," they had the capability to "be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1: 4). In order to prove their loyalty to the Creator and His plan for them in the administration of the divine government (by putting them into the positions once occupied by "the angels that sinned" ... "which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation"), man was also made "a little while inferior to the

angels." (compare 2 Peter 2: 4a and Jude 6a with Hebrews 2: 7a, marginal reading). Their fitness to fill this position depended on their free-will choice to obey God's command to not eat the fruit "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." And as the perpetuation of their life was conditional upon their obedience to this single command, eating of it would result in the forfeiture of the ability to fulfill God's plan for them by ending their life through death. (see Genesis 2: 15-17.) The test was simple enough. They could eat "of every tree of the garden" except that one. Any danger to the continuance of their life centered solely in the choice they would make concerning that one tree. Do not eat of it and live, eat of it and die.

Since his defeat in the attempted coup in heaven earlier, Satan was allowed to carry his rebellion to the newly created earth; where he proceeded to attack and overcome the very objects of his hatred toward God. Only at the forbidden tree could Satan accomplish his design. If he could lead humanity into transgressing God's command, he could subject them and all the earth to his control through death, establish his kingdom on the earth, and thwart God's original plan in the creation of humans. At the tree, "the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety" and caused her to question God's truthfulness and benevolence. Eve, believing the serpent's (Satan's) deceptions, "took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." (2 Corinthians 11: 3; compare with Genesis 3: 1-6). By succumbing to temptation and falling into sin, Adam and Eve breached the relationship they had with God, with one another, and with the rest of creation. They

"delivered" the "dominion" over the earth that God had given to them into the hands of Satan thereby making him "the god of this world" as a result of this usurpation (compare Genesis 1: 28; Psalms 8: 4-8; with Luke 4: 5-6; and 2 Corinthians 4: 4a). The repercussions of this one act of disobedience proved tragic. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5: 12). Yet God did not completely abandon them to the dire consequences of their own choice. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed ... And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Genesis 3: 14-15). When all seemed lost, and mankind became enslaved to an Enemy bent on his destruction, God, through this promise, predicted the eventual death of the serpent (Satan). Though separated from the direct presence of God, and "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1), God would act and by His grace He would put "enmity" (Heb. - *eybah*, "hostility": hatred) between Satan and humanity through the "seed" (offspring) of the woman. This "hostility" would reach its climax when the seed of the woman bruises the serpent's "head" (a *fatal* wound), and in turn the serpent bruises the "heel" (a painful, *non-fatal, fully recoverable*, wound) of the woman's "seed" (a *singular* offspring). The destruction of Satan by this human deliverer would save the fallen race from the helpless and hopeless plight that the Adversary, through sin, had held them in bondage to.

Before the Deity had created anything, they foresaw Lucifer's downfall as an outcome of

granting created intelligences true freedom of choice. God did not foreordain Lucifer's rebellion, the entrance of sin into the universe, or its spread to the earth through Adam's transgression. This was not in any way His purpose, plan, or desire. However, in His foreknowledge of all the choices that free-willed intelligent creatures could make (including those that would resist and go contrary to His will for them), He had devised a plan of redemption and restoration. It would ultimately and finally assure that sin and evil will never threaten the Creation again. "What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time." (Nahum 1: 9). This was to be accomplished by means that would maintain God's sovereignty over His creation, fulfill His original purpose for it, and do so by the unanimous, uncoerced, freewill consent of all the governed intelligences in the universe forever. In His infinite wisdom, God created a being in His own image that not only had the potential to subdue any rebellion that might occur, but also one that He, Himself, could become if the need should arise. Foreseeing the fall of Lucifer and subsequently that of man, the Deity took action beforehand. In "the counsel of peace ... between them both" (Zechariah 6: 13), the Father and the Word decided that one of them, the Word, would become man (the seed of the woman). He alone would gain the victory over Satan where Adam had failed, vindicate God's sovereignty (character, law, right to rule, etc.), and pioneer the way for the human family, as a member of the human family Himself, to fulfill the purpose that God had originally planned for them. By the deliverance thus attained, the image of God that had been defaced by sin

would be restored. This - as Scripture cumulatively traced the historical progression of the promised "seed" (Messiah / Christ) down the generations of chosen men - reached its prophesied fulfillment in the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 3: 23-38; John 1: 1-3, 14; Galatians 4: 4-5). Through the work and power of the God-man, redeemed humans, by partaking (Gr. - *koinonos*, "sharing") of the divine nature, would eventually occupy positions in the divine government that God, in their creation, had designed to help insure that the harmony, peace, and stability of the universe would be eternally maintained. (Ephesians 1: 9-10; 3: 9-11).

God had promised: "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." (Isaiah 13: 12). This He achieved in Jesus, who "in the likeness of sinful flesh" ... "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" ... "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (Romans 8: 3; Hebrews 4: 15; 1 Peter 2: 22). Satan deployed all the powers of darkness he could marshal to defeat Christ and His earthly mission, yet he utterly failed to tempt Him to commit sin or in any manner deviate from the will of His heavenly Father. While the Enemy did "bruise" His "heel" (particularly by the agony He suffered in Gethsemane and on Calvary), He recovered by His subsequent resurrection from the dead. The victory thereby gained, which struck a "bruise" to Satan's "head" (a deathblow), sealed the prophesied doom of the Adversary and all those allied with him. All the accusations and misrepresentations that the satanic forces had brought against God's sovereignty had been proven false by Christ through the gospel. Yet, having failed to overcome Jesus, the En-

emy now turned his attention exclusively toward the followers of Christ (the "woman," His church). As Christ's victory assured "That the righteousness of the law (sinlessness) might be fulfilled in [His people], who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8: 4), Satan sought to attack God on the remaining issue to be resolved: Can redeemed humanity overcome him as Jesus had done? After all, the rebellion had originally begun at the very throne of God with Lucifer's dissatisfaction over the Deity's decision to create man in His own image. This questioning of God's wisdom ignited an uprising that consequently emptied heaven of a large number of the angelic host. Can the gospel of salvation vindicate God's "wisdom" (the incarnate personification of which is Christ Himself - 1 Corinthians 1: 24), so that His original plan for humanity can finally be carried out *safely*? This is now primarily the "things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter 1: 12).

"And when the dragon (serpent) saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman (church) which brought forth (from a chosen line of human ancestors) the man child (Jesus)." (Revelation 12: 13). With the limited access to heaven since his initial fall now completely cut off, and with it all hope of establishing his throne there, Satan, now permanently confined to the earth and "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Ibid. verse 12), waged an intense battle with God's church. Throughout the ages of the Christian era, he has worked with a huge degree of success. His intent to overthrow and destroy God's people and God's purpose for them by establishing his throne here on the earth to rule over a race of rebel humans has pro-

gressed steadily forward. And despite blessings from God, like the Protestant Reformation, only a "little flock" has continued maintaining their fidelity to Christ. Yet, knowing that the Father can still vindicate His plan for humanity through any that Satan can not eliminate, and the longer he fails to do so brings him closer to the doom upon himself that he is trying to avert: "The dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the *remnant of her seed*, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Ibid. verse 17, emphasis added).

Revelation, chapter 13, outlines and describes this war with the remnant. In essence, through an alliance of earthly satanic powers, the entire wicked world will be deceived through miraculous means into giving their allegiance and worship to an apostate religio-political-economic system headed by Satan, who they will be deluded into believing is God. Next, in Revelation 14: 1-5, God's end-time remnant is revealed - the 144,000. First brought into view in Revelation, chapter 7, an interlude chapter between the opening of the last two scroll seals in chapters 6: 12-17 and 7: 1, the 144,000 are there described as the end-time "children of Israel" (the Christian church - Galatians 3: 28-29). They are the *living* "servants of ... God," who will be "sealed ... in their foreheads" with the "seal of the living God." Therefore, when "the great day of his wrath [comes; they will] be able to stand." (Revelation 7: 1-3; compare with 6: 14-17). Just before all human probation closes - and the "wrath" of God and Christ (the Lamb) is poured out upon an unrepentant, defiant, and hateful world ("the seven last plagues" followed by the second coming of

Christ to "judge and make war," see Ibid. 15: 1; 19: 11) - the 144,000 will be sealed in their foreheads. Revelation 14: 6-20 arranges the events culminating in the sealing of this group in the same end-time context. In response to Satan's "war with the remnant," God sends forth a worldwide proclamation of the "everlasting gospel" by three angels. "With a loud voice," each one in succession announces the arrival of the judgment "hour," a call to worship the Creator ("God ... that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." - see Exodus 20: 11), the fall of "Babylon," and a fearsome warning against the worship and support of the global satanic system. Those who patiently (enduringly) heed the call "are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus (the remnant)." Finally, after pronouncing a blessing on those who "die in the Lord from henceforth" (the beginning of the three angels' messages onward), a symbolic depiction of the return of Christ is brought into view.

Now consider. Revelation 14: 1, portrays "a Lamb (Jesus) [standing] on the mount Zion ('the heavenly Jerusalem' - Hebrews 12: 22), and *with him* an hundred forty and four thousand, *having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*" (emph. added). The "seal" that the 144,000 are sealed with in their foreheads is the "Fathers name" - His character as revealed in His law and exemplified in the life of Christ. Notice, they are *with Christ*. His voice, "as the voice of many waters" (compare Revelation 1: 15b) is heard along with theirs as they play harps and sing "as it were a new song before the throne ... and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand." (Ibid. 14: 2-3). "They sing the song of Moses the

servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Ibid. 15: 3), a song of deliverance and victory unique to themselves and their experience. They are "not defiled with women; for they are virgins." They do not commit spiritual adultery with false religion and its worldly allies, but remain completely faithful to Christ and "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." As Jesus overcame all acts of sin through faith and surrender of His human will to the keeping power of God the Father, likewise the sealed 144,000 have overcome all acts of sin through the power of Christ. Being "redeemed from among men" (not *resurrected* from the dead, but *translated* from among those who will be alive at the return of Jesus - see 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17), this last generation of *living* saints are "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." (not "first" in anticipation of the larger *quantity before* the harvest, but "first" in *quality after* the harvest, which at this time is the end of the age - Revelation 14: 4). Thus, "in their mouth was found no guile (i.e., no lie - only pure unadulterated *truth*): for they are without fault before the throne of God (having 'washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.')." (Ibid. 7: 14; 14: 5).

In the last act of the final atonement, mediated alone by Jesus, humanity's Great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, God's wisdom in creating mankind will be fully vindicated. The cleansing of the 144,000 will demonstrate before all the created intelligences that God's original plan for them can and will be realized. "Not by (their) might, nor by (their) power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4: 6), will the 144,000 stand forth as trophies of Christ's power to complete the work in humanity that God had originally envisioned for them.

Satan's last hope of perpetuating his rebellion through a total subjection of all humans to his control will be overthrown. The last generation of Christians, filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and in the midst of the most trying conditions ever, will remain loyal to Christ. Any lingering issues the heavenly host may have had with God's determination for humanity possibly sparking another rebellion has forever been settled.

At last, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times [God the Father will] gather together in one all things *in Christ*, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even in him*". (Ephesians 1: 10, *emph. added*). ❖ GLP

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

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