

FOUR DANGEROUS BOOKS

Something happened in 2018 which I have not seen in the thirty years that I have been presenting my seminars. My emphasis has been focused on two themes. 1) Our message, the everlasting gospel, righteousness by faith, the 1888 message, how salvation works, contrasting with the false evangelical gospel. 2) Our mission, why we exist, what Christ called this church to do, the great controversy, what issues still have to be settled, the vindication of God's character and government, preparation for the seal of God and the close of probation.

Both our message and our mission are controversial and have been called divisive. There is nothing new about that, but 2018 saw a frontal assault on everything I and others teach. This is actually an all-out war to destroy our message and our mission once and for all.

Four new books came off the presses in 2018, three from Andrews University and one from the Pacific Union Conference. The title of the most significant book is *God's Character and the Last Generation*, written by twelve Seminary professors, edited by Jiri Moskala and John Peckham. The term "last generation theology" has been coined in the last twenty years to describe our real message and our mission.

The book was reviewed in *Ministry* by Jud Lake from Southern Adventist University. "In my view, the authors have provided a solid biblical alternative to LGT that is not only intellectually satisfying but also spiritually uplifting....The book as a whole is a major contribution to Christian thought on the end of time and an important corrective to misunderstandings about the vindication of God's character....Preachers will find plenty of ideas for biblical sermon series....*God's Character and the Last Generation* is a landmark work that will inspire a new generation of Seventh-day Adventists to give glory to God alone and proclaim the soon return of Jesus with hope and assurance."

So we will spend a little time reviewing this "landmark work" to know what is being said. The book can be summarized by two major emphases: false statements about Last Generation Theology and a false gospel borrowed from evangelical Sundaykeepers.

Last generation theology advocates perfectionism, which maintains that humans can become absolutely sinless. This tends to place the emphasis on human works and suggests that one might reach a point prior to glorification when one is perfectly "sanctified" and thus no longer in need of the imputed righteousness of Christ....Some emphasize external obedience and focus on abstaining from committing sins by the sheer, disciplined exercise of one's will....They no longer need the work of Christ on their behalf. (pp. 18-19)

Last Generation Theology does not emphasize human works. It emphasizes human surrender. We will never be beyond the need for Christ's righteousness. In fact, we will need it more than ever. Willpower alone will never overcome sin.

E. J. Waggoner was the effectual father of the Seventh-day Adventist version of the so-called last generation theology....God risking His vindication on the performance of His church is one of the more uncertain moments in the doctrinal history of E. J. Waggoner. (pp. 25, 29)

The reality is that God has always risked his vindication on the cooperation of His people. Consider the stories of Job and Abraham and Moses and John the Baptist and Paul. The last generation is simply one more example of cooperation with God which vindicates His name and His government.

Even though Andreasen never considered the perfection of the last generation to be meritorious, his teaching contributed in the church to the presence of a strong element of unwitting legalism. (p. 35)

M. L. Andreasen is always singled out as the source of legalism in the church. The reality is that legalism was a problem in the 1880's that Waggoner and Jones tried to correct. Andreasen simply followed their lead in trying to combat legalism.

Edward Heppenstall...defined sin as a state of being....Sin has been dethroned, but it still remains. Through the Spirit, God awakens and develops the desire for full freedom from sin,...but the full actualization of that desire will occur at the return of the Lord....Consequently, we will always need to ask for forgiveness. (p. 37)

This marks the beginning of the entrance of original sin into Adventist theology. Original sin teaches that we are sinners from birth and will continue in sin until the second coming. Thus we will never fully keep the commandments on earth. This teaching is a total denial of some very clear Ellen White statements.

We sin both voluntarily and involuntarily....Sin is a lack of conformity to the will of God, either in act or state, into which we are born (original corruption)....Those who limit sin to the sins that they consciously and voluntarily choose are the ones who are minimizing the problem of sin! (pp. 48-49)

Minimizing sin is really saying that everything we do is sin, meaning that we can do nothing but sin. Sinning has always been about choice, from Adam to David to Christ to us.

Other Adventists...state that justification means more than imputation of Christ's righteousness; it also includes the process by which Christ actually makes us righteous. According to this view, justification is primarily to "make righteous," not just to "declare righteous," or else it would be only a legal fiction....Proponents of this view seem to adopt major Catholic arguments against the Reformers in the sixteenth century....Some Adventists maintain that...acceptance by God is based on Christ's infused righteousness. (pp. 64-65)

Here "making righteous" in justification is called Catholic and is labeled as "infused righteousness." LGT does not teach infused righteousness, and certainly does not teach Catholic righteousness by works. It is so easy to label your opponent's view as Catholic in order to discredit it.

The original Hebrew and Greek words for "justify"...do not mean "make righteous" but "declare righteous."...Abraham was not made righteous but was accounted righteous. (pp. 66, 69)

Justification being declared righteous only contradicts the Bible, Ellen White, and Jones and Waggoner.

True believers, justified persons, are still sinners...even after conversion through those works wrought in them by the Holy Spirit. In the words of Martin Luther, we are...at the same time just and sinner. (p. 78)

This theology means that conversion does not eliminate sin; it just eliminates condemnation for our continued sinning.

The basis of our justification is always the imputed righteousness of Christ (what Christ has done for us, outside of us),...not His imparted righteousness (what Christ is doing in us; sanctification), which is always partial, always “fall short” of the glory of God. (p. 81)

All these phrases are exactly what Desmond Ford taught at Pacific Union College. His false gospel is now being repeated by leading scholars.

Sanctification is the ever-developing, ever-incomplete fitness for heaven....Our sanctification is always progressive, always partial; it always “falls short” of the glory of God....Since we are...at the same just and sinners till our glorification,...we are in constant need of justification for our pardon and atonement in our sinful state....All human beings are sinful even when they are doing what God has asked them to do, because all have sinful, defiled natural depravity from birth that taints everything. (pp. 84-85, 96)

If this is true, then Satan has won the argument. It is his claim that we can never stop sinning as long as we live, even when we are obeying God (Sabbathkeeping, returning tithe, overcoming temper and lust) we are still sinning. If this is true, then why should we even try to obey?

LGT affirms the insufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice, and the added value of one’s obedience to the experience of salvation. Such obedience is unmistakably meritorious. In no uncertain terms, LGT...denies the complete sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice to save humanity and effectively win the great controversy....The LGT perspective is clear about the role of obedience, sanctification, and perfection in one’s salvation: without perfect obedience, there cannot be salvation. Sanctification and obedience are not so much the fruit of justification and salvation as they are the cause of salvation. (p. 105)

LGT never teaches that Christ’s sacrifice was insufficient or that obedience is meritorious or the cause of our salvation. Perfect obedience is the result of sanctification and never the cause of salvation.

One can never speak of total sinlessness or of being without sin....Selfishness...is still present in a Christian’s life....All that human beings do, however good and righteous it may be, is tainted by selfishness and sin....It is therefore misguided to speak of...the possibility of attaining a sinless life on this earth. (pp. 109-110, 115)

If we can never be without sin then there can be no close of probation; then all our teachings about the seal of God and the mark of the beast and Christ ending His mediatorial work of forgiving sin are all false.

Obedience and good works will always remain important, but never enough to be necessary for our salvation....Obedience to God, although required of the believer, is never to be considered a condition for one’s salvation....All human obedience, however good and wholesome it may be, is tainted by human selfishness. (pp. 113-114)

If obedience is not necessary for salvation or a condition for salvation, then why would we ever ask a person to give up a career over Sabbathkeeping?

Every human being comes into the world as a sinner separated from God....Adam and Eve's sin...imputed guilt...to every human being—everyone is de facto born a sinner separated from God and lost. (p. 119)

This is simply Catholic original sin which was transmitted through Luther and Calvin to modern evangelical Christians, and through them to Adventists.

Do newborn infants need a Savior? Did Jesus need a Savior when He was born?...affirmative to the first question and...negative to the second. (p. 167)

If babies need a Savior because of their fallen natures, then it is mandatory that Jesus could not take our fallen nature. Then He could not be tempted from His own nature like we are, and He certainly could not be tempted in "all points" as Scripture says.

Did Jesus' human nature really need to be exactly like ours for Him to function as our example?...No, Jesus did not need to be exactly like us to function as our example....He did not...need to be exactly like us, burdened with inherited inclinations to sin. It was enough for Him to become fully human....If Christ's nature was not exactly like ours, did He have an advantage over us?...Purity of nature could certainly be considered as an advantage....Christ's advantage affords salvation to humanity. (pp. 168-169)

If He did not have inherited inclinations to sin, how can He show me how to overcome my inherited inclinations? Here it is clearly stated that Christ had an advantage over us. Satan would immediately claim that Christ proved only that Adam could obey; that Christ proved nothing about us being able to obey. Thus Satan's claim that the sons and daughters of Adam could not obey has been disproved by no one, meaning that Satan was not fully defeated by Christ's life and death.

By Christ's atoning death, Satan was decisively and definitely defeated...After the cross God is not at risk at all....Christ's victory is not in jeopardy, threatened, or in peril....There is no way that God could thereafter lose the great controversy....Christ's blameless life and death already provided the full and sufficient grounds for the vindication of God's character....The cosmic vindication of God is the exclusive result of the sacrificial death of Christ....He decisively and once for all defeated Satan. (pp. 195-197)

If Satan was totally defeated by Christ, then why have we experienced 2,000 years of absolute misery and persecution? This would make God responsible for all the wars and atrocities of the past and the terrorism of today.

It is not the case that Jesus is making additional atonement as our Intercessor and our great High Priest in heaven....He is actually not making the final atonement but applying to us the results of the cross....The last generation of believers has no power to determine the time of probation's close by their performance....The activities of the last generation, as presented by the defenders of LGT, seem to be self-centered, focused on the accomplishments and perfect characters of that group. Last generation theology language is very anthropocentric....The work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary should be understood as the application of the benefits of the atonement already made on the cross, and not as a continuation of the work of atonement that began on the cross....The focus of LGT is on our characters and our actions instead of being God-centered people....Last generation theology unacceptably downgrades and reduces the meaning of Christ's death on the cross and its efficacy. It is Jesus (and not the last generation

saints) who irrevocably, permanently, irreversibly, and irretrievably defeats Satan, vindicates God, and secures eternity for the entire universe. (pp. 201-203, 206-207)

We are told here that that there is no final atonement in the Most Holy Place. This means that we are still in the Holy Place aspect of the atoning process. The statements about being human –centered instead of God-centered and downgrading the death of Christ are exactly what evangelicals have been hurling at us for 100 years, and now they are coming from our Seminary professors!

Jesus delays His coming as God desires to save everyone....The more people who make decisions for God, the sooner God could close the time of probation....Our actions have no power to “push” forward His coming....Nowhere in the Bible or in Ellen G. White’s writings is there a statement that the last generation of the faithful will defeat Satan and that by living perfect lives they will finally vindicate God and cause the finishing of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the closing of the great controversy. (pp. 215-216)

To say that the delay in Christ’s return is due only because God wants to save more souls sounds nice until we realize that every year that goes by ten times as many souls will end up in hell. Since more babies are being born every minute, should Christ wait indefinitely for them? Why does Ellen White say that all heaven is waiting to see us vindicate God’s name? If we cannot hasten or delay the second coming, then why did Ellen White say that we would have to remain on earth many more years because of insubordination?

In chapter 24 of *The Great Controversy*...there is nothing in this whole chapter showing that Ellen G. White taught that, before the close of probation, God’s people will reach the state of sinless perfection....There is nothing in this whole description that points to a state of absolute sinlessness for God’s people after the close of probation....Nowhere does Ellen G. White indicate that they will have to go through that time without their Savior....Ellen G. White...rebuffs the idea that she taught that the last generation will be in a sinless state during the time of trouble....God’s people will not, during the time of trouble, reflect the image of Christ absolutely perfectly....Ellen G. White did not hold the idea of the sinless perfection of the last generation during the final crisis....Nowhere does she teach that God’s people will reach a particular state of absolutely sinlessness before the close of probation and that, after the close of probation, they will no longer have sin in any shape or form....She constantly insists that sinlessness is unattainable in this life. God’s people will never reach a sinless state as long as they are in this flesh. (pp. 227-232)

This is a total denial of the meaning of the close of probation. In light of the repeated statements about what Ellen White did not teach, the following are just a few of the statements of what she did teach. “None could share the refreshing unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action.” (EW 71) After the close of probation, “God’s people fear that every sin has not been repented of.” (GC 619) “If the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them they would be overwhelmed...They have no concealed wrongs to reveal, their sins have gone beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out.” (GC 620) “There was no sin in [Christ] that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.” (GC 623) “There will be no atoning blood to cleanse from sin.” (PP 201) Everyone who by faith obeys God’s commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression.” (IHP 146) “[Christ] came to this world and lived a sinless life, that in His power His people might also live lives of sinlessness.” (RH April 1, 1902)

Good deeds are important for the salvation of others but not for our salvation. (p. 249)

This is pure evangelical teaching. They teach that good works (obedience) have nothing to do with personal salvation, but are useful for witnessing. However, Christ showed “that men and women, through His grace, might also live lives of perfect obedience. This is necessary to their salvation.” (RH March 15, 1906)

In the final chapter of this book the issues are summarized as follows:

- 1) Sin is being born with a fallen nature
- 2) Justification is being declared righteous only
- 3) Sanctification will never be completed and we will never become sinless
- 4) Satan charged that Adam and Eve could not keep the law (the reality is that he charged that the sons and daughters of Adam could not keep the law)
- 5) If Christ took our nature He would need a Savior
- 6) Christ’s death fully vindicated God with no need for a final atonement vindication
- 7) A sinless final generation dishonors the glory of God – He wins with or without us

As you have read the excerpts from this book, you have had the “privilege” of sitting at the feet of Desmond Ford. This book is exactly what he taught at Pacific Union College and still teaches. Now his theology is being taught at the highest levels of Adventist scholarship to a whole generation of aspiring pastors. This may be the most dangerous development I have seen in thirty years. Now more than ever we need to become fully intelligent and mature in our understanding of Adventism’s message and mission, because right now the “very elect” are being deceived.

Another book was written by George Knight with the title *End-time Events and the Last Generation*. This was a full attack on M.L. Andreasen’s book on the sanctuary. Knight’s book said that human beings have nothing to do with completing the great controversy (which makes COL 69 meaningless). Of course this demands a repudiation the messages of Jones and Waggoner (despite Ellen White saying that their message was the beginning of the loud cry, and to reject their message was to reject Christ who was the giver of their message). The book recognizes that Ford and Heppenstall taught the same gospel. Simply put, what we are witnessing in these books is just the fruit growing on the tree planted in the 1950’s and watered by Ford in the 1970’s.

Another book was published by the Pacific Union Conference entitled *In All Humility: Saying No to Last Generation Theology*. A few excerpts follow.

The Bible is not as clear on some aspects of eschatology as many think, and...numerous questions will remain unanswered as long as we are in this world. In addition,, we must also recognize that Ellen White’s comments are not always totally clear and that at times they may even seem somewhat inconsistent....This should not worry us unduly, as long as we have a proper understanding of her role as a “lesser light.”

There will, undoubtedly, remain many questions, and we may never find satisfying answers to all of them. However, we are not left with only question marks. There are a number of crucial things we can be absolutely certain about:

- We are sinful and will remain sinful as long as we are in this world.
- The goal of sinless perfection is beyond our reach. However, we have the promise that when Christ comes we will be...changed into perfect beings.

- From our human perspective it may seem that He has delayed His coming, but God has determined the time of the return of His Son.

From this book we learn that Ellen White is not clear about end-time events, that we will remain sinful until Jesus returns, and that there has been no real delay in Jesus' coming. These are exactly the same concepts we have encountered in the two previous books.

These books raise extraordinary challenges to the very heart of Adventist eschatology. If these concepts become mainstream in Adventist theology, all that we have taught about what the real issues are as God brings the great controversy to an end must be restructured. The importance of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant church of prophecy is virtually eliminated. Our beginnings in 1844 and our endings in the great time of trouble are not very significant. We are just one of many voices, each having some small aspect of the real truth about God, His character, and His government. Since Ellen White is not a reliable roadmap to the future, we might as well join with our evangelical colleagues, since our gospel seems to be the same as theirs, in proclaiming the soon return of Jesus to set up His millennial rule on earth.

As we speak, the very elect are being deceived. Now is the time, as never before, to know who we are and what we believe. The entire future of the Adventist movement is in our hands, and will be decided by our faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the calling of this movement into existence one hundred seventy-five years ago.