



*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

WAS WAGGONER WRONG IN 1888?

DID THE LORD NOT SEND "A MOST PRECIOUS MESSAGE"?

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Recently a booklet entitled - Where Waggoner Went Wrong - by John L. Abbott was sent to this office from Australia. The author lists what he believes to be seven errors as found in Christ and His Righteousness, a book written by Waggoner and first published in 1890. The first paragraph of the booklet reads:

"Shortly after the 1888 General Conference Session, Ellen White is said to have written, 'The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones.' TM91. However, in her writings the servant of the Lord has very little to say about this precious message, and she has a great deal to say in condemnation of the many erroneous principles that are upheld in Waggoner's book 'Christ and His Righteousness.'" (sic) p. 3.

The final paragraph reads:

"The message which E. J. Waggoner so enthusiastically gave to the Minneapolis Conference session in 1888 has caused untold harm to the Adventist Church. Those who have accepted his message have led this people back into the wilderness where, for nearly a hundred years, we have been going around in circles. If we do not turn from these false doctrines which he presented - if we continue to claim righteousness as a gift of faith rather than a reward of obedience to God's holy law - it will soon be recorded of us, as it was of ancient Israel, 'they entered not in because of disobedience.' It is high time for us to come out of Babylon that we receive not of her plagues. This is God's last invitation to His people." p. 16.

It is of interest that Froom avers that Waggoner's presentations at the 1888 General Conference Session were taken down in shorthand by Jessie F. Moser-Waggoner, and that from these transcribed studies, Waggoner himself edited and put in book form what we have as Christ and His Righteousness. (Movement of Destiny, p. 189) It is a fact that Ellen G. White declared both Jones and Waggoner to be "the messengers of God's righteousness" (TM, p. 96); and that "God gave to His messengers just what the people needed." (Ibid., p. 95). Then in words which cannot be misunderstood, the servant of the Lord wrote:

"If you reject Christ's delegate messengers, you reject Christ. Neglect this great salvation, kept before you for years, despise this glorious offer of justification through the blood of Christ, and sanctification through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." (TM., pp. 97-98)

We are indebted to John L. Abbott for his attack on Waggoner. Nothing could bring into

focus more than he has, the present issue between the theory of salvation by works, and the Gospel of God. Abbott has written that the message of 1888 as given by Elder E. J. Waggoner "has caused untold harm to the Adventist Church;" that it is a message which "has led this people back into the wilderness, where for nearly a hundred years, we have been going around in circles." On the other hand, Ellen G. White declared that to "reject" and to "neglect" this "great salvation" message as given through Jones and Waggoner is to face "judgment and fiery indignation" at the hand of God. How apropos that this booklet should come at a time when there is an agitation called a "Protest" which is rooted in the Catholic teaching of works as a means of grace.

In setting forth the charges of error made against Waggoner by Abbott, we shall list them, and then give in full context just what Waggoner taught, so that one can see the greatness and beauty of the 1888 Message. (When giving the full context, we shall underscore the sentences which Abbott is so concerned about.)

What Abbott notes as the first three "Errors" come from a single context of thought, so we will place them all together:

"Error No. 1 - 'To justify is to make righteous, or to show one to be righteous.'"

"Error No. 2 - 'It is a sad fact, therefore, that there are in all the human race no doers of the law.'"

"Error No. 3 - 'He who attempts to do that [to keep the law perfectly], sets before himself the impossible task of being better than God requires.'"

Now what does Waggoner say in full context? After quoting Eccl. 12:13, 14, he writes:

"The argument is this: The judgment passes upon every secret thing; the law of God is the standard in the judgment, - it determines the quality of every act, whether good or evil; therefore the law of God forbids evil in thought as well as in deed. So the conclusion of the whole matter is that the commandments of God contain the whole duty of man.

"Take the first commandment, 'Thou shalt

have no other gods before Me.' The apostle tells us of some 'whose god is their belly.' Phil. 3:19. But gluttony and intemperance are self-murder; and so we find that the first commandment runs through to the sixth. This is not all, however, for he also tells us that covetousness is idolatry. Col. 3:5. The tenth commandment cannot be violated without violating the first and the second. In other words, the tenth commandment coincides with the first; and we find that the decalogue is a circle having a circumference as great as the universe, and containing within it the moral duty of every creature. In short, it is the measure of the righteousness of God, who inhabits eternity.

"This being the case, the correctness of the statement that 'the doers of the law shall be justified,' is obvious. To justify means to make righteous, or to show one to be righteous. Now it is evident that perfect obedience to a perfectly righteous law would constitute one a righteous person. It was God's design that such obedience should be rendered to the law by all His creatures; and in this way the law was ordained unto life. Rom. 7:10.

"But for one to be judged 'a doer of the law' it would be necessary that he had kept the law in its fullest measure every moment of his life. If he had come short of this, he could not be said to have done the law. He could not be a doer of the law if he done it only in part. It is a sad fact, therefore, that there are in all the human race doers of the law, for both Jews and Gentiles are 'all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.' Rom. 3:9-12. The law speaks to all who are within its sphere; and in all the world there is not one who can open his mouth to clear himself from the charge of sin which it brings against him. Every mouth is stopped, and all the world stands guilty before God (verse 19), 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' (verse 23)

"Therefore, although 'the doers of the law shall be justified,' it is just as evident that 'by the deeds of the law there shall

no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.' Verse 20. The law, being 'holy, and just, and good,' cannot justify a sinner. In other words, a just law cannot declare that the one who violates it is innocent. A law that would justify a wicked man would be a wicked law. The law should not be reviled because it cannot justify sinners. On the contrary, it should be extolled on that account. The fact that the law will not declare sinners to be righteous, - that it will not say that men have kept it when they have violated it, - is in itself sufficient evidence that it is good. Men applaud an incorruptible earthly judge, one who cannot be bribed, and who will not declare a guilty man innocent. Surely, they ought to magnify the law of God, which will not bear false witness. It is the perfection of righteousness, and therefore it is forced to declare the sad fact that not one of Adam's race [save Jesus] has fulfilled its requirements.

"Moreover, the fact that to do the law is simply man's duty shows that when he has come short in a single particular he can never make it up. The requirements of each precept of the law are so broad, - the whole law is so spiritual, - that an angel could render no more than simple obedience. Yea, more, the law is the righteousness of God, - a transcript of His character, - and since His character cannot be different from what it is, it follows that even God Himself cannot be better than the measure of goodness demanded by His law. He cannot be better than He is, and the law declares what He is. What hope, then, that one who has failed, in even one precept, can add enough extra goodness to make up the full measure? He who attempts to do that sets before himself the impossible task of being better than God requires, yea, even better than God Himself.

"But it is not simply in one particular that men have failed. They have come short in every particular. 'They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.' Not only so, but it is impossible for fallen man, with his weakened power, to do even a single act that is up to the perfect standard. This proposition needs no further proof

than a restatement of the fact that the law is the measure of God's righteousness. Surely there are none so presumptuous as to claim that any act of their lives has been or could be as good as if done by the Lord Himself. Everyone must say with the Psalmist, 'My goodness extendeth not to Thee.' Ps. 16:2" (Christ and His Righteousness, pp. 50-54)

Abbott lists as Waggoner's "Error No. 4":

"A man cannot do good until he first becomes good. Therefore deeds done by a sinful person have no effect whatever to make him righteous."

Waggoner in context reads:

"Since evil is a part of man's very nature, being inherited by each individual from a long line of sinful ancestors, it is very evident that whatever righteousness springs from him must be only like "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6), compared with the spotless robe of the righteousness of God.

"The impossibility of good deeds proceeding from a sinful heart is thus forcibly illustrated by the Saviour: 'For every tree is know by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.' Luke 6:44,45. That is to say, a man cannot do good until he first becomes good. Therefore, deeds done by a sinful person have no effect whatever to make him righteous, but, on the contrary, coming from an evil heart, they are evil, and so add to the sum of his sinfulness. Only evil can come from an evil heart, and multiplied evil cannot make one good deed; therefore it is useless for an evil person to think to become righteous by his own efforts. He must first be made righteous before he can do the good required of him, and which he wants to do." (Christ and His Righteousness, pp. 54-55)

Waggoner's "Error No. 5" according to Abbott is:

"How may the righteousness that is necessary in order that one may enter the city,

be obtained? To answer this question is the great work of the gospel. Let us first have an object lesson on justification, or the imparting of righteousness." (The parable of the Pharisee and the publican is then given.)

Waggoner in context reads:

"No matter how dilligently nor how zealously a man works, nothing that he can do will meet the full measure of the law's demands. It is too high for him to attain to; he cannot obtain righteousness by the law. 'By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified [made righteous] in His sight.' What a deplorable condition? We must have the righteousness of the law or we cannot enter heaven, and yet the law has no righteousness for one of us. It will not yield to our most persistent and energetic efforts the smallest portion of that holiness without which no man can see the Lord.

"Who, then, can be saved? Can there, then, be such a thing as a righteous person? - Yes, for the Bible often speaks of them. It speaks of Lot as 'that righteous man;' it says, 'Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings (Isa. 3:10), thus indicating that there will be righteous persons to receive the reward; and it plainly declares that there will be a righteous nation at the last, saying: 'In that day will this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salavation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.' Isa. 26:1, 2. David says, 'Thy law is the truth.' Ps. 119:142. It is not only the truth, but is the sum of all truth; consequently the nation that keeps the truth will be a nation that keeps the law of God. Such will be doers of His will, and they shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 7:21.

"The question, then, is, How may the righteousness that is necessary in order that one may enter that city, be obtained? To answer this question is the great work of the Gospel. Let us first have an object lesson on justification, or the imparting of righteousness. The fact may help us to a better understanding of the theory. The example is given in Luke 18:

9-14 in these words:- [The whole text as found the Gospel of Luke is quoted. Take your Bible and read the verses. Waggoner then comments:]

"This was given to show how we may not, and how we may, attain to righteousness. The Pharisees are not distinct; there are many in these days who expect to gain righteousness by their own good deeds. They trust in themselves that they are righteous. They do not so openly boast of their goodness, but they show in other ways that they are trusting to their own righteousness. . . .

"But what is the result? - The man who trusted in his own righteousness had none, while the man who prayed, in heart-felt contrition, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner,' went down to his house a righteous man. Christ says that he went justified, that is, made righteous.

"Notice that the publican did something more than bewail his sinfulness; he asked for mercy. What is mercy? - It is unmerited favor. It is the disposition to treat a man better than he deserves. Now the Word of Inspiration says of God: 'As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.' Ps. 103:11. That is, the measure by which God treats us better than we deserve when we humbly come to Him, is the distance between earth and the highest heaven. And in what respect does He treat us better than we deserve? - In taking our sins away from us; for the next verse says: 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.' With this agree the words of the beloved disciple: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' I John 1:9. (pp. 56-59)

The sixth supposed error of Waggoner's is quoted by Abbott as "The only way righteousness can come is as a gift. That righteousness is a gift is plainly stated by Paul in Rom. 5:17."

Again Waggoner in context reads:

"'Being made righteous freely.' How else could it be? Since the best efforts of a sinful man have not the least effect toward producing righteousness, it is evident that the only way it can come to him

is as a gift. That righteousness is a gift is plainly stated by Paul in Rom. 5:17: 'For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ.' It is because righteousness is a gift that eternal life, which is the reward of righteousness, is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Christ has been set forth by God as the One through whom forgiveness of sins is to be obtained; and this forgiveness consists simply in the declaration of His righteousness (which is the righteousness of God) for their remission. God, 'who is rich in mercy' (Eph. 2:4), and who delights in it, puts His own righteousness on the sinner who believes in Jesus, as a substitute for his sins. Surely, this is a profitable exchange for the sinner, and it is no loss to God, for He is infinite in holiness, and the supply can never be diminished.

The scripture that we have just been considering (Rom. 3:24-26) is but another statement of verses 21, 22, following the declaration that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be made righteous. The apostle adds: 'But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all of them that believe.' God puts His righteousness upon the believer. He covers him with it, so that his sin no more appears. Then the forgiven one can exclaim with the prophet: -

'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath covered me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels.' Isa. 61:10" (pp. 60-61)

Abbott lists Waggoner's "Error No. 7" quoting:

"Hiding in Christ he (the convicted sinner), is covered with His righteousness; and now behold! he has obtained, through faith in Christ, that for which he has been vainly striving."

Waggoner in context reads:

"Let the reader try to picture the scene. Here stands the law as the swift witness against the sinner. It cannot change, and it will not call the sinner a righteous man. The convicted sinner tries again and again to obtain righteousness from the law, but it resists all of his advances. It cannot be bribed by any amount of penance or professedly good deeds. But here stands Christ, 'full of grace' as well as truth, calling the sinner to Him. At last the sinner, weary of the vain struggle to get righteousness from the law, listens to the voice of Christ, and flees to His outstretched arms. Hiding in Christ, he is covered with His righteousness; and now behold! he has obtained, through faith in Christ, that for which he has been vainly striving. He has the righteousness which the law requires, and it is the genuine article, because he obtained it from the Source of Righteousness; from the very place whence the law came. And the law witnesses to the genuineness of this righteousness. It says that so long as the man retains that, it will go into court and defend him against all accusers. It will witness to the fact that he is a righteous man. With the righteousness which is 'through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (Phil 3:9), Paul was sure that he would stand in the day of Christ.

"There is in the transaction no ground for finding fault. God is just, and at the same time the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. In Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead; He is equal with the Father in every attribute. Consequently the redemption that is in Him - the ability to buy back lost man - is infinite. Man's rebellion is against the Son as much as against the Father, since both are one. Therefore, when Christ 'gave Himself for our sins,' it was the King suffering for the rebellious subjects - the One injured passing by, overlooking, the offense of the offender....

"Now read God's own statement of His own Name - a statement given in the face of one of the worst cases of contempt ever shown Him: -

"'And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord,

The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' Ex. 34:5-7

"This is God's Name; it is the character in which He reveals Himself to man; the light in which He wishes men to regard Him. But what of the declaration that He 'will by no means clear the guilty'? That is perfectly in keeping with His long-suffering, abundant goodness, and His passing by the transgression of His people. It is true that God will by no means clear the guilty; He could not do that and still be God. 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 never had sinned." (pp. 62-64)

It should be distinctly kept in mind that this attack on Waggoner and the message he gave at the General Conference in 1888, is not coming from neo-Adventists, or the supporters of Dr. Desmond Ford, but rather from those professing to be "concerned" Adventists, which from the publication addresses given on their literature are allied with a certain dissident within the Church here in the United States. Also in all fairness it must be stated that it is impossible to determine at this point whether all "concerned" Adventists in Australia hold with Mr. Abbott. So we must address the issues, lay the axe to the root of the tree, and let the chips fall where they will.

The attack on E. J. Waggoner's position is not new. It began at the 1888 Session itself. Ellen G. White addressed the issue in a message she gave November 1, 1888, to the "Dear Brethren Assembled at General Conference." She stated:

"Dr. Waggoner has spoken to us in a straightforward manner. There is precious light in what he has said. Some things presented in reference to the law in Galatians, if I fully understood his position, do not harmonize with the understanding I have on this subject; but truth will loose nothing by investigation, therefore, I plead for Christ's sake that you come to the living Oracles, and with

prayer and humiliation seek God. . . .

"Of one thing I am certain, as Christians you have no right to entertain feelings of enmity, unkindness, and prejudice toward Dr. Waggoner, who has presented his views in a plain, straightforward manner, as a Christian should. If he is in error, you should, in a calm, rational, Christ-like manner, seek to show him from the Word of God where he is out of harmony with its teachings. If you cannot do this you have no right as Christians to pick flaws, to criticize, to work in the dark, to prejudice minds with your objections. This is Satan's way of working." [Through Crisis to Victory, p. 294]

But this counsel, Abbott has not followed. Not a single Bible reference is to be found in his presentation, until he discusses what he considers to be "Error No. 5." Here he asks the reader to "See Heb. 5:8, 9." This is the section where Waggoner is presenting Christ's parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Abbott's understanding of the publican's prayer is that the publican "seeing himself as a sinner recognized his need, and appealed to God to help him keep God's law." (p. 10). He closes the discussion of "Error No. 5" by quoting Rev. 22:14 KJV.

Since Waggoner's so-called "Error No. 6" involved Romans 5:17, Abbott likewise quotes it; also Romans 6:23, to which Waggoner alludes. [See Thought Paper, p. 5, col. 1] However, Abbott considers the KJV of this text "an unfortunate mistranslation." (p. 12) He then quotes from "The Judgment Hour Version" which reads: - "For as the wages of sin is death, so the wages of obedience is eternal life through the gift of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Ibid.) This is plain distortion of Scripture. The literal Greek text reads in a word for word translation - "For the wages of the sin (is) death, but the gift of the God (is) life eternal in Christ Jesus the lord of us."

The only other reference to the Bible is found in Abbott's "Concluding Remarks." Here he quotes Gal. 3:26 - "Ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." This comment follows - "This text is not referring to our faith in Christ at all, but to His faithfulness in redeeming us." (p. 14) The next verse reads: - "For as

many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Perhaps, using the same line of reasoning as Abbott used on verse 26, we could conclude that since Christ was baptized, His act then excludes the necessity for us to be baptized. Because Christ is the Author of faith does that mean that I do not have to exercise it? Only those led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. (Romans 8:14) Paul asked the Galatians - "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:2)

It should be very evident from the reading of what E. J. Waggoner said at the 1888 General Conference Session, that we have not yet really accepted the message of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps, if we really did perceive this message, proclaim it, and live it, we would not need to be trying to discover a cover-up of 1888, for from the acceptance of this message would flow pure, unadulterated truth in all areas of human fellowship instead of the foul miasma of human theories and speculations, for "the righteousness of Christ. . . is pure, unadulterated truth." (TM. p. 65)

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LONG OVERDUE

We had planned to print - The Mystery of 1888 - by Elder D. K. Short. The type had been reset, and the proof-reading had been completed for the first corrections. We received a call from Elder Short indicating that he and Elder R. J. Wieland had decided to do the printing and distribution of their own writings. This was welcome and long overdue news. We have forwarded to Elder Short all of the unmarred copies of 1888 Re-Examined which we had in supply, and will be sending to him the negatives of the new type-setting of his research - The Mystery of 1888. All orders, therefore, for these publications should be sent to Adventist

History, P. O. Box 1888, Naples, NC 28760, as we will no longer be stocking these books.

In retrospect, one can but wonder what the results would have been had these men decided to publish and distribute their first work - 1888 Re-Examined - very soon after it was completed. Perhaps, if they had done so, Laodicea would not have been spued out of the mouth of God, and genuine repentance might have come to the leadership of the Church before it was weighed in the balances of the Sanctuary. See 8T:247. But as Elder Short contends in his research - The Mystery of 1888 - one cannot alter or rewrite history.

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LOOKING AHEAD

Some doors have opened which will broaden our outreach. We plan to produce a key Thought Paper in Spanish - one issue as a pilot project. If an interest is manifest, we will plan for a Spanish edition on a Quarterly basis. Then an important tract in Spanish is also anticipated. All of this will alter our previously planned routine.

We will schedule only two major itineraries this year - one West, and one East. Some have already indicated they wish to be included in these schedules, and then there are some "carry-overs" from last year. If you wish a meeting in your area, or just would like us to stop by and say, "Hello," while enroute to appointments, please let us know in the next few weeks.

There will be no Adventist Laymen's Annual Fellowship this year. We will be making contacts with all who were in attendance the past two years, and solicit their "input" on a project we hope to impliment here on the campus to take the place of the Fellowship meeting. If the response is favorable, we will seek to set up an "experimental" program this year, perhaps during the third week in August when the Fellowship was scheduled. So those who might be involved, be looking for a letter and please respond as quickly as possible.

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