

It is commendable that Clifford Goldstein is seeking to address the important issues facing the Seventh-day Adventist church in this time. We appreciate his desire to defend the Scriptures and the validity of the Sanctuary doctrine against diseases of unbelief and doubt which are eroding away the foundations of the truth "once delivered to the saints". Nevertheless, we must say that it is of deep concern that doubt concerning messages of heavenly original seems also to adhere to Elder Goldstein himself, as clearly revealed in his arguments found in this editorial entitled "1888 and All That...".

At the time when Brother Goldstein's editorial first came out, this writer wrote a letter of concern as to its contents. I am not aware whether that response was ever published or even taken note of, as I never received any response of which I am aware. I hoped of course that the editorial would be lost in the dust of time and forgotten in the archives, but in the search engine driven world of today, it happens that its life has been drastically supplemented as it appears high on the list of items pulled under the search for "1888 message". Therefore, I have deemed it necessary to debunk a number of the assumptions and misrepresentations found in Elder Goldstein's article.

First of all we might do well to ask Elder Goldstein, whom it is that he has in mind when he refers to "what some claim Jones and Waggoner had taught at the 1888 General Conference session." I wasn't aware of anyone who claimed to know exactly what Jones and Waggoner taught at the Minneapolis General Conference Session. Surely not Elders Wieland or Short, for they never claimed to have such information. This statement of Elder Goldstein's is a straw man argument, for with the exception of one man's notes which only record a series of texts which were simply read by Jones and Waggoner in one presentation, the 1888 Message Study Committee and all who are in the know decry having any such information. Despite my studying carefully these issues for the past twelve years, I know of no one who claims that Waggoner and Jones explicitly taught a legal justification in 1888. So why the point? Instead what Elder's Wieland and Short, myself and a number of others have suggested is that maybe we should take Ellen White's continued and strenuous support for Waggoner, Jones, and Prescott seriously. That we should carefully consider and give significant weight to the messages of men, who were preaching at that time, easily through 1896 (the year in which Ellen White wrote that famous "most precious message" statement) under the strong recommendation of the prophet of the Lord. Elder Goldstein forgot to mention that during that time period, Jones, Waggoner and Prescott clearly articulated a universal justification. Although the message brought by Jones and Waggoner, has come to be identified appropriately with the event and time period in which it was identified for us by Ellen White as having great significance, the 1888 Message Study Committee for their part has always believed that we should recognize the light that God continued to bring to us through those men throughout the era of Ellen White's commendation as falling under that message. Ellen White is exceptionally clear that these men continued to work under the banner of the third angel's message throughout that time.

It is rather interesting that Elder Goldstein conveniently extracts two words out of a larger context to affirm his contentions, while condemning others for using “sentences”. Elder Goldstein forgot to mention that Ellen White, in her statement regarding what she had taught for “forty-five years”, immediately went on to say that it was “...--the matchless charms of Christ. This is what I have been trying to present before your minds. When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband. I have said to myself, It is because God has presented it to me in vision that I see it so clearly, and they cannot see it because they have never had it presented to them as I have. And when another presented it, every fiber of my heart said, Amen.--Ms 5, p. 10. (Sermon, Rome, New York, June 19, 1889.) Ellen White humbly says that she had been “trying to present” these things, and then actually affirms that Waggoner’s public presentations on Righteousness by Faith, were clearer than any others she had ever heard. A little bit of context, like reading the rest of the sentence can surely give you a different impression.

We would certainly not deny that both Ellen White and Waggoner were teaching as she said, “the matchless charms of Christ”, but that she was suggesting that Waggoner had no new or special insights on the subject, that she had always presented every aspect of it as he had, or that she had nothing to learn from His presentation does not at all follow. Although she herself did not immediately agree with all of Waggoner’s positions, she could readily sense the Holy Spirit working through the man, and took a very humble position saying, “I would have humility of mind, and be willing to be instructed as a child. The Lord has been pleased to give me great light, yet I know that He leads other minds, and opens to them the mysteries of His Word, and I want to receive every ray of light that God shall send me, though it should come through the humblest of His servants. {1888 163.3} But many of us cherish our own pride of opinion today, and do not listen humbly to gain whatever blessings we can from our brethren. We set our stakes and refuse to admit of evidence however plain and clear. Many people say, “I don’t need to listen to that person or this person, because I have my Bible”. Yes, and how is it being obedient to the Bible to despise and ignore the teachers, preachers, evangelists, apostles, and prophets, which the Bible itself says have been given to build up the church as the body of Christ?

If Clifford Goldstein’s theory were correct, then perhaps God didn’t really need to send Jones and Waggoner with this “most precious message” because Ellen White had already been presenting everything that they were presenting. In this case, there would be nothing special, unique or fresh about their presentations. But what did Ellen White really say?

“If we place ourselves in a position that we will not recognize the light God sends or His messages to us, then we are in danger of sinning against the Holy Ghost. Then for us to turn and see if we can find some little thing that is done that we can hang some of our doubts upon and begin to question! The question is, has God sent the truth? Has God raised up these men to proclaim the truth? **I say, yes, God has sent men to bring us the truth that we should not have had unless God had sent somebody to bring it to us.** God has let me have a light of what His Spirit is, and therefore I accept it, and I no more dare to lift my hand against these persons, because it would be against Jesus Christ, who is to be recognized in His messengers.” MS 2, 1890

Ellen White herself, was glad to humbly sit as a learner at the feet of these men and expecting to gain fresh insights from the ministry of the Holy Spirit through them. Yet,

so many modern professors of theology and church administrators apparently feel that they are justified in ignoring these brethren since they have Ellen White's writings, not to mention their own great credentials. But according to Ellen White, who are they really ignoring? "Jesus Christ, who is to be recognized in His messengers."

Some of us who hold to a universal justification, take offense at Elder Goldstein's rather careless summary of what he supposes we believe. I am not sure that there is any proponent of universal justification within Adventism, who does not also affirm that faith does indeed change our status. Some of us affirm, that the word "justification" is in itself a legal term and always implies legal status. Therefore it would be impossible to refer to a justification which did not indicate a making right of legal status. Brother Goldstein says that Christ tasting death for every man does not mean that we were all saved unconditionally at the cross. What does Brother Goldstein mean by saved? Does he mean by "saved" the common meaning of "obtaining or possessing eternal life"? If so, then his argument is a "straw man". We, at least most of us, do not believe, nor do we affirm that a person may obtain everlasting life, apart from the exercise of faith in Christ. This however is no evidence at all against the proposition that in some sense the entire human race was saved unconditionally through Christ's death on the cross.

Brother Goldstein's arguments, consistently applied demand a universal justification. How is this so? Note Brother Goldstein's contention that "Christ bore the condemnation of the world's sin". If this is so, then we should ask ourselves if whether because of this in some sense the world did not bear the condemnation for that sin. Indeed, Ellen White argues at length that this is so. The human race was not annihilated on account of Adam's sin, for the express reason that Jesus promised to become man's substitute and die in his place. But why would man have been annihilated? Because of the verdict of God's holy law condemning transgression. What then? That judgment of the law condemning man must have been averted. And to where was it averted? Elder Goldstein himself has already told us, to Jesus Christ. Therefore it must be asserted confidently that Jesus Christ effectively bore the condemnation for the sins of the world at the cross and that resultantly every child of man has not borne that condemnation. Some of us call such a release from condemnation, "justification" and see it described very plainly in numerous passages of Scripture and in the writings of Ellen White.

Do all men stand before God then clothed in the righteousness of Christ? Perhaps a few would argue for that, but this author and I believe the majority of Adventist scholars who affirm a universal justification would argue that the law has further demands upon the human agent than that he should have been annihilated as a result of Adam's transgression. In fact, it seems to me that it is because the death sentence brought upon the human race by Adam's sin was averted that man continues to live, has the opportunity to hear the good news of God's love, and may respond in submission to the One who loved him and gave Himself for him. Through such faith, man may become a partaker of the divine nature and become an obedient child of God. God therefore, because he has made such a regeneration freely available to all men is perfectly consistent and right to maintain the integrity of His Holy Law as it demands obedience of the human agent. The debt of death due in Adam has been paid, but because that debt was paid and grace now flows to all full and free, therefore there remains the continuing debt of love (that is,

the obligation to render obedience to all the commandments of God). Some of us in Adventism still believe that God can make man fully obedient to those commandments and that this is, in fact, necessary to our eternal salvation. All who do not become partakers of the love of God and the righteousness of Christ through the indwelling Spirit of God, do not stand before God as just. They are not represented before the Father as blameless. They are condemned by God's holy law and can expect only wrath and punishment in their future unless they submit to the grace of God and choose to exercise faith toward God and repentance toward our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Dear Brother Goldstein's reasoning and arguments break down severely as he closes this editorial. He reiterates a position that we already have shown to be in error then builds upon the assumption saying, "Nothing in her writings teaches universal, legal justification...I'm not talking about a garnered sentence hither and yon..." The first question that perhaps we should ask is "So what?" We have already refuted the underlying assumption of this whole article namely that Ellen White thought that her writings took in all of the insights that Jones and Waggoner were presenting. She never made this claim. Rather, she fully expected that under the message that they were giving fresh insights would continue to come to light. Secondly, it is interesting that almost immediately Brother Goldstein backs off of the assertion that "nothing" in Ellen White's writings teaches this universal justification, by refusing to admit of evidence in the form of sentences with the cry "...anyone can prove anything from her writings in that way". This is a ludicrous argument. Giving the words their literal meaning and keeping them in harmony with the whole of her writings and with the immediate context, this is simply not true. Could someone take a sentence from Ellen White's writings to truly prove the John Hus married Charles Wesley, or that adultery is a righteous act that every believer should commit at least once a week! Of course not. Seventh-day Adventists have always believed that "every word" was to have its proper bearing when taking on the task of biblical interpretation. Many a scriptural doctrine would fall flat if it were not found to be clearly affirmed in specific texts and short passages of Scripture, sometimes from a very limited number of sources. (i.e. the ordinance of footwashing). One sentence of inspiration in other words is enough to prove whatever that sentence is saying. Every word of God is pure....He is a shield to those who put their trust **in Him**. Proverbs 30:5 Therefore if one sentence could be found that supports the contention that Christ's death on the cross effected a legal change for the entire human race or that the entire human race has been delivered and the internal evidence of the text taken in that sense is amenable to the immediate context and the whole of the author's writings, then there is no way that it can be disproven to be a correct interpretation of the sentence. Ellen White, nor the Spirit of God will be constrained to give evidence in the form in which Brother Goldstein decides he would like to see it. He will have to submit his ideas to the whole of revelation allowing every sentence and every word to have its plain and obvious meaning and then humbly line himself up behind every syllable of Divine revelation.

Ellen White explicitly and strenuously supported men, who did teach a universal justification. She however did not articulate it in those words, but that is no indication either that she did not believe this or that she did not teach the concept. We submit that many passages of Scripture and of Ellen White's writings (whether short or long) support

the concept of a universal justification. If Elder Goldstein would like to show us that we are in error, then let him come to us and show us in the Spirit of Christ from the Holy Scriptures our mistakes. If he cannot demonstrate that we are in error, then let him show care and concern for his brethren by refusing to stoop to the level of using the official organ of the Seventh-day Adventist church to put forth groundless objections and arguments which misrepresent his brethren, placing them in an unfavorable light. Perhaps, Elder Goldstein should have read Ellen White's choice words for those who were disagreeing with Waggoner in the 1888 era. "If he is in error, you should, in a calm, rational, Christlike 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. {1888 163.4}

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