



# calvary at sínai

**The Law and the Covenants in  
Seventh-day Adventist History**

Paul E. Penno, Jr.

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Please contact the author for information regarding distribution of  
this document: [penno@sbcglobal.net](mailto:penno@sbcglobal.net)

Book design by CFI Graphics Division: [lwalper@cherokeefarms.com](mailto:lwalper@cherokeefarms.com)



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# Introduction

The understanding of the law and the two covenants has a rich and colorful history in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its ebb and flow has had high water marks as well as low. It reached its height in the 1888 message of the everlasting covenant as presented by E.J. Waggoner.

His key concept was that the new covenant and the old covenant can be seen as two parallel tracks that have run from the Fall of man until the time when Christ brings in the everlasting kingdom. They are primarily conditions of the heart. One is a ministration of righteousness. The other is a ministration of death. One is faith in the promise of God. The other is the self-dependent promise of the people to be obedient.

The low water mark of the covenants in Adventist history was the rejection of the 1888 message and its messengers. Some thought that Waggoner presented justification by faith as a “rider” in order to bring his understanding of the moral law in Galatians 3. Since they believed that the law in Galatians was the ceremonial law, they were biased against hearing the message of the covenants in the context of the gospel.

*Calvary at Sinai* chronicles this story in the latter part of the nineteenth century. History is like a puzzle with many pieces. The individual parts must interconnect perfectly in order for the picture to fit properly and make sense. To take one piece here and one piece there out of its setting is

to distort the picture. The approach we have taken here has been to assemble the data in such a way that the pieces connect in a coherent, chronological setting. Careful attention has been paid to letting the original witnesses speak for themselves. Conclusions have been drawn based upon the evidence.

There were certain events leading up to the 1888 Minneapolis Conference that precipitated a crisis. It did not just happen in a vacuum. The Sunday-law movement was gaining momentum. The law in Galatians had been vigorously discussed as early as 1856, when J. H. Waggoner expressed views about it being the moral law. Some of the leading Adventist writers took the position that Galatians dealt primarily with the ceremonial law.

How did E. J. Waggoner come to his understanding of righteousness by faith, the law, and the two covenants? He had a keen interest in Bible study, especially the writings of the Apostle Paul.

What happened at “that terrible conference”<sup>1</sup> at Battle Creek in 1886? Something occurred that caused D. M. Canright to decide that he had enough of Adventism. He left the church and became one of its bitterest opponents.

Some believed there was a conspiracy on the West Coast to bring in controversial topics to the Minneapolis Conference. Was there an East-West rivalry? What suspicions developed over the church prophetess, Ellen White, in that time period?

The year 1888 brought momentous opportunities and challenges to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. What was the key issue that created such a vigorous discussion? How do we know what E. J. Waggoner presented at the 1888 Minneapolis Conference, since no verbatim reports were taken?

Some have felt that the conference was all about the issue of the law in Galatians. But others saw the keynote of the gospel and justification by faith. Where does the truth lie? How are the law and the covenants related to each other? For that matter, what do they have to do with righteousness by faith?

The aftermath of the 1888 Minneapolis Conference was hard feelings and polarized positions on the law and the two covenants. There are sources, both published and unpublished, which provide documentation about events immediately following 1888. They tell an intriguing story of behind-the-scenes activities among church leadership in regard to the message and the messengers.

One commonly accepted view is that after Uriah Smith and George Butler made their confessions in 1890 and thereafter, they came to appreciate the light of righteousness by faith. However, the controversy over the law

in Galatians and the two covenants continued to play a role in church discussions long after the 1888 Minneapolis Conference.

*Calvary at Sinai* explores the battle over the law in Galatians and the two covenants. Did the brethren confess and embrace “the most precious message” of Christ our righteousness as presented by E. J. Waggoner through the theme of the two covenants? Why did Elder J. S. Washburn say that 1890 was “Minneapolis over again”?<sup>2</sup> Was the view of the law in Galatians and the two covenants, presented by E. J. Waggoner at the 1888 conference, endorsed by Ellen White? When did she speak to the issues of the law and the two covenants?

Only our history can tell the story.

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### Endnotes:

1. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, October 1, 1888, Battle Creek, Michigan.
2. Letter J. S. Washburn to E. G. White, April 17, 1890, Clarinda, Iowa. *Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis*, p. 174.

## chapter one

# The Covenants in Early Adventist Thinking

Many of the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers of the nineteenth century were typological covenant dispensationalists,<sup>1</sup> i.e., they believed that the new covenant followed the old covenant sequentially after the cross. In addition, the pioneers held a two-law position. The Ten Commandments were distinct from the typical ceremonial laws. Hence the ceremonial laws which were ordained under the old covenant were abolished at the cross, while the Ten Commandments were perpetual.

The evangelical Protestants opposed the Seventh-day Adventist position on the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments with a one-law theory.<sup>2</sup> Evangelicals claimed that both the moral and the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament were of Mosaic origin. They held the Mosaic law was abolished with the old covenant at the cross.

Evangelicals also held a covenant dispensationalism. This was the point of convergence between Seventh-day Adventists and evangelicals. At this point of convergence Seventh-day Adventists unwittingly conceded a crucial issue to their opponents.

Uriah Smith writing in 1877, expressed this covenant dispensationalism in the context of the sanctuary teaching:

The sanctuary of the old covenant must bear the same relationship to the sanctuary of the new covenant, which the old covenant itself bears to the new. . . . All agree that they stand as type and antitype. The first was the type and shadow; this is the antitype and substance. The sanctuary of that dispensation was the type; the sanctuary of this is the antitype.<sup>3</sup>

Uriah Smith's understanding of the typical earthly sanctuary was that it was associated with the old covenant, while the antitypical heavenly sanctuary was associated with the new covenant. This, led him to conclude there was a sequential old covenant-new covenant typological dispensationalism. The pioneer's typological understanding of Scripture interpretation led them to conclude that the old covenant was a type of the new covenant.

E. J. Waggoner observed this biblical typology of the ceremonial system in the Old Testament. He saw that it pointed forward to Christ as type met antitype.<sup>4</sup> But he also noted an experiential dimension in which certain Bible texts distinguished between the old and the new covenants. This aspect of biblical teaching had been overlooked by the pioneers.

The pioneer's typological understanding of Scripture interpretation led them to conclude that the old covenant itself was the type of the antitypical new covenant. The ceremonial law of the types in the Old Testament dispensation being fulfilled by Christ, the antitype, in the New Testament dispensation, led many of the pioneers to conclude that the old covenant type during the Old Testament dispensation was fulfilled by the new covenant antitype of the New Testament dispensation.

The Bible was divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. The typological relationship between the sacrifices and ceremonies of the old dispensation, pointed to the greater sacrifice of Christ presented in the new dispensation. Ellen White wrote: "The Christ typified in the former dispensation is the Christ revealed in the gospel dispensation."<sup>5</sup> Christ united the two testaments. The promise of the Old Testament was complemented by the fulfillment of the New Testament. "In the life and death of Christ, a light flashes back upon the past, giving significance to the whole Jewish economy, and making of the old and the new dispensations a complete whole."<sup>6</sup>

These two economies were like Adam and Eve who were “made in the image of God.” Adam alone was not the image of God. Eve alone was not the image of God. Adam and Eve together were the complete image of God. The Old Testament sanctuary, its sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood, and its multitude of ceremonies were made obsolete as mandatory forms of worship by the New Testament fulfillment in Christ; nevertheless, they remained a light from the past which was made clearer by “the life and death of Christ.” These two economies of the old and the new dispensations were sequential—the new following the old. Both were a revelation from God concerning the gospel.

However, there was another equally biblical understanding of the old covenant and new covenant dispensations. The old and the new covenants understood as a heart experience was a nuance that had been overlooked by the early pioneers. These two covenant experiences were two parallel dispensations which had manifested themselves concurrently both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The old covenant and the new covenant were two separate experiences which, as it were, ran on two parallel tracks from the time of Cain and Abel until the mark of the beast and the seal of God as spoken of in the Book of Revelation.

Undoubtedly the pioneer’s focus on the two economies of the Old and New Testaments, caused them to miss the Scriptural dimension of the old covenant and the new covenant as two distinct heart experiences. It is the purpose of this current essay to demonstrate from Seventh-day Adventist history how this took place.

Further, we can see that it was God’s purpose to correct this misunderstanding and bring to the attention of the church light on the old covenant and the new covenant as two different heart experiences. This was essential in that the everlasting covenant is the third angels’ message. The third angels’ message is the reason for the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its mission.

This typological dispensationalism of the Old Testament sanctuary and the antitype of the New Testament heavenly sanctuary, along with the two-law theory of the ceremonial law and the Ten Commandment law, became the early Adventist pioneer understanding of the Scripture with reference to the old covenant dispensation before the cross and the new covenant dispensation after the cross.

The history of the pioneer's interpretation of the law in Galatians 3 is essential for understanding the crisis that confronted the church at the 1888 Minneapolis Conference. Before 1857 some Adventist pioneers such as J. N. Andrews understood the law in Galatians 3:24 to be the Ten Commandments.<sup>7</sup> J. H. Waggoner maintained this in his book *The Law of God*.<sup>8</sup> Stephen Pierce maintained that the law in Galatians was "the law-system."<sup>9</sup> In discussing the "schoolmaster" of Galatians 3:24 Pierce explained—

that the Moral Law alone was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ we have no evidence. True, it is by this Law we have the knowledge of sin; but how it brings us to Christ we are unable to tell. It was by the ministration of this Law, or by the types and shadows the body of which is of Christ, that men under that dispensation were led to Christ, as it is by the ministration of the gospel, or its teachings that men are led to Christ under this dispensation.<sup>10</sup>

One thing is clear, Pierce understood the "schoolmaster" of Galatians 3:24 to mean the law of types and shadows of the old dispensation which led men to Christ. He included the moral law in that whole system of law, but he could not tell how the moral law led men to Christ in the old dispensation. The ministration of the whole system of law under the old dispensation was no longer needed with "the ministration of the gospel" or its teachings to lead men to Christ under the new dispensation. Pierce interpreted Galatians 3:24 typologically rather than a description of the heart experience. Indeed, there was further truth to be learned from Galatians 3.

As Uriah Smith later recalled this three-day discussion at Battle Creek, he wrote to W. A. McCutchen:

Bro. [J. H.] W[aggoner] took the position (or had taken it in his book) that the law in Galatians was the moral law. Bro. Pierce argued that it was the law system, "including the ceremonial law." I was then quite young in the truth, and as these meetings were new to me, I including both Bro. and Sr. White became convinced that Bro. Pierce had the right view, and J. H. W. was

wrong. Sr. White shortly after this had a vision in which this law question was shown her, and she immediately wrote J. H. W. that his position on the law was wrong, and Bro. Pierce was right. Bro. White then took Bro. W[aggoner]'s book out of the market, for we all then considered the matter settled.<sup>11</sup>

Later, in 1887, Ellen White was frustrated in seeking to recall what she had been shown. She could not remember what had been revealed in vision regarding J. H. Waggoner's book on the law:

I am troubled; for the life of me I cannot remember that which I have been shown in reference to the two laws. I cannot remember what the caution and warning referred to were that were given to Elder [J. H.] Waggoner. It may be that it was a caution not to make his ideas prominent at that time, for there was great danger of disunion.<sup>12</sup>

Ellen White initiated a search for this manuscript but it was never found. There were a number of different ideas about the law in Galatians 3 among Adventists in the 1850's, and setting forth one idea as foremost would tend toward disunity.<sup>13</sup>

Ellen White's reported vision on the law in Galatians, around 1857, during the discussions with J. H. Waggoner and Stephen Pierce, became the basis for Uriah Smith and George I. Butler later concluding, prior to the 1888 Minneapolis Conference, that Galatians 3 dealt exclusively with the ceremonial law.

What was the relationship between the cross and the old and new covenants in early Adventist theology? It was best represented by the illustration of the cross as the great divide between the old dispensation and the new dispensation, between the old covenant and the new covenant. So there was an Adventist typological dispensationalism that viewed the covenants as conditioned primarily by time boundaries. The two dispensations of the old covenant and the new covenant as two distinct heart experiences had not as yet been discovered by the Adventist pioneers.

Alberto Timm recognized this feature of early Adventist covenant theology. He wrote:

The Bible covenants were regarded as the basis of God's salvific relationship with His people. The transition from the old to the new covenant was viewed as marked by the death of the Son of God as "the testator" (Heb. 9:15-17), which installed Him as "the messenger" (Mal. 3:1) and "the mediator" (Heb. 8:6) of the new covenant.<sup>14</sup>

Timm's observation was certainly correct.

This was the one point at which Adventist covenant theology had a seeming convergence with the evangelical dispensationalists who abolished the moral law with the death of Christ. For evangelicals the two covenants were seen as sequential and time bound. For example, a contemporary Baptist, Robert Howell (1801-1868), wrote:

... I will offer but one other exposition of the "two covenants," and which will also serve to show the abrogation of the law, and the independent, and effective character of the gospel. . . .

Thus have we seen that the old covenant, or law, was fulfilled, and superseded by the new covenant, or gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup>

Here Howell uses the dispensational model of the two covenants to abolish the law with the old covenant and bring in the gospel of Jesus Christ with the new covenant.

This Adventist typological model of the old covenant succeeded by the new covenant created a problem for interpreting Galatians 3 which dealt with the heart experience of the everlasting covenant. With the typological model of the two covenants as sequential in nature, if the "schoolmaster" was the moral law, then Adventists would have to agree with the antinomians that the moral law was done away with at the cross. However, if the "schoolmaster" or "added law" represented the ceremonial law instituted with the old covenant, then it was done away with at the cross. This latter view was the preferred interpretation of the law in Galatians 3 by some Adventists. In the 1850's there was a diversity of views on this matter within Adventist thinking.

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## Endnotes:

1. This phrase is not used in a pejorative sense. It expresses one aspect of biblical truth regarding the two covenants.
2. Uriah Smith outlined the one-law theory. "While the other view, that there was only one law previous to the death of Christ, which was at that time all abolished, making necessary a new enactment for whatever law we have since that time, is contrary to the plainest principles of God's government, arrays Bible against Bible, and is utterly execrable in the conclusions to which it leads." Uriah Smith, "The Two Laws. (Continued.)," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 60, 3 (January 16, 1883), p. 40. Hereafter *RH*.
3. Uriah Smith, *The Sanctuary and the Twenty-three Hundred Days of Daniel VIII*, 14 (Battle Creek, Michigan: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1877), p. 181. Emphasis his.
4. "The antitype of every portion of the ceremonial law may be traced in the work of Christ, but not so with the moral law." E. J. Waggoner, "The Sabbath of the Decalogue," *The Signs of the Times* 11, 31 (August 13, 1885), p. 489. Hereafter *ST*.
5. Ellen G. White, "The Two Dispensations," *The Review and Herald* (March 2, 1886), paragraph 3. Hereafter *RH*.
6. *Ibid.*, paragraph 4.
7. "Had the law been abolished at the death of Christ, it could not have been a schoolmaster many years afterward to bring the Galatians to Christ." J. N. Andrews, "Discourse with Brother Carver," *RH* 2, 4 (September 16, 1851), p. 29. Also, "The 'schoolmaster' sets before him the righteous requirements of God's law, and with unrelenting severity, as he is not able to keep it, compels him to exclaim, 'O wretched man that I am'. . . . He is now convinced that he cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, and in his despair, he flies to Jesus Christ." J. N. Andrews, "The Perpetuity of the Law of God", *RH* 1, 5 (January, 1851), p. 34.
8. J. H. Waggoner, *The Law of God: An Examination of the Testimony of Both Testaments* (Rochester, N. Y.: Advent Review Office, 1854), p. 81.
9. S[tephen] P[ierce ], "Answer to Bro. Merriam's Questions Respecting the Law of Gal. 3," *RH* 10, 23 (October 8, 1857), p. 180.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
11. Uriah Smith, Letter to W. A. McCutchen, Aug. 8, 1901, *Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho: 1988), p. 305. Hereafter referred to as *MMM*.
12. E. G. White, Letter to G. I. Butler and U. Smith, April 5, 1887, Basel, Switzerland. *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (The Ellen G. White Estate: Washington, D. C.: 1987), p. 32. Hereafter *EGW 1888*.
13. Tim Crosby, "Using the Law to No Profit," *RH* 163, 20 (May 15, 1986), p. 525.

14. Alberto Ronald Timm, "The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages, 1844-1863: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines," p. 407. Emphasis added.
15. Robert Boyte C. Howell, *The Covenants* (Southern Baptist Publication Society: Charleston: 1855), pp. 104, 105.

## chapter two

# Waggoner on the Law

By 1884 E. J. Waggoner was advocating that Galatians 3 dealt with the moral law. Quoting Galatians 3:24 which spoke of the “schoolmaster,” Waggoner explained: “Notice that the law does not point to Christ—that office is intrusted [sic.] to something else—but it brings us, yea, drives and forces us to him as our only hope.”<sup>1</sup> The Ten Commandments convict of sin, but the law can not save. Hence, the law drives the sinner to Christ.

This was Waggoner’s seminal article on the law in Galatians.<sup>2</sup> Its themes would be more fully explored with respect to the two covenants in the future. But for the time being, it provoked no controversy.

It may be thought that E. J. Waggoner picked up his views of the law in Galatians from his father, J. H. Waggoner. However, his view of the relationship of the moral law to the covenants was much different from his father’s view.

E. J. Waggoner agreed with his father that the “schoolmaster” in Galatians 3 was the moral law. But that was as far as the similarities went. J. H. Waggoner taught that the old covenant terminated with Christ and the new covenant was instituted by Christ. J. H. Waggoner said: “We know that the New Testament, or covenant, dates from the death of the Testator, the very point where the first covenant ceased.”<sup>3</sup> This was the typological dispensationalism with its focus primarily on the time element of the two economies of the Old and the New Testament.

E. J. Waggoner recognized the time element of the two economies of the Old Testament and the New Testament. As early as 1881 he referred to the “Christian dispensation.”<sup>4</sup> Speaking of the Sabbath he referred to both dispensations, “If the seventh day was observed in Paradise, was kept by the patriarchs, and was the recognized Sabbath under all the Mosaic dispensation, all the time that has been lost must be in the Christian era, the possibility of which will be duly considered.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, at least once he referred to the Mosaic dispensation as the old covenant:

So it was by virtue of the second or new covenant that pardon was secured to those who offered the sacrifices provided for in the ordinances of divine service connected with the old or first covenant.<sup>6</sup>

Even in this, he viewed the types of the Mosaic dispensation not as a means of pardon, but an expression of faith in Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. To E. J. Waggoner, the necessity of the heart experience of the new covenant was available for people before the cross as well as after the cross.

Thus, when Waggoner taught the biblical exposition of the two covenants as two different experiences in the plan of salvation he later [1893] explained it this way,

... the “Christian dispensation” began for man as soon, at least, as the fall. There are indeed, two dispensations, a dispensation of sin and death, and a dispensation of righteousness and life, but these two dispensations have run parallel from the fall. God deals with men as individuals, and not as nations, nor according to the century in which they live. No matter what the period of the world’s history, a man can at any time pass from the old dispensation into the new.<sup>7</sup>

E. J. Waggoner taught that the two covenants from the gospel perspective, were more appropriately seen as conditions of the individual heart. This biblical perspective needed attention from Adventists. The typological dispensationalism of the old and the new covenants was a biblical perspective, but not the only one.

E. J. Waggoner was fully aware of the potential for controversy that the exposition of the heart experience of the law and the covenants might

have within the denomination. Elder W. C. White later [1890] wrote of a private conversation which he and E. J. Waggoner had about the matter. Elder White wrote to Dan T. Jones who was the secretary of the General Conference:

As regards the controversy over the law in Gal. I have never taken the part, or occupied the position in this matter which Eld. Butler supposed, or which it appears you have thought I did from the statements in your letter. In the spring of 1885, while walking in the woods with Eld. [E. J.] Waggoner, he introduced two points over which he was perplexed. First was the apparent necessity of taking positions while pursuing his editorial work that would be in conflict with Eld. Canright's writings; the second was with reference to the point in controversy between Elds. Smith, Canright, and my father [James White] on the one side, and Elds. [J. H.] Waggoner and [J. N.] Andrews on the other: I expressed my opinion freely that he and the editors of the Signs should teach what they believed to be truth, if it did conflict with some things written by Eld. Canright and others, . . . .<sup>8</sup>

In this reported conversation which Elder W. C. White had with E. J. Waggoner in 1885 it is evident that Elders Smith, Canright, and James White held the ceremonial law position in Galatians 3 and Elders J. H. Waggoner and J. N. Andrews held the moral law position in Galatians 3.

There were differing views regarding which law was represented by the "schoolmaster" or "added law" in Galatians 3 within Adventist thinking during the 1880's. This tension had existed since the 1850's remaining unresolved. This decades-old problem was to become a crisis in the later part of the 1880's.

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## Endnotes:

1. E. J. Waggoner, "‘Under the Law’ (Continued.)," *ST* 10, 35 (September 11, 1884), p. 554.
2. The series ran from August 28 through September 18, 1884.
3. J. H. Waggoner, "The New Covenant," *RH* 4, 1 (May 26, 1853), p. 3.
4. E. J. Waggoner, "Precept and Practice," *ST* 7, 22 (June 9, 1881), p. 259.
5. E. J. Waggoner, "A Definite Sabbath," *ST* 7, 36 (September 22, 1881), p. 427.
6. E. J. Waggoner, "Lesson 19.—Hebrews 9:1-7," *RH* 67, 4 (January 28, 1890), p. 62.
7. E. J. Waggoner, "The Day of Rest," *The Present Truth* 9, 23 (September 7, 1893), p. 356.
8. W. C. White, Letter to Dan T. Jones, April 8, 1890.

## chapter three

# The Gospel Sickle

**EJ** Waggoner's position on the moral law in Galatians 3 in the *Signs* articles<sup>1</sup> did not go unnoticed by the church leaders in Battle Creek, Michigan. The first salvo, in what was to become an all-out-war over the law in Galatians and the covenants, was the emergence of a new journal from Battle Creek. The next move would be a visit from the General Conference President himself, Elder George I. Butler. He would journey to Healdsburg College, California, and find out what was happening in the classroom where Waggoner taught.

The Gospel Sickle was published in Battle Creek in competition with the *Signs* published in Oakland, California. Ellen White detected the competitive nature of the two journals. She wrote to E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones about it:

The "*Sickle*" was started in Battle Creek, but it is not designed to take the place of the "*Signs*", and I cannot see that it is really needed. The "*Signs of the Times*" is needed and will do that which the "*Sickle*" cannot. I know if the "*Signs*" is kept full of precious articles, food for the people, that every family should have it. But a pain comes to my heart every time I see the

“*Sickle*”. I say it is not as God would have it. If Satan can get in dissension among us as a people, he will only be too glad.<sup>2</sup>

Elders George Butler, Uriah Smith, and D. M. Canright were regular contributors to *The Gospel Sickle* using it as a vehicle for promoting their views of the law and the covenants in opposition to those views published in the *Signs* by E. J. Waggoner. For as long as the *Sickle* was published, from February 1, 1886 to December, 1888, Ellen White could detect the “dissension” in it.

Elder Dudley M. Canright, one of the principal contributors to the *Sickle* defined his concept of the covenants:

Now what is a covenant? Webster thus defines it: “A mutual consent or agreement of two or more persons to do or forbear some act or thing, a contract; a writing containing the terms of an agreement or contract between parties.” It will be readily seen that this agreement made between God and Israel in Ex. 19, is a covenant in the fullest sense of the term. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Canright took his definition of the Bible covenant from Webster’s dictionary. Thus he saw God’s covenant as a contract between Himself and Israel.

Later Canright used terminology that revealed his underlying assumptions:

Some persons maintain that all God required under the old dispensation was simply outward obedience to his law. . . . They had the Spirit of God in the Old Dispensation. . . . The fact is that God designed his people to be just as spiritual during the old covenant age as he does now.<sup>4</sup>

Canright associated the “old covenant age” with the “Old Dispensation.” Canright’s assumption was that the Spirit of God was in fulfillment of the old covenant. He did not understand that God’s everlasting covenant (the new covenant) was the only covenant which promised the Holy Spirit. It is true “that God designed his people to be just as spiritual

during” “the Old Dispensation.” But that could never be possible with “the old covenant.” Here again, the biblical typological dispensationalism was dominant in Canright’s thinking to the neglect of the equally biblical paradigm of the two different heart experiences of the old and the new covenants.

Uriah Smith was in harmony with this Canright’s understanding of the typological dispensational emphasis on the time element of the old and the new covenants, when he said, “The new covenant superseded the old when Christ ratified it with his own blood upon the cross.”<sup>5</sup> Smith’s diagram of the two covenants published in the Review indicated his typological understanding of their relationship in the Old Testament and the New Testament.<sup>6</sup> It led Smith and his colleagues to overlook and exclude the heart experience of the new covenant before and after the cross. The was the fuller dimension of the biblical truth of the everlasting covenant.

Canright insisted:

The new covenant, or the gospel, then, began to be preached by Jesus Christ. . . . The mediator of the new covenant had now come to supersede the old covenant; but Jesus was careful to have the new covenant offered only to the Jews; because the Lord had promised that this new covenant was to be made with the house of Israel.<sup>7</sup>

Here Canright asserted the sequence of the old covenant followed by the new covenant. It was apparent in his thinking that the old covenant was God’s plan of salvation for the Jews, but it was superseded by the new covenant with the coming of Jesus. This seems to point to a new method and means of salvation, or a fundamental change in God’s dealings with man, or both, implicit with a time-based transition from the old to the new covenant. This would later create uncomfortable complications for Canright, making it difficult for him to maintain key Bible doctrines such as the Sabbath.

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## Endnotes:

1. *ST* August 28 through September 18, 1884.
2. E. G. White, Letter to E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, February 18, 1887, Basel, Switzerland. EGW 1888, p. 25.
3. D. M. Canright, "The Law to the Gentiles. 4.—Why God Made a Covenant with Israel, and How the Gentiles Were to Come into It," *The Gospel Sickle* 1, 5 (April 1, 1886), p. 37. Hereafter *GS*.
4. D. M. Canright, "The Law to the Gentiles. 6.—God Required Spiritual Service of His People During the Jewish Age," *GS* 1, 7 (May 1, 1886), pp. 52, 53. Emphasis his.
5. U. Smith, "The Sanctuary," *GS* 1, 8 (May 15, 1886), p. 58.
6. See Appendix A for Smith's diagram of the two covenants.
7. D. M. Canright, "The New Covenant," *GS* 1, 10 (June 15, 1886), pp. 76, 77. Cf. Anonymous, "The New Covenant Made with the Jews," *GS* 1, 11 (July 1, 1886), p. 81. Emphasis supplied.

## chapter four

# Elder George Butler and the Law in Galatians

**G**eorge I. Butler, president of the General Conference, was in Healdsburg, California, by mid-April, 1886. What he discovered on the West coast was anything but reassuring to him. Elder Butler gave a full report of his visit in California to Ellen White:

One other matter I will speak of, which makes me feel badly. I learned when upon the Coast by the inquiries of those who had attended the College at Healdsburg, of me [sic.], that there had been quite strenuous efforts made by E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones to impress upon the minds of the theological students that the “added law” of Galatians 3 and the law which is “our Schoolmaster” to bring us to Christ is the moral law of the commandments. The same arguments are passing more or less occasionally through the Signs. Some of these students come to me to enquire [sic.] about this and wanted my opinion. You cannot fail to remember that this question has been agitated largely in the past.

I am positive that by far the largest number of our people and of our ministers hold the view that the “added law” added because of the transgression of the moral law is the typical remedial system pointing to Christ and that law which is the main subject of discussion by the apostle in Galatians is the ceremonial law.

Elder J. H. Waggoner was always much opposed to this view, and I judge the young brethren in the office share his sentiments. Your husband, Elder Smith, Canright, myself and many others have held this view. But some of us have felt we ought to keep rather quiet on this subject, seeing there was not unanimity of opinion on it by all our leading brethren. But when we learn that the opposite view held by the minority is being vigorously pushed in one of our colleges among our Bible students and published to the world in the *Signs*, I confess it does not please me very well. I have written Brother Jones about it and talked with Brother Brownsberger and E. J. Jones about it. They know this to be true and Professor Brownsberger regretted it much. I heard it intimated years ago that you had light concerning the added law, to the effect that it related to the remedial system rather than the moral law. I think this question ought in some way to be set at rest. It would be a most bitter pill to many of our leading brethren to be compelled to see the idea taught generally, that the law which was added because of transgression was the moral law itself.

We believe that law to have always existed but that its transgression required another law to be added because of sin, viz., a remedy for sin. This brings in the law of types and shadows, leading to Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Elder Butler framed his position on the ceremonial law in Galatians 3.

Elder Butler held his position on the ceremonial law in Galatians 3 because he believed Ellen White was given light on the subject.<sup>2</sup> He believed

that the only law that could be “added” (Galatians 3:19) at the time of Sinai was the ceremonial law, since the Ten Commandments had always existed. He was not pleased with the alternate view that was published in the *Signs* by E. J. Waggoner and taught at Healdsburg College by A. T. Jones.

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### **Endnotes:**

1. G. I. Butler, Letter to Ellen G. White, June 20, 1886, Madison, Wisconsin. *MMM*, pp. 18, 19.
2. G. I. Butler, Letter to Ellen G. White, August 23, 1886, Mount Vernon, Ohio.

## chapter five

# Waggoner on Galatians

The Sabbath School lessons were published in *The Youth's Instructor*. From April-July, 1886, the topic was on the law. These lessons were authored by E. J. Waggoner. Elder Butler wrote to E. G. White about them:

... Elder Underwood and others have told me about the effect of the articles in the SIGNS and Sabbath School lessons, in various localities, and the Law in Galatians. The positions taken are causing great debate, and stirring up a spirit of discussion and controversy and making trouble.<sup>1</sup>

The Sabbath School lessons were set up on a question and answer format with a Bible text providing the answer. Waggoner asked:

1. From what has Christ redeemed us? Gal. 3:13, first part.
2. What is the keeping of the commandments? 1 John 5:3.
3. If keeping the commandments is love, can it be also the curse of which Paul speaks?
4. Upon whom does the curse of the law fall? Gal. 3:10. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Through this line of questioning, Waggoner identified the law in Galatians 3 as the Ten Commandments. Because these lessons were studied by the whole church it received a wider audience beyond the readership of the *Signs*. Thus, it provoked a lot of discussion. It put Elder Butler in a position where he felt he had to do something.

If anything cemented Waggoner's appointment with controversy, it was a nine-part series of articles on the law in Galatians 3 which he wrote for the *Signs*.<sup>3</sup> This was the first comprehensive exposition he had published on that chapter. He believed that the law in Galatians 3 was the moral law. "There is probably no portion of Scripture which is more commonly supposed to give 'aid and comfort' to the enemies of the law of God, than the third chapter of Galatians."<sup>4</sup> But he reassured his readers if they would hear him out, they would discover it to be a strong bulwark in defense of God's law.

Abraham was the father of all faithful believers in Christ. The apostle Paul wrote:

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.<sup>5</sup>

In his own words Waggoner explained these verses:

Having shown that even Abraham was not justified before God by his own works, Paul shows that the promise is to none but the children of Abraham; and since the children of Abraham are those only who have the same faith that he had, only those that are of faith can receive the promise.<sup>6</sup>

Then Waggoner quoted Galatians 3:10 which Elders Butler, Canright, and Smith applied to the ceremonial law: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the

law to do them.” He put his finger on biblical support for identifying the law here in this verse. Waggoner explained: “These words are quoted from Deut. 27:26, and Jer. 11:2-4, in both of which places they have unmistakable reference to the ten commandments.”<sup>7</sup>

The apostle Paul explained the curse of the law: “For Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith’” (Galatians 3:13, 14). The curse of the law was upon sin and disobedience resulting in death. Christ was made a curse for us so that through faith we might receive the blessing of Abraham.

Waggoner was fully conscious of the controversial position he was taking on the law in Galatians 3. He observed: “Since some . . . have supposed that the third of Galatians refers principally to the ceremonial law, it may not be amiss to show briefly why it is impossible that the ceremonial law should be the subject of discourse in that chapter.”<sup>8</sup>

First, the ordinances never condemned anyone. They taught the gospel in the “Jewish age.” Second, neither we today nor the Gentile Galatians could be said to have been redeemed from the ceremonial law. But we Gentiles are under the condemnation of the moral law and locked up by it. It revealed all mankind to be sinners.<sup>9</sup>

The apostle Paul explained the relationship between the law and the promise: “And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect” (Galatians 3:17).

Waggoner pointed out that the law “was the basis” or “foundation of the promise” or “one of the terms of the covenant.” On this point he was in agreement with other Adventist writers. A little further on he said: “As the commandments were the condition of the Abrahamic covenant, so they are of what is known as ‘the second covenant,’ which is in every respect the same as that made with Abraham. See Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10.”<sup>10</sup>

From these comments we can see that Waggoner did not understand the new covenant as beginning with the first advent of Christ. The new covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ. But “the covenant was confirmed

in Christ to Abraham . . . in anticipation.”

“The commandments were the condition of the Abrahamic covenant. . . . Christ taught . . . obedience to the law. . . . Matthew 5:17-19; 19:17; Luke 16:17.”<sup>11</sup>

Waggoner’s further exposition dealt with Galatians 3:15: “. . . Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.” Waggoner explained: “It is admitted, even by antinomians, that the law of God was in full force until the death of Christ, and therefore Gal. 3:15 should convince them that it is in full force now.”<sup>12</sup> So Waggoner was not a covenant dispensationalist and not an antinomian, though he agreed along with the antinomians that the law in Galatians 3 was the Ten Commandments. The antinomians attempted to do away with the law because they were covenant dispensationalists.

Where Waggoner really distinguished himself from his Adventist contemporaries was in seeing the covenant made by God with Abraham as “in every respect” the new covenant. The old covenant, on the other hand, was made *by Israel’s* promise to God as a nation at Sinai. Picking up the phraseology of Galatians 3:17 Waggoner asked:

What covenant was it that “was confirmed before of God in Christ”? . . .

The promise was that Abraham should be “heir of the world” (Rom. 4:11), and that in his seed all nations should be blessed. The condition was that he should walk before God and be perfect. Gen. 17:1-8. But this was not such a covenant as was made with the Israelites at Horeb. That one contained no reference to Christ, and no provision for the forgiveness of sins; the one with Abraham was confirmed “in Christ” (Gal. 3:17) and was made not on condition that he should be righteous by his own unaided efforts, but was made on condition of his having the righteousness of faith. Compare Rom. 4:11 with 3:22-25. This of course involved the forgiveness of his sins; and so we see that the covenant with Abraham (which is the one referred to in this chapter) was exactly the same as “the second covenant,” which is made with us. The covenant made at Horeb, and called “the first covenant,” although it was after

that made with Abraham, was, as we have before learned, only for the purpose of showing the people the need of the help promised in the Abrahamic or second covenant.<sup>13</sup>

For Waggoner the condition of the new covenant given to Abraham was the law of God. The condition was fulfilled by Christ who gave “the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14). There was only one condition for salvation. Waggoner said: “Faith in Christ is the only condition of salvation.”<sup>14</sup>

Why then the law? Waggoner contemporized the question. “If we are saved by grace, what need have we of the law?”<sup>15</sup> The apostle Paul answered: “It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Galatians 3:19).

George Butler had already gone on record with Ellen White about the “added” law. He had written to Ellen White:

“It would be a most bitter pill to many of our leading brethren to be compelled to see the idea taught generally, that the law which was added because of transgression was the moral law itself.”<sup>16</sup>

He believed the whole church would be sold over to antinomianism if the ceremonial law interpretation of Galatians 3:19 was surrendered.

The idea of the law being “added” sounded like it just came into existence at Mount Sinai. No law-abiding Seventh-day Adventist would hear of such a thing. They believed the law was co-existent with God. It was no wonder then, that Butler and others viewed the “added” law as the typical remedial system given to Moses.

But Waggoner pointed out that the words “spoken” or “emphasized” were more precise than the King James Version translation “added” (Galatians 3:19). “It was *spoken* because of transgression.” Waggoner affirmed: “. . . the law was already in existence, and known to man, although only by tradition; but now the Lord added it in written form.”<sup>17</sup>

A parallel passage to which Waggoner referred was Romans 5:20: “Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.” Explained

Waggoner: “The ‘entering’ of the law was at Sinai. Why did it enter?— That the offense (sin) which previously existed might abound.”<sup>18</sup> This was Luther’s first use of the law. The law was emblazoned at Sinai so that they would recognize their utter sinfulness. “. . . It was necessary for men to see the real nature of sin, in order that they might seek the grace that is in Christ, which alone can take away sin.”<sup>19</sup>

D. M. Canright represented the brethren in the East when he wrote about the “added law.”

. . . The second law was added to point to the promised seed till he should come. . . . Why was this law given? . . . “It was added because of transgressions, *till the seed should come*.” Then it was not the moral law; for that does not point to Christ, nor say anything about the coming of the seed, while the law of sacrifices, types, and shadows, related wholly to that promised seed.<sup>20</sup>

So Canright viewed the law in Galatians 3 as the ceremonial law. In addition, he interpreted the coming of the seed to be Christ’s first advent anticipated by the sacrifices and types. In doing this, he denied the function of the moral law in pointing us to Christ as the only means of solving the sin problem.

However, Waggoner kept in view the full scope of God’s promise to Abraham. The cross was of strategic importance in ratifying the covenant, but its ultimate fulfillment would not be complete “. . . till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. . . .” (Galatians 3:19b).

What is the coming of the seed? Certainly, not ultimately, the first advent of Christ, Waggoner replied. God promised Abraham, “And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies” (Genesis 22:17). Christ’s enemies as well as Satan would not be removed until the second coming (Revelation 19:11-21).<sup>21</sup>

The Apostle Paul continued: “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed” (Galatians 3:23). Waggoner observed: “The idea of bondage is everywhere connected with sin. It is a cruel master.”<sup>22</sup> The law “shuts up” its violator. He was kept “in ward.” The only way of escape was “the faith” of Jesus which

brought sweet release from certain death. Waggoner saw the movement of this passage in Galatians 3 as descriptive of the law's action upon the heart of the individual sinner. He did not see this passage through the paradigm of a typological old covenant succeeded by the new covenant dispensationalism; however biblical that might be (see for example, 2 Cor. 3; Heb. 9:1).

Waggoner asserted that the law did not refer to the ceremonies because they never preceded faith in Christ. The sinner believed in Christ first as his Saviour from sin, and then by faith in his Substitute brought the prescribed sacrifice. The ceremonial law never locked up the sinner, but it was possible to be locked up by the moral law before it drove the sinner to the faith of Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Next, Waggoner gave attention to verse 24. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). He explained: The law served as a correctional officer in prison. It locked up its violator. Plus the law, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, literally drove the sinner to Christ. The law hemmed the sinner in through personal guilt. It provided no recourse for freedom. The sinner only learned from Christ, who was the perfect embodiment of the law, how to walk in righteousness and consequent liberty.

The Apostle Paul spoke of the coming of "faith." "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:25). In Christ was the perfect law of liberty. The forgiven sinner walked free in Him. Therefore, the believer was no longer under law, but under grace. He walked in perfect harmony with the law because of Christ. When the forgiven and cleansed sinner walked in harmony with the law through Christ he was "no longer under a school master." The law had nothing against one who was in harmony with it.

Referring to the "law was our schoolmaster," Waggoner commented:

The past tense can be used here only by those who have come to Christ and have been justified by faith, as Paul shows in the next verse. Since the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, it must still be the schoolmaster (*pedagogue*) to those who are not in Christ, and must retain that office until every one who will accept Christ is brought to him. Therefore the

law will be a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, as long as probation lasts. But the Levitical law passed away hundreds of years ago; therefore it cannot be the law referred to here.<sup>24</sup>

In Waggoner's view, Galatians 3:24 was not a typological covenant dispensational text. It did not say the law was abolished at the cross. What Galatians 3:24 *did* say was that for the Christian, the law's function as a correctional officer ended when he was released by Christ the Saviour from sin. So the "schoolmaster" had a role in every sinner's life no matter whether they lived in the old dispensation or in the new dispensation.

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## Endnotes:

1. G. I. Butler, Letter to Ellen G. White, August 23, 1886, Mount Vernon, Ohio. Emphasis his.
2. E. J. Waggoner, "The Sabbath-School. Third Sabbath in July. Lesson 13.—Redeemed from the Curse of the Law," *The Youth's Instructor* 34, 26 (June 30, 1886), p. 103.
3. This series ran from July 8-September 2, 1886.
4. E. J. Waggoner, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 1." *ST* (July 8, 1886), p. 406.
5. Galatians 3:7-9.
6. E. J. Waggoner, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 1." *ST* (July 8, 1886), p. 406.
7. *Ibid.*
8. E. J. Waggoner, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 9," *ST* 12, 34 (September 2, 1886), p. 534.
9. *Ibid.*
10. E. J. Waggoner, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 2," *ST* 12, 27 (July 15, 1886), p. 423.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. E. J. Waggoner, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 3," *ST* 12, 28 (July 22, 1886), p. 438.
15. *Ibid.*
16. G. I. Butler, Letter to Ellen G. White, June 20, 1886, Madison, Wisconsin.
17. *loc. cit.*

18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. D. M. Canright, *The Two Laws* (Review and Herald, Battle Creek, Michigan: 1886), pp. 9, 10. Emphasis his.
21. E. G. Waggoner, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 4," *ST* 12, 29 (July 29, 1886), p. 454.
22. E. J. Waggoner, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 8," *ST* 12, 33 (August 26, 1886), p. 518.
23. E. J. Waggoner, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 9," *ST* 12, 34 (September 2, 1886), p. 534.
24. *Ibid.*

## chapter six

# “That Terrible Conference”

By August, 1886, Elder Butler was pleading to Sister White in Switzerland, to settle the law issue in Galatians that was facing the church.

Of course it would be quite a shock to me, after studying the question so long and having it seem so clear to me, if it should be shown to you the position I hold was wrong. But I feel sure I would accept it and at least keep quiet if I could not clearly understand it. ... May God guide you, my dear Sister, and if you have light to help me to move carefully, I shall be very glad.<sup>1</sup>

When there was no reply from Ellen White after repeated appeals, Butler complained to her.

But when Dr. Waggoner came out in our pioneer paper with nine long articles directly presenting the subject, I felt that this course could not go on. So I wrote to you several times, but got no reply.<sup>2</sup>

With the General Conference session in Battle Creek approaching, November 18, 1886, Elder Butler wrote an open letter to E. J. Waggoner entitled, *The Law in the Book of Galatians*.<sup>3</sup> It was distributed to all the delegates of the conference.

Two days before the opening meeting he wrote in ominous tones to Ellen White:

We expect to call our good *Signs* brethren to an account for the way they have done in reference to some of the disputed points of our faith, the law in Galatians. They have been publishing a lot of articles in the *Signs* about their position, setting that forth in our pioneer paper as the opinion of this denomination.<sup>4</sup>

Elder Butler sought to maintain strict control over the theological content of the denominational journal, the *Signs*. He decided to handle the conflict by the appointment of a Theological Committee to discuss the matter and make a recommendation to the general session. Butler explained to Ellen White what transpired within the committee:

Brother E. J. Waggoner came on, . . . loaded for the conflict. The Theological Committee was ordered. I was to act as chairman but declined as I, being a party in the matter might be supposed to favor one side. Elder Haskell was chosen as Chairman and appointed the Committee. It stood four—Haskell, Whitney, Wilcox and Waggoner in favor of the *Signs* position. Five—Smith, Canright, Covert, J. H. Morrison and self opposed. We had an argument of several hours but neither side was convinced. The question was whether we should take this into the Conference and have a big public fight over it or not. I could not advise it and all thought it would be most unhappy and result only in heat and debate. I did advise and draw up preambles and resolutions bearing upon our public course in such matters.<sup>5</sup>

The split of the committee meant that Butler did not get all he had hoped to gain.

Elder S. N. Haskell, president of the California Conference, was chairman of the committee. Elder Butler was frustrated with Haskell's dissimulation:

But Brother Haskell comes on and comes into my private family, enjoying my hospitality throughout the meeting, with Brother B. L. Whitney also both filled with this spirit of opposition. They knew well my feelings. They knew well what perplexity and trouble of mind I had over these things and yet their influence sustained Dr. Waggoner every way they knew how during the whole meeting. Their great effort was to keep Dr. Waggoner from being censured and help him all they could.<sup>6</sup>

Elder Butler had hoped to gain a public censure of Elder Waggoner. What he received was a compromise. The General Conference session passed a resolution which was obviously aimed at Jones and Waggoner. It was directed to editors and teachers in the Adventist school system. The resolution was a slap on their hands. It said, that boards, Sabbath School leaders, and editors of publications should—

. . . not . . . permit doctrinal views not held by a fair majority of our people, to be made part of the public instruction of said schools, or to be published in our denominational papers . . . before they are examined and approved by the leading brethren of experience.<sup>7</sup>

The tensions that existed between brethren over the theological issues was palpable.

Elder Butler looked back upon the 1886 Conference as one of the worst experiences of his life. It literally made him sick. He wrote to Ellen White:

My mind has been much exercised over these things, and I cannot keep them from agitating me much, because the whole matter seemed to me so unjust and inconsistent, but I rallied

after two months of sickness, and was finally able to go through *that terrible conference* [1886] we had here the last held in Battle Creek.<sup>8</sup>

The theological and personal conflict at the conference was so intense it made Elder Butler sick.

Ellen White agreed with him on one thing. She replied to Elder Butler:

You speak, dear brother, of that terrible conference, the last held in Battle Creek, while I was in Switzerland. That conference was presented to me in the night season. My guide said, "Follow me; I have some things to show you." He led me where I was a spectator of the scenes that transpired at that meeting. I was shown the attitude of some of the ministers, yourself in particular, at that meeting, and I can say with you, my brother, it was a *terrible conference*.<sup>9</sup>

Heaven had recorded the events transpiring within the church and revealed them to Ellen White in far off Europe.

The animosities and rancor that would later flourish in the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference were all aroused by the time of the 1886 Battle Creek Conference, primarily over the issue of the law in Galatians 3.

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## Endnotes:

1. G. I. Butler, Letter to Ellen G. White, August 23, 1886, Mount Vernon, Ohio, *MMM*, p. 23.
2. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, March 31, 1887, Battle Creek, Michigan.
3. George I. Butler, *The Law in the Book of Galatians: Is It the Moral Law, or Does It Refer to that System of Laws Peculiarly Jewish?* (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review & Herald Publishing House, 1886).
4. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, Nov. 16, 1886, Battle Creek, Michigan. *MMM*, p. 30.

5. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, December 16, 1886, Plainfield, Wisconsin. *MMM*, p. 43.
6. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, October 1, 1888, Battle Creek, Michigan. *MMM*, p. 96.
7. *RH*, (Dec. 14, 1886), p. 779.
8. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, October 1, 1888, Battle Creek, Michigan. Emphasis supplied.
9. E. G. White, Letter to George I. Butler, October 14, 1888, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *EGW 1888*, pp. 92, 93. Emphasis supplied.

## chapter seven

# D. M. Canright

Elder Butler received a devastating blow on February 17, 1887. It was to be the first fallout from “that terrible conference” of 1886. Butler listened as his old friend and colleague, Dudley Canright, asked to be disfellowshipped from the Otsego, Michigan, church. Butler reported the reason for Canright’s decision to Ellen White.

He talked perhaps three-fourths of an hour or more. He said in substance that he could go no longer with Seventh-day Adventists, he had ceased to believe that the law was binding, and did not expect to keep another sabbath. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The last straw for Canright was evidently the 1886 conference and the experience he had on the Theological Committee. As Butler reported it—

He was very much disgusted at the turn some things took at the time of our last General Conference, some of the theological questions that came up and the way that some of our brethren acted toward them made him feel badly and set him to thinking

so he said he went to studying this law question and came to the conclusions that he has.<sup>2</sup>

Canright had been on the theological committee of nine, at the time of the 1886 conference, centered on the law in Galatians 3. That discussion had caused Canright to think that his views were incorrect. Galatians 3 was talking about the moral law. Then Canright reasoned, if it was the Ten Commandments that was the “schoolmaster,” it was truly done away with at the cross, and that included the Sabbath.

Canright had a typological covenant dispensational view of the old and new covenants just like Butler and others. That framework of the covenants caused a misunderstanding in Canright’s view of the relationship between the law and the covenants in Galatians 3 which addresses the issue of the heart in relation to faith, law and covenant. He was compelled to abandon the Ten Commandments as far as the new dispensation was concerned.

Canright later wrote:

No other subject perplexes Adventists so much as the covenants. They dread to meet it. They have tried various ways to explain it away, but they are not satisfactory even to themselves. I have been there and know. “The abolition of the Sinatic covenant carries with it the abolition of the Jewish Sabbath so completely that no authoritative trace of it can be found this side of the grave of our risen Lord.”

Elder Smith says: “If the ten commandments constituted the old covenant, then they are forever gone.” This, therefore, becomes a test question.<sup>3</sup>

One of the main reasons Elder Canright left the Seventh-day Adventist Church was because he believed the law was abolished with the old covenant when Christ died. He did not see any connection between the law and the new covenant as a heart experience. Hence the Sabbath was viewed as abolished with the Sinai covenant. This was but a logical

conclusion for him, having already embraced the time-based paradigm that the old covenant is followed by the new covenant which went into effect after the cross. He shared this view of the covenants with Elders Butler and Smith.

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**Endnotes:**

1. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, February 17, 1887, p. 2. Otsego, Michigan.
2. *Ibid*, p. 4.
3. D. M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889), p. 350. Emphasis supplied.

## chapter eight

# Elder Butler's Vindication

Elder Butler had written numerous letters to Ellen White in Europe about the problems back home regarding the law in Galatians 3. He had received no response from her throughout the year 1886. Finally on February 18, 1887, her long awaited letter arrived. It was a copy of a letter she was sending to E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, in which she chastened the men on the West Coast.

Ellen White urged Waggoner and Jones to be careful about—

... these known differences being published in articles in our papers, you would never have pursued the course you have, either in your ideas advanced before our students at the college, neither would it have appeared in the Signs. . . .

I have no hesitancy in saying you have made a mistake here. . . . This is not in God's order.

... God has plainly revealed that such things should not be done. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Clearly Ellen White had some straightforward admonition for these brethren.

Waggoner's letter to Ellen White in response to her chastening, was compliant. He expressed his "gratitude to God that His spirit still strives with me, pointing out the errors to which I am so subject. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Waggoner did have an underlying motive of reforming the teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He desired to bring about doctrinal unity in its ranks.

I do desire most earnestly that the time may soon come when all our people shall see eye to eye. In my unconscious self-sufficient [*sic.*], I supposed that I could do much toward accomplishing this. I have learned that God will accomplish His work in His own way, and that the strongest efforts in the best cause are powerless when not prompted solely by love to God. . . .<sup>3</sup>

There was, indeed, a sectional rivalry going on between the Review and Herald Publishing House and the Pacific Press. Waggoner could see it. "I am truly sorry for the feeling that has existed and does exist between the two offices." Waggoner believed there was a "misunderstanding on their part" at the *Review* office. However, Waggoner accepted the blame too, for "I know full well that a feeling of criticism has been allowed to creep in here, as I think in no one more than me."<sup>4</sup>

When Elder Butler received a copy of Ellen White's letter of February 18, 1887, he considered it a full vindication from her regarding his course of action. He gently chided her for not responding sooner. He was fully aware that Waggoner and Jones were teaching the moral law view in Galatians 3 at Healdsburg College for about "two or three years."

What really aggravated Elder Butler at the 1886 General Conference was—

. . . when Dr. W.[aggoner] came on to the Conference, fully armed for the fray, and was sustained so fully by Bro. Haskell, B. L. Whitney, Wilcox and others so that he and Bro. Whitney

got little companies of our brethren together to indoctrinate as much as possible in quiet. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Elder Butler was jubilant that Ellen White had vindicated his position.

I greatly rejoice . . . after this long time, to see that you do not endorse the course the young men have pursued. . . . They will be surprised at your letter. . . .

I am sorry for them, for I always pity those who suffer keen disappointment.<sup>6</sup>

She had come out saying that J. H. Waggoner's position on the law in Galatians was incorrect. That was "very satisfactory" to Butler.

However, what he was really waiting for was a statement from her stating clearly what "the added Law" was in Galatians 3:19.

. . . The added Law is either the moral or the ceremonial Law systems. You say in substance that Elder Waggoner's position was not correct, his position was that the moral Law was the added law, hence it must be the other. If our people knew that you had light that the Moral Law was not the added Law, the question would be settled in short order. That is precisely what our people are waiting with much anxiety to know. I am not urging you to say anything, but I feel certain that after all the stir over this question it will make constant trouble, till your opinion is known. You see if it don't [*sic*].<sup>7</sup>

Butler felt that he had only received half a loaf from Ellen White. But even half a loaf was better than no loaf at all.

Ellen White sent another letter to Elders Butler and Uriah Smith. She was not pleased with Butler's article in the *Review* of March 1, 1887, on "Elder Canright's Change of Faith," and with his open letter reply to E. J. Waggoner on *The Law in Galatians*. She took him to task for violating the very principles he expected others to observe about not bringing doctrinal matters of controversy out into the open for public view.

She counseled him: “Had you avoided the question, which you state has been done, it would have been more in accordance with the light God has seen fit to give to me.”<sup>8</sup> She had received word that Butler had used her letter to Waggoner and Jones [February 18, 1887] against them. But she said to him:

I sent this not that you should make them weapons to use against the brethren mentioned, but that the very same cautions and carefulness be exercised by you to preserve harmony as you would have these brethren exercise. . . .

. . . I do not wish the letters that I have sent to you should be used in a way that you will take it for granted that your ideas are all correct and Dr. Waggoner’s and Elder Jones’s are all wrong.<sup>9</sup>

Ellen White went on to chastise Butler for his polemics in the open letter, *The Law in Galatians*. “The principles that you refer to are right. . . . I think you are too sharp,” when it came to dealing with Dr. Waggoner.

Then she told him about “some impressive dreams” she had been receiving about Butler and the disaffected Canright being in the same boat.

. . . You are not altogether in the light. Elder [D. M.] Canright was presenting his ideas upon the law, and such a mixed up concern I never heard. Neither of you seemed to see or understand where his arguments would lead to.<sup>10</sup>

Canright was in the dark shadows sitting in a “worm-eaten” boat with “decaying timbers” and Butler was right there with him. “Elder Canright was turning the light down lower and lower.” Then someone said, “. . . It is the work of Satan.”<sup>11</sup>

She expressed her outright contempt for “the course of Elder Canright.” She—

. . . advised his books to be suppressed, especially the one on

the law. . . . If that work is what I believe it to be, I would burn every copy in the fire before one should be given out to our people.<sup>12</sup>

Canright's *The Two Laws* had been republished just before the 1886 General Conference obviously to be used as support for Butler's position on the ceremonial law in Galatians 3.

Elder Butler did not want to see an open discussion of the law in Galatians. He wanted control of the flow of information. But Ellen White counseled: "I want to see no Pharisaism among us. The matter now has been brought so fully before the people by yourself as well as Dr. Waggoner, that it must be met fairly and squarely in open discussion."<sup>13</sup>

Instead of shutting off all discussion, Ellen White believed that the church must be open to the Word of God. Christ would lead the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the teaching of Scripture.

For his part, Elder Butler had a bad reaction to Ellen White's correspondence. His retort to her was:

I have not, Sister White, been able to see the justice of your letter of April 5, 1887, and never expect to. . . . I had thought I would never answer that letter, but bear in silence and patience that which seemed to me to be unjust.<sup>14</sup>

He went on to say:

In your letter of April 5, 1887 you seem to be quite anxious lest I should take advantage of the letter of reproof you had written to Eld. Waggoner and Jones concerning their course in pushing their views on Galatians, and lest I should draw conclusions that perhaps I was right in my views of that subject. Let me say in regard to this that I had never used your article up to that time you had written, in any such way as your letter intimates, and had no thought of doing so.<sup>15</sup>

Elder Butler complained—

. . . in regard to my own attitude. I am blamed in the above extracts. . . . One would hardly suppose . . . that a person holding the position of president of the General Conference was obliged to keep his mouth shut while persistent efforts were being made to bring up a silent controverted point before the public. . . .

And now you censure me for having written a little pamphlet on the subject of the law in Galatians. . . . You say I have circulated my pamphlet and it is only fair that Dr. Waggoner should have just as fair a chance as you have had. My dear sister, you will pardon me if I say that that language seems to me passing strange.<sup>16</sup>

Elder Butler had one regret—

. . . that when these arguments of Waggoner on the other side of the question appeared in the *Instructor* lessons and *Signs of the Times*, . . . that Eld. Smith and I did not just wade into them and show them up in the widest channels possible.<sup>17</sup>

Then he used his ultimate argument with Ellen White:

I fancy a few days of Elder James White's administration when such a move as this would come up, if those young men would not have heard thunder around their ears, if he had been on earth, that would have made them tingle, then I have forgotten the nature of this procedure. I have not forgotten the way he handled things of this kind if he would not go for them in public and private and make them regret such boldness then I misjudge.<sup>18</sup>

This was making Elder Butler sick. He was having doubts about the testimonies. It was time to square off with these "young fledglings" who

had just gotten into the “editorial chair” and show them up.<sup>19</sup> Those were fighting words.

In the days to come, Uriah Smith was to press his form of typological covenant dispensationalism through the pages of the *Review*. He explained:

That covenant with Israel was called “the first covenant,” and extended to the first advent of Christ. The time having then come for the greater blessings to be conferred which were promised through the seed of the woman, a new covenant was made by God with Israel and Judah.<sup>20</sup>

Pressing the model of typological covenant dispensationalism without recognition of the heart experience model of the two covenants contributed toward Thomas Preble, Moses Hull, and Dudley M. Canright scuttling their faith in the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath.

Elder Smith was even more explicit:

The conclusion is therefore clear, that these two covenants embody *two grand divisions* of the work which Heaven has undertaken for human redemption, and cover two especial dispensations devoted to the development of the work.<sup>21</sup>

Elder Smith, like so many others, took his definition of a biblical covenant from Webster’s dictionary. There was an agreement of parties to obey certain conditions. Smith concluded,

. . . every covenant which God enters into with men must be based on the condition on his part of obedience to his law. The theological definition . . . from Webster is therefore correct when it placed obedience as the first of the terms upon which the promises are to be secured.<sup>22</sup>

According to this view of God’s everlasting covenant, His promise was conditional upon the obedience of the people to the law of God.

E. J. Waggoner agreed that the condition of God's covenant was the Ten Commandments. However, the sinner was incapable in himself of rendering such obedience. So God promised that Christ would be the sinner's actual substitute and surety. God's covenant, then, was His promise in Christ. Waggoner observed:

The Lord made a promise to him [Abraham], that would have staggered most men, it was so great, so incomprehensible. . . . Abraham said, I believe; and the Lord, in return for that simple faith, declared his sins forgiven. . . .

In what did Abraham have faith? . . . In the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Abraham believed God's Word. Abraham said, "Amen," to what God promised him and he was accounted righteous.

The Ten Commandments were the "basis" for both covenants. There was agreement in this between Elders Smith and Waggoner. However, Waggoner would clearly disagree with Butler and Smith's categorical statement:

The two great covenants that God has made—one for each dispensation. . . . the covenant of the old dispensation, and another [basis] for the covenant of the new.<sup>24</sup>

Waggoner would observe that these kind of statements did not take into account the fuller revelation of Scripture regarding the two different heart experience of the old and the new covenants.

Elder Smith asked, "When was the new covenant made?" He answered, when Christ died on the cross.

At the cross the Jewish system ended and the Christian dispensation began. There was the dividing line between them. . . . From that moment the new covenant was in force.<sup>25</sup>

The implicit idea was that salvation was confined to the Jews until Christ died on the cross. In Smith's view the new covenant did not exist until after the cross.

Along these lines, Elder Smith agreed with Elder Butler's interpretation of Galatians 3:17. Smith quoted the verse with his own interpolations:

... the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ [the Abrahamic covenant], the law [the Horeb covenant with Israel], which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance [the world promised to Abraham, Rom. 4:13] be of the law [is to be secured by a performance of the ceremonies and services of the Mosaic system], it is no more of promise [it does not rest simply on the promise of God], but God gave it to Abraham by promise.<sup>26</sup>

According to Smith the law which came "four hundred and thirty years after" Abraham was the "ceremonies and services of the Mosaic system."

In addition to the Abrahamic covenant, God "added; a subordinate arrangement . . . a new covenant was formed. . . ." with Israel.<sup>27</sup>

... "Till Christ, as the promised Seed, should come. . . ." If the Jews "followed the leadings [*sic.*] of this 'pedagogue,' this 'schoolmaster,' they would not have rejected the Messiah. . ."<sup>28</sup>

For Smith the "schoolmaster" in Galatians 3:24 was the ceremonial law. In actuality, the Jews were so caught up in the rigorous observance of the ritualistic system that it failed to point them to Christ when He came. In fact, they rejected the Messiah, to some degree, because of their perversion of the ceremonial law.

Elder Smith believed that the defense of the Sabbath hinged on the distinction between the two laws.<sup>29</sup> He was not about to concede that the law in Galatians 3 was the moral law. His point was forcefully made,

. . . our opponents labor to show that in the days of Moses, all the law. . . “was a burdensome system,” a “yoke of bondage,” a “schoolmaster designed only to lead us to Christ;” . . . and was therefore “nailed to the cross.”<sup>30</sup>

Smith believed the schoolmaster was the ceremonial law. To yield on this point would, in his view, be a concession to the antinomians.

The discussion of the law in Galatians 3 and the two covenants, was shaping up to be the major issue for years to come. There was disunity on these points between the *Review and Herald*, *The Gospel Sickle*, and *The Signs of the Times*.

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## Endnotes:

1. E. G. White, Letter to E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, February 18, 1887, p. 22.
2. E. J. Waggoner, Letter to E. G. White, April 1, 1887, Oakland, California. *MMM*, p. 71.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 72.
5. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, March 31, 1887, Battle Creek, Michigan. *MMM*, p. 69.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
8. E. G. White, Letter to G. I. Butler and U. Smith, April 5, 1887, Basel, Switzerland entitled “Giving Exposure to Differing Doctrinal Viewpoints; Disapproval of D. M. Canright’s Actions,” *op. cit.*, p. 33.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 34
13. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
14. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, October 1, 1888, Battle Creek, Michigan. *MMM*, p. 82.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 98.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 99.
20. U. Smith, "What Does God Write?" *RH* 64, 31 (August 2, 1887), p. 488. Emphasis supplied.
21. Uriah Smith, "The Two Covenants," *Bible Echo, and Signs of the Times* 2, 11 (November, 1887), p. 162. Emphasis supplied.
22. U. Smith, "God's Covenants with Men," *RH* 64, 37 (September 13, 1887), p. 584.
23. E. J. Waggoner, "The Commentary. Call of Abraham. Lesson 8.—Sabbath, February 25," *ST* 14, 7 (February 17, 1888), p. 106.
24. Editorial Committee: Uriah Smith and George Butler, "Notes and Comments," *GS* 2, 21 (November 1, 1887), p. 161.
25. U. Smith, "God's Covenants with Men," *RH* 64, 42 (October 25, 1887), p. 664. Reprinted as U. Smith, "God's Covenants with Men," *GS* 3, 1 (January 1, 1888), p. 2.
26. *Ibid.* Interpolations his.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, p. 618. Compare, ". . . The 'law of Moses,' . . . [was] 'added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made,' and, which was a 'school-master,' simply to teach the rudiments of faith till Christ should come. . . ." Editorial Committee: Uriah Smith and George Butler, "Notes and Comments," *GS* 2, 16 (August 15, 1887), p. 121.
29. "The best point of attack upon the Sabbath question, our opponents are coming to think, is the position we hold in reference to the distinction between 'laws which are called moral,' and those which are of a ceremonial and remedial nature." U. Smith, "The Two Laws and the Sabbath," *GS* 3, 10 (May 15, 1888), p. 75.
30. *Ibid.*

## chapter nine

# The California Conspiracy<sup>1</sup>

As the 1888 General Conference approached, the California Conference delegation felt it wise to caucus. They anticipated certain subjects would arise at the conference. Chief among them would be the law in Galatians 3.

The delegates met at “Camp Necessity,” near Oakland, on June 25-26, 1888. Those present were E. J. Waggoner, A. T. Jones, C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press; W. C. White, son of E. G. White, a member of the General Conference Executive Committee; and some others.

W. C. White took notes on the discussions. On June 26, 1888, they discussed Galatians 3:23 and 4:21. Specifically the “added law” of Galatians 3:19 was determined to mean “spoken” comparing Deuteronomy 5:22 and Hebrews 12:19. These texts were “both referring to Moral Law the same in original of Gal. 3:19. . . . No instance where it is applied to the ceremonial law.”<sup>2</sup> It was brought out that J. N. Andrews had taken the same position on the moral law in Galatians in his early writings in the *Review*. Support was also derived from Wesley’s sermons.<sup>3</sup>

Elder White later recalled the “Camp Necessity” meeting in writing to Dan Jones, secretary of the General Conference:

... It was proposed that the editors of the *Signs*, C. H. Jones, and myself, and as many of the California ministers as we could get to join us should go out into the mountains and spend a few days in Bible study. . . . Eld. McClure was with us part of the time. We spent . . . one day in the examination of Eld. Butler's law in Galatians, and other topics bearing on that question, at the close of which Eld. Waggoner read some MS which he had prepared in answer to Eld. Butler's pamphlet. . . . At the close of our study, Eld. Waggoner asked us if it would be right for him to publish his MSS and at the next Gen. Conf. place them in the hands of the delegates, as Eld. Butler had his. We thought this would be right, and encouraged him to have five hundred copies printed. We made no secret of this, nor did we take any pains to make it public.<sup>4</sup>

E. J. Waggoner did prepare his letter of response to Elder Butler's *The Law in Galatians*, it was entitled, *The Gospel in Galatians*.

Much later Elder A. T. Jones provided his recollections of that retreat in writing to C. H. Holmes in 1921.

Some time before starting to that institute, C. H. Jones, general manager of the Pacific Press, W. C. White and some others asked Bro. Waggoner and me to go with them for a few days outing and we all study together the Scriptures on these "heretical" questions that were certain to come up in the institute and conference. Wind of this little innocent thing wafted to the brethren in Battle Creek as further confirmation of their settled view that Bro. Waggoner and I in furtherance of our scheme to revolutionize the doctrine of the denomination were working other brethren into our scheme so as to come to the institute and General Conference at Minneapolis so strongly fortified as to carry our scheme. We did not know till after the institute and conference were all over that the General Conference men in Battle Creek held these things concerning us, and we never in our lives having thought of any such thing came to the institute and conference as unknowing of what

the other men were thinking as we were ourselves of what they thought that we were thinking. And so in all innocence we came to the meeting expecting just nothing but plain Bible study to know the truth.<sup>5</sup>

Then something unexpected happened at the California campmeeting in September 1888. According to Elder White:

. . . A very bitter spirit was manifested by some toward Elds. Waggoner and Jones, instigated partly, I presume, by the personalities in Eld. Butler's pamphlet, and arising partly from an old family grudge against Eld. Waggoner, Senior. We had a ministers Council in which almost every utterance of these brethren bearing directly or remotely on the Gal. question was criticised, but the brethren who opposed their teachings would neither consent to a fair examination of the subject nor would they let it alone. They preferred the piecemeal picking process, . . .<sup>6</sup>

The "wind" that "wafted" the report of this "minister's council" to the General Conference men in Battle Creek was later revealed by W. C. White and Ellen White.

W. M. Healey was a minister and evangelist in the California Conference. Elder W. C. White wrote:

What Eld. Healy [*sic.*] wrote to Eld. Butler, I do not know, but it seems to have given the impression that we were secretly working up a scheme, whereas, as we supposed, we were working in perfect harmony with Eld. Butler's plans.<sup>7</sup>

Ellen White wrote to Elder W. M. Healey:

Your suppositions regarding the position and work of Elders A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner were incorrect. Your letters to Elder Butler, to warn him against something, were entirely misleading. He burned these letters, so that no one should learn

the source of his light. These letters resulted in retarding the work of God for years, and brought severe and taxing labor upon me.

One such experience as that we had in Minneapolis, as a result of your unwise letters, is sufficient. This experience has left its impress for time and for eternity. O my brother, I beg of you for Christ's sake to be careful how you plant in other minds the seeds of unbelief, to bring forth results as sad as those we have seen in the past.<sup>8</sup>

She told Healey on an earlier occasion: "Because I came from the Pacific Coast they would have it that I had been influenced by W. C. White, Dr. Waggoner, and A. T. Jones."<sup>9</sup> She explained that as a result of Healey writing to the General Conference president she was suspected of being influenced by the trio.

This led to the belief among Butler and Smith that Ellen White was being influenced by E. J. Waggoner, A. T. Jones, and her son. Thus, doubt was cast upon the source of her counsel for the church. By this means, the brethren in Battle Creek were led to believe there was a California conspiracy.

Ellen White confirmed that this feeling existed at the time of the Minneapolis Conference and prior to it.

I was represented as telling things untrue, when I made the statement that not a word of conversation had passed between me and Brethren Jones and Waggoner nor my son Willie upon the Law in Galatians. If they had been as frank with me as they were in talking with one another against me, I could have made everything plain to them in this matter. I repeated this several times, because I saw they were determined not to take my testimony. They thought we all came to the conference with a perfect understanding and an agreement to make a stand on the Law in Galatians.<sup>10</sup>

Her appeals, for investigation of Scripture and open discussion at the future General Conference, fell on deaf ears at headquarters. From the

information they were getting they assumed she was being influenced by the Pacific Coast brethren.

The General Conference brethren were trying to exclude discussion of the law from the session. It seemed to them that Ellen White's calls for openness were playing right into the hands of Waggoner, Jones, and W. C. White. The latter had been writing Elder Butler about having an institute in which doctrinal matters would be discussed. Now everything seemed to be falling into place. The church leadership was convinced that a concerted effort would be made to doctrinally sabotage the conference.

Minds were made up. They believed the conspiracy theory. Said Ellen White of the Battle Creek brethren,

... they thought the law in Galatians would come up and they would go armed and equipped to resist everything coming from those men from the Pacific Coast, new and old.<sup>11</sup>

Uriah Smith confirmed this was his state of mind going into the 1888 Conference. He later (1890) wrote of this to Ellen White:

The next unfortunate move, I think, was when the brethren in California met, just before the Minnesota Conference, and laid their plans to post up, and bring their views on the ten horns and the law in Galatians into that Conference. We were only informed of this by letter from California, a few days before it was time to start for Conference. I could hardly believe that it was so, but the report was soon confirmed after reaching that place. Brother Haskell came to me and asked how I thought those questions had better be introduced. I told him I thought they had better not be introduced at all; that they would only bring confusion into the Conference, and do only harm and not good. But he said the California brethren were decided on having them presented; and so they were introduced, and nearly ruined the Conference, as I feared they would. Had these disturbing questions not been introduced, I can see no reason why we could not have had as pleasant and blessed a conference there as we have ever enjoyed.<sup>12</sup>

A. T. Jones said he had no idea all of these suspicions were in the minds of the brethren. “. . . In all innocence we came to the meeting expecting just nothing but plain Bible study to know the truth.”<sup>13</sup>

W. C. White said,

When I went to the Minneapolis meeting, I was as innocent as a goose, and while my old friends at B. C. [Battle Creek] and even my own relatives were saying the bitterest things against me. . . .<sup>14</sup>

Elder White went to Minneapolis thinking things had been arranged with Elder Butler for a discussion of the law in Galatians at the institute.

Elder Waggoner came prepared with his “reference books.” What they met with was decided opposition. As Elder White put it,

. . . why our brethren from B. C. [Battle Creek] should oppose the matter, and claim that the proposition to discuss these questions was all a surprise, when we could see from their very actions that it was not a surprise, we never could understand.<sup>15</sup>

“Several hundred” copies of Elder Butler’s pamphlet *The Law in Galatians* were distributed among the delegates by Elder Rupert. So discussions must have been anticipated by the Battle Creek brethren.

Elder Butler had been sick repeatedly over the course of three years. He said his resistance had been lowered by all the stress involved with his heavy responsibilities as president of the General Conference. He believed that the issue over the law in Galatians was an “unnecessary and unjustifiable” evil.<sup>16</sup> He even blamed Ellen White for his illness from May-August, 1888. He wrote to her: “I have never had any doubt myself but what it was sadness of heart brought upon me by the position you took that gave me that four month’s [*sic.*] sickness.”<sup>17</sup>

Ellen White had failed to respond from Switzerland, to his pleas for help against Waggoner and Jones throughout the year 1886. Then her letter, on February 18, 1887, to the young men was just what he was looking for in condemning their position. He wrote to Ellen White:

There have been simply two views held on this subject of the added law, the one Eld. Waggoner has held that the added law refers to the moral 10 commandments the other that the added law referred to the laws particularly Jewish. . . . They are the points on which the whole matter turns, which has been in debate and controversy for years.<sup>18</sup>

Elder Butler vehemently protested Waggoner's Sabbath School lessons in the *Instructor* during the summer of 1886. Then the "long series" on Galatians 3 in the *Signs*, later that summer of 1886, was circulated to some 20,000 readers.<sup>20</sup> This was seen as a direct challenge to the leadership and doctrinal authority of the church. It was the president's duty to say something. Elder Butler complained to her: "You never answered me a word concerning it or paid the slightest attention to these things. . . ." <sup>21</sup>

All these worries had made him so sick, he felt, that now he was ready to lay down his burdens. He would not be able to attend the Minneapolis Conference. Others would have to take up the cause. He would have to nurse himself and his wife back to health at home in Battle Creek. But he warned the loyalists to "stand by the landmarks."

For her part Ellen White would not accept the blame for Butler's illness.

If my letter caused so great consequences to you as five months' illness, I shall not be held accountable for it; for if you had received it in the right spirit, it would have had no such results. I wrote in the anguish of my soul in regard to the course you pursued in the [1886] General Conference two years since. The Lord was not pleased with that meeting. Your spirit, my brother, was not right. The manner in which you treated the case of Dr. Waggoner was perhaps after your own order, but not after God's order.<sup>22</sup>

By the time of the Minneapolis Conference of 1888 there were so many suspicions on the part of the Battle Creek brethren with regard to the delegates coming from California that they believed they had a conspiracy on their hands to doctrinally hijack the denomination on the law in Galatians 3.

The brethren from California were unaware of these suspicions. This was the setting for the fateful 1888 Conference.

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## Endnotes:

1. This is George R. Knight's caption. George R. Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Cast of A. T. Jones* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D. C.: 1987), pp. 31, 32.
2. W. C. White, "Camp Necessity," June 25 and 26, 1888," *MMM*, p. 419.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 418; handwritten, p. 439.
4. W. C. White, Letter to Dan T. Jones, April 8, 1890, Boulder, Colorado. *MMM*, pp.167, 168.
5. A. T. Jones, Letter to C. H. Holmes, May 12, 1921, Washington D. C. *MMM*, p. 328.
6. W. C. White, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
7. *Ibid.*
8. E. G. White, Letter to W. M. Healey, August 21, 1901, Los Angeles, California. *EGW 1888*, pp. 1759, 1760.
9. E. G. White, Letter to W. M. Healey, December 9, 1888, Battle Creek, Mich., *op. cit.*, p. 186.
10. E. G. White, Letter to "Children of the Household," May 12, 1889, *op. cit.*, pp. 310, 311.
11. *Ibid*, p. 308.
12. Uriah Smith, Letter to E. G. White, February 17, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan. *MMM*, p.154.
13. A. T. Jones, Letter to C. H. Holmes, May 12, 1921, Washington, D. C. *MMM*, p. 328.
14. W. C. White, Letter to Dan T. Jones, April 8, 1890, Boulder, Colorado. *MMM*, p. 171.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
16. G. I. Butler, Letter to E. G. White, October 1, 1888, Battle Creek, Michigan. *MMM*, p. 80.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 97.

## chapter ten

# The Gospel in the Book of Galatians

There were two principle documents in the debate between Elder George I. Butler and E. J. Waggoner. George Butler prepared an open letter to the delegates of the 1886 General Conference session entitled *The Law in the Book of Galatians*. E. J. Waggoner's response was entitled, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*.<sup>1</sup> The two titles in themselves revealed much about what each author considered to be the theme of the Epistle to the Galatians. Butler emphasized the law in Galatians. Waggoner focused on the gospel in Galatians. These two documents framed the issues that were discussed at the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference.

Regarding Galatians 3, Elder Butler said:

The law “added because of transgressions” unmistakably points to a remedial system, temporary in duration, “till the seed should come.” The moral law is referred to as the one transgressed. But the “added” law, of which Paul is speaking, made provision for the forgiveness of these transgressions in figure, till the real Sacrifice should be offered.<sup>2</sup>

Waggoner replied:

Although the law existed in all its force before the exode [sic.], yet it “came in,” “entered,” was spoken or given, or “added” at that time. And why? That the offense might abound, i.e., “that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful;” that what was sin before might the more plainly be seen to be sin. Thus it entered, or was added, “because of transgressions.” If it had not been for transgressions there would have been no necessity for the law to enter at Sinai. Why did it enter because of transgression? “That the offense might abound;” in order to make sin seem greater than ever before, so that men might be driven to the super-abounding grace of God as manifested in Christ. And so it became a school-master, pedagogue, to bring men to Christ, in order that they might be justified by faith, and be made the righteousness of God in Him. And so it is stated later that the law is not against the promises of God. It works in harmony with the promise, for without it the promise would be of no effect. And this most emphatically attests the perpetuity of the law.<sup>3</sup>

As for the schoolmaster law, Butler applied

... it to that provisional temporary system of law in which the Jew and proselyte were “shut up,” “in ward,” till the “middle wall of partition” was “broken down.” It was a “severe” system, “yoke of bondage” which they could not bear, “against” them, and “contrary to” them.<sup>4</sup>

Several statements which Elder Butler made indicated subtle nuances of difference in the plan of salvation from one dispensation to the next. For example, “But the ‘added’ law, of which Paul is speaking, made provision for the forgiveness of these transgressions in figure, till the real Sacrifice should be offered.” Forgiveness of sins was not a reality for the Hebrews of the Old Testament, but figurative. Again Butler played on this subtlety.

There was no propriety, therefore, in still keeping up the wall of separation between them and others. They all stood now upon the same level in the sight of God. All must approach Him through the Messiah who had come into the world; through Him alone man could be saved.<sup>6</sup>

Waggoner detected two methods of salvation in Elder Butler's scheme; one through the remedial system for the Jews before the first advent, and the other through the Messiah for Jews and Gentiles after the cross. Waggoner responded directly to Butler:

Your words seem to imply that before the first advent men approached God by means of the ceremonial law, and that after that they approached Him through the Messiah; but we shall have to go outside the Bible to find any support for the idea that anybody could ever approach God except through Christ. Amos 5:22; Micah 6:6-8, and many other texts show conclusively that the ceremonial law alone could never enable people to come to God.<sup>7</sup>

Elder Butler spoke of a figurative forgiveness of sins before the first advent.

The moral law is referred to as the one transgressed. But the "added" law, of which Paul is speaking, made provision for the forgiveness of these transgressions *in figure*, till the real Sacrifice should be offered.<sup>8</sup>

Waggoner expressed his dismay at Butler's statement:

... there is an idea expressed in the quotation just made which I am sorry to see has of late been taught to some extent. And that is that in the so-called Jewish dispensation forgiveness of sins was only figurative. Your words plainly indicate that there was no real forgiveness of sins until Christ, the real Sacrifice, was offered. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Waggoner stated that Elder Butler's theology restricted salvation only to the generation living during the first advent.

But you say that the apostle is reasoning of dispensations, and not of individual experiences, and that bringing them to Christ means bringing them to His first advent, and "to the system of faith there inaugurated." But that is the weakest position you could take, for if that were the meaning, then it would follow that the law accomplished its purpose only for the generation that lived at Christ's first advent. No other people ever came to Christ, in the sense in which you use the term. In order for the law to bring men to Christ, in the sense in which you apply it, that is, to His first advent, it would have had to lengthen their lives. Adam would have had to live at least 4,000 years. For, let me again repeat: The text does not say that the law was a school-master to point men to Christ, but to bring them to Him.<sup>10</sup>

Butler's position that the "schoolmaster" was the ceremonial law during the old dispensation forced Galatians 3:24 to say that the rituals "bring" its observers to the Christ of the new dispensation. Such a dispensational understanding of the text forces a literalism which is patently absurd. As in the case of Adam who sacrificed a lamb for his sins, he would have had to be kept alive by the law until Christ's advent in order for the text to be true. On the other hand, if Galatians 3:24 is understood as applying to "individual experiences," then it is no longer a dispensational text but descriptive of the experience of the heart when the moral law convicts of sin and of righteousness in Christ.

Elder Butler acknowledged righteousness by faith, but keeping the law and the Sabbath were the most important things on his agenda. God gave Israel the ceremonial law under the old covenant in order to mark them off from the rest of the world as His specially chosen people. If they obeyed these ordinances they would live.

The two covenants were almost two methods of salvation in Butler's theory, as the purpose of the symbol, or type, was emphasized at the expense of the very heart experience of which it was to be a witness. The old covenant

was for Israel before Christ and the new covenant was for spiritual Israelites after the coming of Christ. It was as if salvation by works was only for the Jews under the old dispensation. They were elected over all others.

E. J. Waggoner saw the moral law as ordained for life. When man sinned, he came under its condemnation and penalty. The ten commandments were “added” or “spoken” at Sinai because the children of Israel did not recognize their sinfulness as had their father Abraham. God emphasized the moral law in order to bring Israel to Christ their righteousness. The law did not have a dispensational function. The ten commandments always served the purpose of driving guilty sinners to the foot of the cross so that by the faith of Jesus they might be saved.

The ancient remedial system of sacrifices was the means by which faith was expressed in Christ. It had existed before Sinai for Abel, Noah, and Abraham. These patriarchs availed themselves of it. The sacrifices were not the means by which forgiveness of sins was obtained. Only Christ forgave sins. Those who by faith in Christ participated in the ordinances thereby demonstrated that their faith was genuine in the anticipated sacrifice of their Saviour. This system retained no more significance as a personal expression of faith once Christ died on the cross.

Waggoner arrived at his understanding of justification by faith through his understanding of the covenants. The old covenant was essentially, “Obey and live.” It was the people’s self-dependent promise, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” Such a boastful claim did not reckon with the sinfulness of human nature. It placed the promise-keeper under a terrible yoke of bondage for he could not in his own power obey the law. The old covenant mentality was a condition of the heart. Therefore, the old covenant could not be time-bound. All who had a similar view of themselves in relationship to God were under the old covenant yoke.

On the other hand, the new covenant was all God’s promise. God gave His salvation to all who believed in Christ. The condition for salvation was perfect obedience to the law of God. This condition was met by Christ. This was the promise which God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God renewed it to Israel at Sinai, but they, for the most part, rejected it through their unbelief.

The everlasting covenant was just as much in existence during Old Testament times as it was following Christ’s first advent and death on the

cross. The ratification of the new covenant by the blood of Christ was in anticipation before the cross. However, the effectiveness of salvation before the cross was not any less real. Following the cross, believers enjoyed the reality of the new covenant's confirmation and they could look back to Calvary in faith.

These two open letters on Galatians written by George I. Butler and E. J. Waggoner are a primary source for determining the issues discussed at the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference. In short, the issue involved righteousness by faith in its proper relationship to the law of God. Waggoner viewed justification through the motif of the old and the new covenants.

According to Waggoner's theology, the Ten Commandments were the schoolmaster which drove the sinner "unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

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## Endnotes:

1. Waggoner's letter to G. I. Butler was dated February 10, 1887, but he held off publishing it until after the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session. R. Dewitt Hottell was reading *The Gospel in Galatians* and *The Law in the Book of Galatians* after the Minneapolis Conference on November 10, 1888. Clinton L. Wahlen, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
2. G. I. Butler, *The Law in the Book of Galatians: Is It the Moral Law, or Does It Refer to that System of Laws Peculiarly Jewish?* (Review and Herald Publishing House, Battle Creek, Mich.: 1886), p. 44.
3. E. J. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians. A Review* (Pacific Press, Oakland, California: 1888), pp. 26, 27.
4. G. I. Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
5. G. I. Butler, *The Law in the Book of Galatians: Is It the Moral Law, or Does It Refer to that System of Laws Peculiarly Jewish?* (Review and Herald Publishing House, Battle Creek, Mich.: 1886), p. 44.
6. G. I. Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
7. E. J. Waggoner, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
8. G. I. Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 44. Emphasis supplied.
9. E. J. Waggoner, *op. cit.*, p. 29. Emphasis supplied.
10. E. J. Waggoner, *Ibid.*, pp. 44.

## chapter eleven

# The 1888 Minneapolis General Conference

The ministerial institute opened on Wednesday, October 10 and lasted through the 16th, in the church at 4th Avenue South and Lake Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> It was held in the basement of the church. It continued until the beginning of the General Conference whose opening meeting was on October 17.

As the institute was opening, Ellen White wrote of Elder Butler's diatribe-filled letter addressed to her. She said to her daughter-in-law, Mary White:

Elder Butler has sent me a long letter, a most curious production of accusations and charges against me, but these things do not move me. . . . Elder Smith and Butler are very loathe to have anything said upon the law in Galatians, but I cannot see how it can be avoided. . . . Tomorrow noon the law in Galatians is to be brought up and discussed.<sup>2</sup>

Saturday evening, October 13, a long letter from Elder Butler was read to the delegates which kept them up until ten o'clock. Ellen White wrote to Mary White: "The letter written by Eld. Butler was a good thing to open this question so we are in for it."<sup>3</sup>

On Monday, October 15, E. J. Waggoner began a series of nine lectures on the law and the gospel. He delivered his seventh lecture on Thursday, October 18, at 9 o'clock. He spoke on the law in Galatians.<sup>4</sup>

There was no doubt about the subject matter of Waggoner's presentations. They dealt with the relationship between justification by faith and the moral law. Furthermore, the law and the covenants of Galatians 3 were presented as interrelated with justification. Their proper understanding constituted the third angel's message of Revelation 14:12.

On Friday, October 19, Waggoner's seventh lecture quoted Galatians 3:17:

"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."

Then he compared "the Covenant with Abraham with the Second Covenant."<sup>5</sup> By this he meant that the everlasting covenant was one and the same with the second covenant promise God made to Abraham through Christ.

On Sunday, October 21, Waggoner delivered lecture eight:

At 9 a.m. Elder Waggoner continued his lessons on the law and gospel. The Scriptures considered were the fifteenth chapter of Acts and the second and third of Galatians, compared with Romans 4 and other passages in Romans. His purpose was to show that the real point of controversy was justification by faith in Christ, which faith is reckoned to us as to Abraham, for righteousness. The covenant and promises to Abraham are the covenant and promises to us.<sup>6</sup>

Evidently at one point during the conference, Waggoner took up the covenant allegory of Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4:21ff. and maintained that the old covenant (Hagar) was a condition of works-salvation that still existed running concurrently with the new.<sup>7</sup>

According to the recollections of R. T. Nash,<sup>8</sup> who was a delegate in 1888, Elder Morrison in rebuttal to Waggoner made the point that Adventists had always believed in justification by faith and were children of the free woman in the covenant allegory of Galatians 4.

On Monday, October 22, Elder Waggoner delivered lecture nine. It was “a discussion of law and Galatians, or Justification by Faith, that lasted an hour and a half.”<sup>9</sup> Another source reporting the same meeting wrote, “Elder Waggoner spoke at the early morning session on the subject of ‘Two Covenants, and Their Relation to the Law.’”<sup>10</sup>

On Tuesday, October 23, there was rebuttal time given to Uriah Smith, R. M. Kilgore, and J. H. Morrison who lectured on the law in Galatians. Elder Morrison had been appointed by the General Conference to present the traditional viewpoint of the ceremonial law in Galatians. This day was to be a turning point for Ellen White.

Elder R. M. Kilgore made some statements that day to which Ellen White referred in her “Morning Talk” on October 24. She said:

Had Brother Kilgore been walking closely with God he never would have walked onto the ground as he did yesterday and made the statement he did in regard to the investigation that is going on. That is, they must not bring in any new light or present any new argument notwithstanding they have been constantly handling the Word of God for years, yet they are not prepared to give a reason of the hope they have because one man is not here. Have we not all been looking into this subject?<sup>11</sup>

Ellen White represented Brother Kilgore as saying that this “new light” on the moral law in Galatians 3 should not be presented by E. J. Waggoner because Elder Butler is not present at the meeting.

W. C. White, in his notes from the 1888 Conference, provided some detail as to Elder Kilgore’s remarks. Representing the General Conference delegation Kilgore said:

I opposed bringing up the question, especially when it was said that Dr. W [Waggoner] was misrepresented. I considered it an unfortunate matter to come up here. If W [E. J. Waggoner] had been sick I would have opposed its coming up. It is cowardly. There has never been an opportunity as Dr. W.[aggoner] has

had. Another thing has troubled me. The experience of 16 yrs ago. Report “A Test. to Eld. [J. H.] Waggoner.”<sup>12</sup>

Elder Kilgore felt the discussion of the law in Galatians was out of order because Elder Butler was not present. If Elder E. J. Waggoner had been in a similar state of sickness as was Elder Butler, Kilgore would have objected to the discussion on the law in Galatians because of his absence from the meeting. Because Elder Butler was absent this gave an unfair advantage to Elder Waggoner to discuss his beliefs with the delegates. Had not the Testimonies already denounced the moral law interpretation of Galatians given to Elder J. H. Waggoner sixteen years prior?

On Wednesday, October 24, Ellen White addressed the delegates about Elder Kilgore’s attempt to get a resolution passed by the Conference which would close off the discussion of the law in Galatians. Ellen White related:

And then to take the position that because Elder Butler was not here that that subject should not be taken up. I know this is not of God. . . .

Well, one says, “Your prayers and your talk run in the channel with Dr. Waggoner.” I want to tell you, my brethren, that I have not taken any position; I have had no talk with the doctor nor with anyone on this subject, and am not prepared to take a position yet. . . . If Elder Waggoner’s views were wrong, what business has anyone to get up and say what they did here yesterday? If we have the truth it will stand. These truths that we have been handling for years—must Elder Butler come and tell us what they are?

. . . Elder Kilgore, I was grieved more than I can express to you when I heard you make that remark, because I have lost confidence in you.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly Ellen White placed confidence in God’s ability to lead His people when they placed their confidence in the Scriptures and not upon

the views of even the most eminent men.

There followed a rebuttal by the skilled debater J. H. Morrison, president of the Iowa Conference. R. T. Nash recalled: “. . . the opposition selected a man to speak their minds in opposition. . . . Elder J. H. Morrison was their spokesman.”<sup>14</sup> He had a chalkboard set up with opposing propositions written:

- (1) “Resolved—That the Law in Galatians Is the Ceremonial Law” with J. H. Morrison’s name affixed.
- (2) “Resolved—That the Law in Galatians Is the Moral Law.”

“This last proposition was for Waggoner to sign. But he refused to do so, for he said, he had not come to debate.”<sup>15</sup>

Elder Morrison “opposed this coming up because no one is present who has given this subject special study.”<sup>16</sup> Then he spoke right to the issue of “the Law in Galatians. Is it trusting in keeping a Law that is right to keep, or is it trusting in a law that it is not right to keep”?<sup>17</sup> For Morrison the law to which Paul addressed in Galatians that was “not right to keep” was the ceremonial law. “What sub(??) [subject] in Galatians. The Law of Moses. . . .”<sup>18</sup> At one point he said the law in Gal. 5:3 was “another whole law of which circumcision is a part.”<sup>19</sup>

When he came to Galatians 3, Elder J. H. Morrison said, according to W. C. White’s handwritten notes taken at the time—“Chap. 3 [Galatians] Paul’s argument . . . Yoke of Bondage, The Cer. [ceremonial] Law. . . .”<sup>20</sup> Morrison was championing the ceremonial law position in Galatians 3.

Elder J. H. Morrison spoke on Galatians 5:1. “What mean, Yoke of bondage & the Liberty. The Yoke was not the law of 10 Com. but cer [ceremonial] precepts.”<sup>21</sup>

E. G. White gave her assessment of the remarks of Elders R. H. Kilgore, Uriah Smith, and J. H. Morrison:

When they came into the meeting in the morning I was surprised to hear Elder Kilgore make the kind of speech he did before a large audience of believers and unbelievers—a speech which I knew could not be dictated by the Spirit of the Lord. He was followed by Elder Smith, who made remarks of the same order, before Brother Morrison began his talk, which was

all calculated to create sympathy, which I knew was not after God's order. It was human but not divine. And for the first time I began to think it might be we did not hold correct views, after all, upon the law in Galatians, for the truth required no such spirit to sustain it.<sup>22</sup>

This statement indicates that Ellen White held the view that Galatians 3 dealt with the ceremonial law. However, the pejorative speeches of Kilgore, Smith and Morrison slanted toward gaining the "sympathy" of the audience, caused her, "for the first time," to question whether the ceremonial law in Galatians 3 was the correct view.

It was the spirit during that meeting which caused her to reconsider. It would be some time before she would endorse Waggoner's view of the moral law in Galatians 3, but this was where her suspicions were raised as to the incorrectness of the ceremonial law view in Galatians 3. She began to doubt the traditionalist's view of the ceremonial law in Galatians because of the spirit of the manipulative spirit demonstrated in Kilgore, Smith and Morrisons' speeches.

What kind of spirit did E. J. Waggoner demonstrate throughout his presentations? Ellen White said: "I insisted that there should be a right spirit, a Christlike spirit manifested, such as Elder E. J. Waggoner had shown all through the presentation of his views. . . ."<sup>23</sup> Evidently he did not prejudice his audience by his personal demeanor.

On Sunday, November 4, the final day of the conference, Ellen White wrote to her daughter-in-law Mary White:

This has been a most laborious meeting, for Willie and I have had to watch at every point lest there should be moves made, resolutions passed, that would prove detrimental to the future work.<sup>24</sup>

There was a movement to force a vote establishing the correct position on the relationship of law and gospel.

A.T. Jones later (1907) recalled this effort at the conference:

At Minneapolis, in 1888, the G C “administration” did its very best to have the denomination committed by a vote of the GC to the covenant of “Obey and Live,” to righteousness by works.

The attempt failed then; but from that day till this, that spirit and that element have never ceased that endeavor; though when they found that they could not accomplish it just then, they apparently and professedly accepted righteousness by faith. But they never did accept it in the truth that it is. They never did accept it as life and righteousness from God; but only as “a doctrine” to be put in a list or strung as a “subject” with other “doctrinal subjects.”<sup>25</sup>

There may have been several occasions when a vote was attempted. W. C. White noted—

. . . there is almost a craze for orthodoxy. A resolution was introduced into the college meeting, that no new doctrine be taught there till it had been adopted by the General Conf. Mother and I killed it dead, after a hard fight.<sup>26</sup>

The evidence indicates that Waggoner presented justification by faith in the context of the everlasting covenant and the law in Galatians, Romans and Hebrews. Though the actual lectures of Waggoner were not recorded, eyewitnesses took notes, such as W. C. White. There were newspaper accounts, and the General Conference “daily bulletin,” strengthen this conclusion.<sup>27</sup> In addition, E. J. Waggoner’s *Signs* articles and *The Gospel in Galatians*, written just prior to the Minneapolis Conference, indicate that this was the message he presented.

E. J. Waggoner’s message of righteousness by faith was constructed in connection with his understanding of the law and the two covenants. To misunderstand, discount, or reject any aspect of this trio would be to distort the 1888 message. The law in Galatians 3 may never have been a landmark, but it was crucial for understanding God’s plan of salvation for the ages.

The message of the law’s true purpose in Galatians 3 within righteousness by faith was rejected at Minneapolis by many Seventh-day

Adventist Church leaders. Ellen White remained open to the question, pending study of the Scriptures. The same was true regarding her understanding of the covenants. However, she completely endorsed the message of righteousness by faith.

I see . . . the beauty of the truth in the presentation of the righteousness of Christ in relation to the law as the Doctor has placed it before us. It harmonizes perfectly with the light which God has been pleased to give me during all the years of my experience.<sup>29</sup>

The aftermath of the 1888 conference was doctrinal confusion on these points as well as irritable feelings between brethren. The church was in for a long journey to resolve these issues.

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## Endnotes:

1. The chronology followed here is taken from Clinton Wahlen, "Selected Aspects of Ellet J. Waggoner's Eschatology and Their Relation to His Understanding of Righteousness by Faith, 1882-1895," (Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1988), pp. 71-77.
2. E. G. White, Letter to Mary White, October 9, 1888, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *EGW 1888*, pp. 66-68.
3. *Ibid*, p. 68.
4. R. Dewitt Hottel, "Diary of R. Dewitt Hottel, Quicksburg, VA-1888," *MMM*, p. 506.
5. W. C. White, "Notes Made at Minneapolis, Minnesota, October, 1888," *MMM*, p. 424.
6. "Third Day's Proceedings, Friday, Oct. 19, 1888," *General Conference Daily Bulletin* 2, 1 (Oct. 21, 1888), p. 1.
7. As he stated in *The Glad Tidings* (Oakland, California: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1900, 184ff.
8. R. T. Nash, Letter to Ellen G. White Estate, June 25, 1955; Document File 189.
9. "They Are for Temperance," Minneapolis Tribune (October 23, 1888), p. 5. *MMM*, p. 557.

10. "Sabbath Disclosures," St. Paul Pioneer Press (October 22, 1888), p. 6. *MMM*, p. 582.
11. E. G. White, "Morning Talk," October 24, 1888. *EGW 1888*, p. 151.
12. W. C. White, "Notes Made at Minneapolis, October, 1888." *MMM*, p. 424.
13. E. G. White, "Morning Talk," October 24, 1888. *EGW 1888*, pp. 151-153.
14. R. T. Nash, "An Eyewitness Account." *MMM*, p. 352.
15. LeRoy E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), p. 243.
16. *MMM*, p. 424.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, p. 426.
21. *Ibid.*
22. E. G. White, "Looking Back at Minneapolis," December, 1888. *Ibid*, p. 221. Emphasis added.
23. E. G. White, "Looking Back at Minneapolis," Ms 24, 1888. *op. cit.*, p. 219.
24. E. G. White, Letter to Mary White, November 4, 1888, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *op. cit.*, p. 182.
25. Alonzo T. Jones, "God's Everlasting Covenant," Remarks made in the Battle Creek Sanitarium Sabbath School, n.p., July 20, 1907, p. 31.
26. W. C. White, Letter to Mary White, November 3, 1888, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *MMM*, p. 123.
27. Clinton Wahlen, "What Did E. J. Waggoner Say at Minneapolis?" *Adventist Heritage* 13, 1 (Winter, 1988), pp. 22-37.
28. "'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith' (Gal. 3:24). In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.  
An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren {E.J.} Waggoner and {A.T.} Jones." Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book One, (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D. C.: 1958), p. 234.
29. E. G. White, "To Brethren Assembled at General Conference," November 1888, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

## chapter twelve

# 1890—Minneapolis All Over Again

Another opportunity for educating the church membership regarding the 1888 message concerning the covenants was the “Sabbath-School lessons on the Letter to the Hebrews for Senior Classes.” They ran from October 5, 1889 to June 21, 1890. Elder J. H. Waggoner had authored the lessons for three quarters. He died of an aneurysm on April 17, 1889 before completing them.<sup>1</sup> So Elder E. J. Waggoner was asked to finish the writing. Ellen White mentioned that E. J. Waggoner was the author of the Sabbath School lessons for the first quarter of 1890.<sup>2</sup>

These lessons were well worth studying. Addressing the Horeb covenant, Waggoner asked: “. . . Wherein must the first [covenant] have been faulty? Ans.—In the promises.”<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 8:6, 7. “Therefore the first covenant was a promise on the part of the people that they would make themselves holy.”<sup>4</sup> This was an impossibility.

Waggoner continued by asking:

. . . wherein is the great difference between the first covenant and the second? Ans.—In the first covenant the people promised to make themselves holy; in the second, God says that he will do the work for them.<sup>5</sup>

That righteousness covers all past sins, it issues through the life in present good works.<sup>6</sup>

Citing Galatians 4:24, Waggoner pointed out that the old covenant “gendereth to bondage.” Man would have to obey the law to be released from “past sins” and walk in liberty. Since he is incapable this, the first covenant where the people promise to obey brings nothing but bondage.<sup>7</sup>

God never made a covenant with the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:12). The covenants were made with the Jews (Romans 9:4). If Gentiles believed in the Redeemer they enjoyed the blessings of the covenant (Ephesians 2:13-20).<sup>8</sup>

If there was no forgiveness of sin under the old covenant, how were they saved? Circumcision was a sign that Israel could enjoy the blessings of God’s covenant with Abraham.

This was a covenant of faith, already confirmed by the word and oath of the Lord, in Christ, the Seed, and it was not disannulled by any future arrangement. Gal. 3:15-17.<sup>9</sup>

The old covenant had ordinances and a sanctuary (Hebrews 9:1). “But these were superadditions, not at all necessary to the covenant, but quite necessary as types of the sacrifice and priesthood of the new covenant.”<sup>10</sup> They were typical in nature. There was no pardon inherent with them. They were signs pointing to the new covenant. When the people availed themselves of them they expressed faith in the everlasting covenant.

Speaking of the first covenant Waggoner said:

All transgressions committed under that covenant that were pardoned, were pardoned by virtue of the second covenant, of which Christ is mediator. Yet although Christ’s blood was not shed until hundreds of years after the first covenant was made, sins were forgiven whenever they were confessed.<sup>11</sup>

God had already confirmed His covenant with Abraham with a promise and an oath.

These “two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie,” [Hebrews 6:17, 18] made the sacrifice of Christ as efficacious in the days of Abraham and Moses as it is now.<sup>12</sup>

The old covenant as manifested at Sinai did not exist by itself, since the new, or second, covenant preceded it, and being everlasting, was concurrent with it. Waggoner said:

What is called the “second covenant” virtually existed before the covenant was made at Sinai; for the covenant with Abraham was confirmed in Christ (Gal. 3:17); and it is only through Christ that there is any value to what is known as the second covenant.<sup>13</sup>

After the denomination had been studying the lessons for a full month, Elder Smith published a disclaimer in the *Review* about them.

To the many inquirers who are writing us concerning the new theological departure in the Sabbath-school lesson, . . . the Bible . . . is our only rule of faith. . . .

. . . It is not necessarily to be understood that the *Review*. . . indorses all that they may contain. . . .

. . . It is not only the privilege but the duty of those who detect their disagreement with the Scriptures, to reject them without scruple and without reserve.<sup>14</sup>

This is what Smith wrote in response to letters objecting to the Sabbath School lessons that were pouring in from all over the country; including Iowa, Nebraska, Idaho, Michigan, and Indiana.

Dan Jones reported to Elder Olsen that—

Everything is moving along nicely, except in reference to the sabbath-school lessons. I understand there is quite considerable

flurry over the covenant question. They are having it up and down in the different teachers' meetings.<sup>15</sup>

Dan Jones taught a Sabbath School class at the Battle Creek Tabernacle. He was very agitated about the lessons that were written by E. J. Waggoner. He wrote to Elder George I. Butler:

I refer, especially, to our late Sabbath-school lessons, in which the covenant question has been presented there has never anything happened in my life that has taken me down like this. I have just felt so thoroughly upset by the whole affair that I have hardly known how to act or what to do. They came on us like a thunder bolt from a clear sky. . . . But by some hook or crook the matter has been wound and twisted in until it is there in all its glory.<sup>16</sup>

Dan Jones reported to E. W. Farnsworth:

. . . The sabbath-school lessons had just come out, and there was a good deal in them that I could not indorse [sic.] on the subject of the covenant question; so I resigned as teacher of the Sabbath-school, and stayed away from the school a couple of weeks.<sup>17</sup>

These lessons were to precipitate the revisiting of the whole issue of the law and the covenants. These points had not been resolved by the denomination in 1888. They would continue to be flash points that would spark tensions again and again. It was like Minneapolis all over again.

The 1888 Minneapolis conference focused on the law, the covenants, and righteousness by faith. The ministers' Bible school, from November 5, 1889 to March 25, 1890, again focused on the covenants question.<sup>18</sup>

In the ministers' school A. T. Jones presented the covenants. A student who was present at the lectures, Elder E. P. Dexter, later (1891) wrote:

Since attending Bro. Jones Lectures I have given the *covenants* considerable study, and while cheerfully accepting the advanced

light which has accompanied his exposition of this subject, I cannot be blind to the fact that this subject is *not fully understood* by our people. This lack, and want of harmony was exposed in the S.S. lessons on Hebrews. Since then, it has seemed to me, this subject has been avoided.<sup>19</sup>

Unable to stay into the new year, A. T. Jones had to leave for New York City before Christmas of 1889, in order to take up duties with *The American Sentinel*.

E. J. Waggoner was A. T. Jones' replacement. Dan Jones reported to H. E. Robinson that "it was with considerable reluctance that Dr. Waggoner was secured for the remainder of the term. . . ." <sup>20</sup> E. J. Waggoner taught in the Bible school a course on the Book of Isaiah during the latter part of 1889.<sup>21</sup> But he changed directions at the first of the year and announced he would be teaching the covenants.

Dan T. Jones was in charge of the school in the absence of its principal, Prof. W. W. Prescott. Elder Jones wrote about what happened:

. . . I heard that Dr. Waggoner had announced in his school that he would take up the covenant question the next Monday morning. . . I thought about it a little, and concluded I would go and have a talk with Bro. White and the Dr. in reference to the matter, and try to prevail on them to lay over that question, at least until Prof. Prescott and Eld. Olsen could be here.<sup>22</sup>

Dan Jones felt that if Waggoner had not consulted with the "managing board of the school or the other members of the faculty, it would have caused great dissatisfaction from all quarters."<sup>23</sup>

Dan Jones went first to Elder W. C. White about the problem. Elder White advised him to talk to Dr. Waggoner to work it out. On Friday, Jones talked with Waggoner about holding off on teaching the covenants to the ministers until it could be decided by Prof. Prescott and Elder Olsen. The two men talked for a couple of hours about the problem. Waggoner had already made his plans to begin teaching on Monday and was not about to change his mind.

On Monday around six o'clock in the evening, Dr. Waggoner handed Dan Jones a letter of resignation for the one hour class time when the covenants were to be taught. This threw Jones into confusion about what to do. So on Tuesday he tried to get Dr. Waggoner to reconsider, but neither would compromise on their issues. It was decided between Dan Jones and W. C. White that Uriah Smith should take over the class.

Then Dan Jones and Uriah Smith—

... arranged to make a smooth matter of it before the class as we could; by stating that it had been thought best for Bro. Smith to come in with some of his lines of work for the present, and put off the covenant question for the present, as Dr. Waggoner was overworked and needed rest; and it had been expected that Bro. Smith would assist in the Bible-school, and so on. They put it on me to introduce the matter before the class. And after the decision was made we only had ten minutes to go on before the hour Bro. Smith was going to take would begin. So I went over with Bro. Smith, and got there a few minutes before the Dr. closed his class. After he had closed, he [Dr. Waggoner] said: "Sometimes the unexpected happens, and something very unexpected has happened to me. There have been objections made to my teaching the covenant question in this school, very much to my surprise, and I will not take it up for the present. Bro. [D. T.] Jones will explain to you the change that has been made." That upset my little speech completely that I had fixed up; so I could only say that it had been thought best to postpone the presentation of the covenant question for the present at least, and that Bro. Smith would take up the sanctuary question.<sup>24</sup>

It appeared that Dan Jones was less than honest with the students about what had happened precipitating Dr. Waggoner's departure from the classroom.

On Sunday morning, February 16, in the east vestry of the tabernacle,<sup>25</sup> Uriah Smith gave a brief overview of his position on the covenants. Smith traced the plan of salvation through the covenants given to Adam, Abraham

and Israel. Smith said that Israel was “under the Adamic covenant; they were under the Abrahamic covenant.”<sup>26</sup> If they would “be obedient to him; keep his laws and commandments,” then He would make them a great nation. Smith concluded:

So I understand the two covenants were the two dispensations through which God was working to carry out his plan originally made with Abraham.<sup>27</sup>

When Dr. Waggoner made his presentation on Monday, February 17, for two hours, Dan Jones noted:

Nothing was presented that Eld. Smith or any one else posted on the covenant question could object to, until near the close of the last session, when Dr. Waggoner drew a parallel between the old and new covenants, showing that each had three objective points: first, righteousness; second, inheritance of the earth, and third, kingdom of priests. But in the first it all depended upon the obedience of the people; in the second, or new covenant, God does it for the people.<sup>28</sup>

Jones objected to the view that the old covenant and the new covenant were two different and distinct covenants.

According to Dan Jones, there was agreement between Waggoner and Smith on the objectives of both covenants: the necessity of righteousness, the restoration of the earth, and all the priesthood of all believers.

Elder O. A. Olsen was present for E. J. Waggoner’s presentation on the covenants. He said, “I think that Dr. Waggoner has brought out some very important truth on that subject.”<sup>29</sup>

Elder U. Smith continued his formal presentation on Wednesday, February 19, 1890. Edson White made notes of his remarks. Smith said all was in harmony on the matter of justification by faith. He continued:

But on this subject of the covenants, there are some points, some scriptures, where there seems to be a difference of opinion

in regard to the application.<sup>30</sup>

. . . I think the promise to Abraham began right there and took in his immediate posterity and ran down through the literal seed, [i.e., the covenant was for the direct descendants] and through the literal seed went on to a wider development of the plan—reaching clear over to the final consummation, the redemption of man, the renewing of the earth, and the final possession of the inheritance. And in the development of that promise I understand God has formed *two dispensations*, two stages, if we may so speak, in the development of that work. In the accomplishment of that promise which he gave to Abraham there were *two stages, two dispensations*, and by each of these he was carrying on the same idea, reaching forward to the same end; and both of them were an *advance step* in the development of the plan: the promise, first, embracing the literal seed, securing to them many of the blessings to be had in the world here, in time, in their mortal state, and many of the privileges to be had in the world; and yet the promise to Abraham being such that all could not be secured in this mortal state, in this present earth in its present condition, and, therefore, involving the final resurrection of the dead, immortality, eternal in the new earth, as the final completion of the promise; but taking in these *two stages*. Now, we find ourselves able to see the bearing of some scriptures and see the harmony between some statements from the sacred writing that we could not do if we took the promise to Abraham to be simply a promise made to him and then bounding right over to Christ, and dropping all else from him to Christ. It seems to me the promise to Abraham filled up the whole time between him and Christ; and when it struck Christ, of course it took in all that was to be accomplished through him.<sup>31</sup>

Elder Smith implied that the first covenant was a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant to his seed—Abraham's literal descendants.

He explained what God accomplished “in making this covenant with the people in bringing them out of Egypt: first, to carry out as it pertained to that time the promise of Abraham.”<sup>32</sup> He saw no distinction between the Sinaitic covenant made with Israel and the Abrahamic covenant. “. . . It seems to me that this covenant is very intimately related with that Abrahamic covenant.”<sup>33</sup>

Smith was saying that the Sinai covenant was to preserve the purity of the Israelites from other nations. Christ could then trace his genealogy as Messiah back to Abraham who was given the covenant.

The impression left by Elder Smith was that salvation under the old covenant was only *figurative*. This was a reflection of Butler’s figurative forgiveness of sins but not a reality until Christ should come. The Abrahamic covenant could only point to Christ the reality. Smith explained:

So in Christ were the provisions of the Abrahamic covenant fulfilled, and light and immortality brought to light through the gospel, and conferred upon the people. And finally they would be brought over to the atonement, when sins would be absolutely forgiven, and that not for anybody—not even for Abel—until the atonement is made down here at the atonement of Christ,—carrying out to completion the promise made to Abraham and the promise of salvation made to Abraham.<sup>34</sup>

In Elder Smith’s view none of the patriarchs who lived by faith received atonement for their sins until Christ actually died. Their forgiveness was only figurative in anticipation of the cross.

It is to be pondered, however, that Moses taught that Abraham “believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Christ said to the Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56). Surely Moses and Abraham must have known and experienced the blessed assurance of the forgiveness of their sins since by faith they knew Christ.

The apostle Paul stated: “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman” (Galatians 4:21). Elder Smith interpreted the law here by saying, “Why certain teachers had come down

from Jerusalem troubling their minds, and saying, they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses.”<sup>35</sup>

Uriah Smith said that Paul was talking about a problem with the old covenant that existed in the apostle’s day dealing with the Judaizers and Galatian Christians. They wanted to revert back to circumcision in order to be saved like the Israelites were under the old dispensation. Thus, he felt Paul was not speaking negatively of the old covenant during the time of Israel for which it was instituted. It was a good thing which God had ordained for their salvation, but it had no usefulness after the cross.

However, what Paul actually taught was that the old covenant experience persisted to that day with his fellow Jews in Jerusalem. “These are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children” (Galatians 3:24, 25). There were those in Jerusalem in Paul’s day who continued in the old covenant experience.

One pastor who participated in the Bible school, S. A. Whittier, assessed the Smith’s view of the covenants. He said: “. . . It has not seemed to me that our position on the two covenants was clear.”<sup>36</sup>

The president, Elder O. A. Olsen thought it “amusing.” He reported—

I have taken occasion to make inquiries of leading brethren in reference to their views on the covenants, and the fact is . . . that I have not found two that held particularly the same views. This has led me to conclude that our brethren are not clear on the subject, neither have they the full light. . . .<sup>37</sup>

This indicated the state of confusion among brethren regarding the issue of the covenants.

A few days after Elder Smith’s presentation, on Monday, February 24, Elder R. C. Porter<sup>38</sup> of the Minnesota Conference spoke. He set forth his thesis in these words: “I understand the Abrahamic covenant to embrace both the old and the new covenants. . . .”<sup>39</sup> He continued: “. . . The old covenant, as it is called, was made to carry out the covenant made with Abraham. . . .”<sup>40</sup> Porter made no distinction between the old and the new

covenants. One was but the extension of the other.

Elder Porter made a statement several times that seemed to be responsive to what Dr. Waggoner had been teaching. “The Lord did not expect the people to keep that [old] covenant in their own strength.”<sup>41</sup> He made this point several times that God provided divine aid to keep the old covenant. “. . . The promise of divine help was right there given to them, to enable them to carry out the specifications of the old covenant.”<sup>42</sup> Waggoner said there was no such promise in the old covenant for divine pardon or aid. Porter was seeking to counter Waggoner on this point.

In Porter’s understanding, God provided for the people to be righteous under the old covenant.

. . . The Lord looked for righteousness in that people; and he certainly would not look for righteousness if he had not provided a way by which they could obtain that righteousness for which he would look.<sup>43</sup>

Surely these were points made to rebut Waggoner on his understanding of the old covenant.

And then, as if to completely wipe away the basic premise of Waggoner’s understanding of the old covenant as being based on the promises of the people, Elder Porter said: “The conditions on which that [old] covenant was made were that of actual obedience, and not on the promise of the obedience.”<sup>44</sup> He was saying that Israel must obey the commandments as a condition of the old covenant. They could obey because God would help them. The old covenant was not the promise of the people to obey. There could not have been a more thorough rejection of Waggoner’s message on the covenants.

Finally, Elder Porter asserted his agreement with Elder Smith about the new covenant being a continuation in the new dispensation of the old covenant in the former dispensation. “The Abrahamic covenant is the everlasting covenant; and the two covenants are but the means in the different ages for the carrying out of that plan; . . .”<sup>45</sup> The Abrahamic covenant is the same as the old and the new covenants. The old and the new covenants are the same means in “different ages” of restoring the sinner “into favor with God.”

Waggoner would agree that the two dispensations were different historical periods with different symbols and types of the plan of salvation. But Porter and Smith made the symbols the *means* of the everlasting covenant, rather than simply *expressions* of faith in Christ. This was the essence of the old covenant experience which Waggoner was contrasting to the new covenant experience of righteousness by faith. The purpose of any symbol was primarily as an expression of faith in God, who would fulfill *His promise* in Christ. Christ Himself was the only *means*, or way, of salvation.

Ellen White's reaction to Porter's presentation was a resounding rejection. "... Brother Porter, ... you are not in the light. Do not be surprised if I, when you are in the darkness, refuse to have an interview with ... you."<sup>46</sup> His understanding of the two covenants was darkness rather than light.

The trio of Dan Jones, Uriah Smith, and R. C. Porter were united in their opposition to Waggoner's presentation of the two covenants. They were confused about the covenants, but they did not recognize their confusion. They were not open to what Waggoner had to teach from the Bible. Through their leadership they left a lasting impact upon the ministers' institute of 1890. It should be emphasized that they were not malicious in doing this. They sincerely believed that they were upholding God's truth.

Another example of how Dan Jones worked underhandedly to neutralize Dr. Waggoner's influence was when Elder N. W. Allee wrote to him for advice about speakers for an institute in the Missouri Conference. Evidently Allee wanted to arrange for A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner to come as guest speakers, but Dan Jones advised against it. He wrote to Allee:

... I do not have very much confidence in some of their ways of presenting things. They try to drive everything before them, and will not admit that their positions can possibly be subject to the least criticism. They say, "It is truth; and all you need to do is to study it as long as I have, and you will see it!" ... But our more thoughtful men, Bro. Smith, Bro. Littlejohn, Bro. Corliss, Bro. Gage, and others,—do not agree with them on many positions which they take on ... the covenants, the law in Galatians. ... But these things they make prominent wherever they go ... upon which there is a difference of opinion among our leading brethren. I do not think you want to bring that

spirit into the Missouri Conference.<sup>47</sup>

Dan Jones concluded his advice to Allee by characterizing Waggoner's theology as "a high-falutin theory that never has worked and never will work anywhere."<sup>48</sup>

There are those who would look back on Seventh-day Adventist denominational history of 1890 and conclude a victory was achieved. However, Elder J. S. Washburn, who was closer to the events, had a more sober assessment:

I was one of those ordered by the General Conference Committee to attend the Minister's school at Battle Creek, the last winter but was not able to go on account of sickness in the family. But some of the reports from them have made me think it was in a measure "Minneapolis" over again. It seems to me God is just holding over our heads a great blessing, but is waiting for us to be ready for it before bestowing it upon us, and that this blessing is true holiness and that when we shall come up to our duties and privileges in this matter then our work shall go with the "loud cry."<sup>49</sup>

Later that year (May 19, 1890), R. C. Porter was back in Minnesota and received a letter from Dan Jones which continued to feed his negativism toward the covenant message. Jones wrote to him:

I find that the agitation on the covenant question and justification by faith has lost none of its force as it has gone out to different parts of the field, but has rather gathered strength and taken on objectionable features, until they see it now in a much worse light than it really is.<sup>50</sup>

In summary, the ministers' Bible school of 1890 focused on the issue of the two covenants. When E. J. Waggoner attempted to address this subject in the ministers' institute, Dan Jones felt such controversial topics needed approval from the school principal. Waggoner stepped down from teaching at the time which had been allotted to him.

Eventually, when the school principal, Prof. W. W. Prescott, arrived, presentations were allowed from both sides of the question. The evidence indicates that there was confusion in the minds of the pastors as well as some church leaders over the covenant issue.

Ellen White supported an open and fair discussion among the pastors on the covenant question. She indicated her disapproval of Elder R. C. Porter's presentation of the traditional view.<sup>51</sup>

The evidence reveals that among some of the leadership of the General Conference,—namely Dan Jones, Uriah Smith, and R. C. Porter,—there was opposition to E. J. Waggoner and the two covenants. Ellen White said there were underhanded dealings going on. The way Dan Jones tried to discourage the Missouri Conference from inviting A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner as guest speakers indicates a behind-the-scenes maneuvering.

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## Endnotes:

1. J. N. Loughborough, "Elder J. H. Waggoner," *ST* 15, 19 (May 20, 1889), p. 294.
2. E. G. White, Letter to Willie and Mary White, March 13, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan. *EGW 1888*, p. 627. They were also discussed in Dan T. Jones, Letter to E. W. Farnsworth, February 9, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan.
3. *Sabbath-School Lessons on the Letter to the Hebrews for Senior Classes*. Jan. 4 to Mar. 29, 1890, (Oakland, California: International Sabbath-School Association, 1889), p. 10.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
6. E. J. Waggoner, "Letter to the Hebrews. Chapter 8:8-13," *ST* 16, 1 (January 6, 1890), p. 10.
7. *Ibid.*
8. E. J. Waggoner, "Letter to the Hebrews. Chapter 8:8-13," *ST* 16, 2 (January 13, 1890), p. 26.
9. *Sabbath-School Lessons on the Letter to the Hebrews for Senior Classes*. Jan. 4 to Mar. 29, 1890, (Oakland, California: International Sabbath-School Association, 1889), p. 17.
10. E. J. Waggoner, "Letter to the Hebrews. Chapter 8:6-13," *ST* 16, 3 (January 20, 1890), p. 42.

11. E. J. Waggoner, "Letter to the Hebrews. Chapter 9:8-14," *ST* 16, 5 (February 3, 1890), p. 74.
12. *Ibid.*
13. E. J. Waggoner, "Letter to the Hebrews. Chapter 8:6-13," *ST* 16, 3 (January 20, 1890), p. 43.
14. U. Smith, *RH* 67, 4 (January 28, 1890), p. 64.
15. Dan T. Jones, Letter to O. A. Olsen, January 16, 1890. Battle Creek, Michigan, paragraph 3.
16. Dan T. Jones, Letter to George I. Butler, February 13, 1890. Battle Creek, Michigan.
17. Dan T. Jones, Letter to E. W. Farnsworth, February 9, 1890. Battle Creek, Michigan, p. 2, paragraph 2.
18. "The 1890 ministers' school struggled through the winter. . . . The major bone of theological contention had been the covenants, a topic that Waggoner's Sabbath school lessons had recently reignited." George R. Knight, *A User-Friendly Guide to the 1888 Message* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland: 1998), p. 120.
19. E. P. Dexter, Letter to E. G. White, March 11, 1891. Dexter said that "Bro. A. T. Jones [was] at the ministers' institute, Battle Creek, 1888-89. . . ." Emphasis supplied.
20. Dan T. Jones, Letter to H. E. Robinson, January 3, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, p. 1, paragraph 3.
21. Dan T. Jones, Letter to M. Larson, January 2, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, p. 2, paragraph 1.
22. Dan T. Jones, Letter to E. W. Farnsworth, February 9, 1890, p. 2, paragraph 2.
23. Dan T. Jones, Letter to C. H. Jones, February 1890, p. 3, paragraph 1.
24. Dan T. Jones, Letter to George I. Butler, February 13, 1890.
25. Dan T. Jones, Letter to J. O. Corliss, February 16, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, p. 2, paragraph 1.
26. Uriah Smith, "Remarks of Eld. Uriah Smith at the Bible-School, Feb. 16th, 1890," p. 3.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
28. Dan T. Jones, Letter to R. A. Underwood, February 18, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, p. 2, paragraph 0.
29. O. A. Olsen, Letter to T. L. Waters, March 17, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan.
30. Uriah Smith, "Remarks of Uriah Smith, Bible-school, February 19, 1890."
31. *Ibid.* Emphasis supplied.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*

36. S. A. Whittier, Letter to O. A. Olsen, January 22, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, p. 1, paragraph 3.
37. O. A. Olsen, Letter to R. A. Underwood, February 16, 1890, Coopersville, Michigan, pp. 1, 2, paragraph 2.
38. Elder Porter had been brought in by the General Conference committee while the Bible school was in progress. He was to be a teacher for the school. Dan Jones reported the committee believed that “Bro. Porter has some natural qualifications that would well fit him for this line of work. . . .” Dan T. Jones, Letter to Allen Moon, January 3, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan. Cf. Dan T. Jones, Letter to R. C. Porter, January 2, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan.
39. R. C. Porter, “Remarks of Eld. R. C. Porter, at the Ministers’ Bible-school,” February 24, 1890. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Archives. Edson White took notes on Porter’s “speech on the covenant question, delivered at the Bible-school last winter.” Dan T. Jones, Letter to R. C. Porter, May 5, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. E. G. White, Sermon, March 8, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan. *EGW 1888*, p. 595.
47. Dan T. Jones, Letter to N. W. Allee, January 23, 1890, pp. 4, 5, paragraph 1.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 5, paragraph 0.
49. J. S. Washburn, Letter to E. G. White, April 17, 1890, Clarinda, Iowa. *MMM*, p. 174.
50. Dan T. Jones, Letter to R. C. Porter, May 5, 1890, pp. 3, 4.
51. E. G. White, Sermon, March 8, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan. *EGW 1888*, p. 595.

## chapter thirteen

# Ellen White Endorses the Covenant

The controversy over the two covenants was not resolved by the church at the 1890 ministers' institute. It continued to be an issue of contention in the years to come. But Ellen White did make a public announcement during the institute as to where divine authority rested. The Scriptures were the basis for doctrine and practice. The Bible would have to resolve the matter.

There were a few, one being Elder J. O. Corliss, who studied the Bible and came into agreement on the law and the two covenants with E. J. Waggoner. Evidently, D. T. Bourdeau was another, since he presented a lecture with Waggoner in support of the better view.

Ellen White saw the issue over the law in Galatians as a minor matter. It certainly was not a "landmark" pioneer doctrine of the church. This was the reason why she could not understand why it had caused such an "incomprehensible tug of war"<sup>1</sup> at Minneapolis. But on the issue of the covenants, she was about to break her silence.

Ever since the Minneapolis Conference, Ellen White had been encouraging Bible study on this matter. Neither E. J. Waggoner nor Uriah Smith's word was to be taken for truth. She herself tried to stay out of the controversy by not taking a position on the law in Galatians or the two covenants.

Now the time had come. Light was sent from above. On Thursday, March 6, 1890, Ellen White was given insight as to what Heaven thought about the two covenants. She wrote a letter to Elder Smith that following Sabbath, March 8.

Night before last I was shown that evidences in regard to the covenants were clear and convincing. Yourself, Brother Dan Jones, Brother Porter and others are spending your investigative powers for naught to produce a position on the covenants to vary from the position that Brother Waggoner has presented. Had you received the true light which shineth, you would not have imitated or gone over the same manner of interpretation and misconstruing the Scriptures as did the Jews. What made them so zealous? Why did they hang on the words of Christ? Why did spies follow Him to mark his words that they could repeat and misinterpret and twist in a way to mean that which their own unsanctified minds would make them to mean. In this way, they deceived the people. They made false issues. They handled those things that they could make a means of clouding and misleading minds. The covenant question is a clear question and would be received by every candid, unprejudiced mind, but I was brought where the Lord gave me an insight into this matter. You have turned from plain light because you were afraid that the law question in Galatians would have to be accepted. As to the law in Galatians, I have no burden and never have.<sup>2</sup>

This was a strong endorsement by Ellen White regarding the two covenants as presented by E. J. Waggoner. Evidently the Lord observed the great disunity in the leadership of the church. He wanted to draw them together in the truth as it is in Jesus—if they would just walk in the light as presented from Scripture.

A particularly poignant illustration which Ellen White drew from Scripture with regard to her endorsement of Waggoner's covenant theology was the comparison between the Jews of Christ's day and the present church leadership. She said they had confused ideas which baffled the people.

We observe that in the context of the covenants, the Jews believed the Sinaitic covenant to be God's unqualified election of the Hebrew people. Therefore, they rejected Christ when He claimed to be the Mediator of God's covenant.

Likewise, Elder Smith had presented a view of the old covenant which represented Israel as God's elect people by means of the covenant with Abraham. The matter of the heart's condition and faith toward Christ was secondary to God's election. There was a predestinarian flavor to his views of the old covenant. By presenting his confusing views holding that the new covenant and was but the continuation of the old covenant, Elder Smith was acting just as the Jews did in Christ's day, who hung on all His words and misrepresented Him to the people. Ellen White said: "You have strengthened the hands and minds of such men as Larson, Porter, Dan Jones, Eldridge and Morrison and Nicola and a vast number through them. All quote you, and the enemy of righteousness looks on pleased."<sup>3</sup>

Ellen White warned Elder Smith:

If you turn from one ray of light fearing it will necessitate an acceptance of positions you do not wish to receive, that light becomes to you darkness, that if you were in error, you would honestly assert it to be truth.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, Elder Smith feared that if he gave in on the point of the distinction between the two covenants, then he would have to concede the issue of the moral law in Galatians 3.

Elder Smith had just written to Ellen White on February 17, 1890, about this very concern. He could read the handwriting on the wall as to which direction she was moving, and it disturbed him greatly. He had such cognitive dissonance that it was causing him to question the Testimonies. If one domino fell in his whole theory, then they all would go down. Elder Smith had written to Ellen White about Waggoner's—

. . . position on Galatians, which I deem as erroneous. . . . He [E. J. Waggoner] took his position on Galatians, the same which you had condemned in his father [J. H. Waggoner].<sup>5</sup>

The significance which he placed on this issue was made plain when he said to her in no uncertain terms:

As it looks to me, next to the death of Brother [James] White, the greatest calamity that ever befell our cause was when Dr. Waggoner put his articles on the book of Galatians through the *Signs*. I supposed the question of the law in Galatians was settled away back in 1856. . . . I was surprised at the articles, because they seemed to me then, and still seem to me, to contradict so directly what you wrote to J. H. Waggoner. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Smith was adamantly opposed to Waggoner's views on the distinction between the two covenants because of his position on the ceremonial law in Galatians 3.

Now on Sunday, March 9, 1890, the day after she had sent her endorsement of the covenant question to Elder Smith, Ellen White confided to her son W. C. White:

I have no brakes to put on now. I stand in perfect freedom, calling light, light, and darkness, darkness. I told them yesterday that the position of the covenants I believed as presented in my volume 1 [*Patriarchs and Prophets*]. If that was Dr. Waggoner's position then he had the truth.<sup>7</sup>

The leadership of the church along with Ellen White had met on Sabbath, March 8, in the afternoon at the *Review* office chapel.<sup>8</sup> On Monday she again wrote to her son:

I am much pleased to learn that Professor Prescott is giving the same lessons in his class to the students that Brother Waggoner has been giving. He is presenting the covenants . . . . Since I made the statement last Sabbath that the view of the covenants as it had been taught by Brother Waggoner was truth, it seems that great relief has come to many minds.<sup>9</sup>

On Sunday, March 9, Ellen White reported what happened at that Sabbath afternoon meeting:

There was a large number present. Elders Olsen<sup>10</sup> and Waggoner led the meeting. The blessing of God came upon me, and all knew that the Spirit and power of God were upon me, and many were greatly blessed. I spoke with earnestness and decision. . . .<sup>11</sup>

She directed their attention to her statement in Volume 1 (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, “The Law and the Covenants”) on the covenants and declared it to be in harmony with Dr. Waggoner. This was a crucial public meeting because her endorsement of Waggoner’s view of the covenants had been by letter to Uriah Smith, W. C. White and Mary White. Now she made the “light” known in a public service.<sup>12</sup>

Ellen White got up to speak that Sabbath afternoon in the office chapel. She told them exactly where she stood in the present conflict. She referred to the revelation that had been given her on Thursday night, March 6, and said:

. . . the light that came to me night before last laid it all open again before me, just the influence that was at work, and just where it would lead. . . . You are just going over the very same ground that they went over in the days of Christ. You have had their experience; but God deliver us. . . . You have stood right in the way of God. The earth is to be lighted with His glory, and if you stand where you stand to-day, you might just as quick say that the Spirit of God was the spirit of the devil. . . .

. . . Do not hang on to Brother Smith. In the name of God, I tell you, he is not in the light. He has not been in the light since he was at Minneapolis. . . .

. . . Let the truth of God come into your hearts; open the door. Now I tell you here before God, that the covenant question, as it has been presented, is the truth.<sup>13</sup>

Ellen White connected the truth of the distinction of the two covenants as presented by E. J. Waggoner as being light from the Holy Spirit.

This was the same light of the everlasting gospel that would lighten the earth with His glory (Revelation 18:1). To reject the truth of the covenants was to reject the Spirit of God and call Him the devil. This was the same kind of dealings which the Jews practiced with the truth Christ presented.

Crediting Elder Smith's view of the covenants was to run in the channels of darkness. His view of the covenants had been reviewed many times. By now there should have been a clear distinction between what was truth and error. There was no question where Ellen White stood on the covenants. She was with E. J. Waggoner. The everlasting covenant was the light of justification by faith. It was the light to be shared with the world. With its reception would come the Holy Spirit's blessing to finish the work.

Early in 1890, Ellen White had been working on an expansion of Volume I of *The Spirit of Prophecy*. When she received divine confirmation on March 6, 1890, of Waggoner's position on the two covenants, she incorporated it into her revised edition entitled *Patriarchs and Prophets*.<sup>14</sup> This was completely new material. It was one of the best statements on the relationship between the covenants and righteousness by faith.<sup>15</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets* was published August 26, 1890.<sup>16</sup> Ellen White said:

The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden. . . . This same covenant was renewed to Abraham. . . . This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God's law. . . .

The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God's law.

Another compact—called in Scripture the “old” covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice. The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, . . .<sup>17</sup>

Ellen White distinguished between the two covenants as to when and how they were ratified. She did not confuse them as had Elder Porter. Then she affirmed the validity of the new covenant for Old Testament times.

That the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham is evident from the fact that it was then confirmed both by the promise and by the oath of God—the “two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie.” Hebrews 6:18.<sup>18</sup>

Ellen White continued her observations regarding the covenants:

But if the Abrahamic covenant contained the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai? In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. In delivering them from Egypt, God sought to reveal to them His power and His mercy, that they might be led to love and trust Him. He brought them down to the Red Sea—where, pursued by the Egyptians, escape seemed impossible—that they might realize their utter helplessness, their need of divine aid; and then He wrought deliverance for them. Thus they were filled with love and gratitude to God and with confidence in His power to help them. He had bound them to Himself as their deliverer from temporal bondage. . . .

Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God's law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught. . . .

. . . The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God's law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." Exodus 24:7. . . . Only a few weeks passed before they broke *their covenant* with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image. They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken; and now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the *Saviour revealed in the Abrahamic covenant* and shadowed forth in the sacrificial offerings. Now by faith and love they were bound to God as their deliverer from the bondage of sin. Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant.

The terms of the "old covenant" were, Obey and live: . . . The "new covenant" was established upon "better promises"—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law.<sup>19</sup>

Here she picked up the theme of Waggoner that there was no "hope for the favor of God" in their broken covenant. Their sinfulness became pronounced. They felt "their need of pardon." They were brought to the Saviour of the Abrahamic covenant. Now instead of coming with their promises, they were bound to God by genuine "faith and love." They had a new appreciation for His deliverance from "bondage" to sin.

Reflected in her statements were the exact terms which Waggoner had used to describe the relationships between the old and the new covenants. If the Holy Spirit ever endorsed a concept more clearly, it was the everlasting covenant of the 1888 message.

Ellen White emphasized Waggoner's point that the old covenant was legalism. The new covenant promise alone provided pardon from sin and divine aid. The *Patriarchs and Prophets* statement was one of the most

beautiful and succinct comments on the glad tidings of the everlasting covenant ever written aside from Scripture.

As those with the light of the covenants had opportunity in various venues, they opened up the truth to the people. It was received by some in the field.

We can briefly summarize the significant events of the ministers' Bible institute.

On Sabbath, March 8, 1890, Ellen White gave a testimony to the leadership of the church. She had received a night vision, March 6, confirming that Elder Waggoner had the light on the covenant issue. She also confirmed this by letters written to Uriah Smith and W. C. White.

Even though Dan Jones was not present March 8, when Ellen White made her public endorsement of the covenant views of E. J. Waggoner, it was surely public knowledge. Upon his return to Battle Creek he must have been informed of what she said. Despite her endorsement, Dan Jones wrote:

It seemed for awhile that Sister White would come out and endorse Dr. Waggoner's position on the covenant question fully, and it was a great perplexity to me to know how to look upon the matter; for it seemed clear to my mind that his positions were not all correct. But . . . the matter of doctrine was not the important point in the issue at all. Sister White and Dr. Waggoner said they did not care what we believed on the law in Galatians or on the covenants. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Dan Jones assumed that neither Ellen White nor E. J. Waggoner thought the law or covenants were crucial issues.

However, the evidence indicates that E. J. Waggoner never relinquished his position on the moral law in Galatians 3 or the distinction between the old and the new covenants. As for Ellen White, she endorsed his view of the covenants, but did not saying anything about the law issue as yet.

Another false assumption under which Dan Jones was operating was that Waggoner had conceded a key point of his teaching. Jones wrote that Waggoner had “. . . given up the position that in the old covenant the

promises were all on the part of the people, and none on the part of God.”<sup>21</sup> There was no evidence that Waggoner gave up this position.

Dan Jones sounded relieved when he wrote to J. H. Morrison:

I understood that there was considerable importance attached to the points of doctrine involved in the questions of the law in Galatians and the two covenants.<sup>22</sup>

So if there was no real doctrinal issue involved, where did the conflict lie?

In his own mind Dan Jones had figured out the real problem. He wrote to R. M. Kilgore:

It is the spirit alone that has been manifested to which she objected, and to which Eld. Waggoner takes exception. Both Sister White and Dr. Waggoner stated that the doctrinal points were not the points at issue. So that removes the real point that was in my mind all the time.<sup>23</sup>

He had rationalized that doctrine was unimportant. In this way he could create some semblance of order in his conflicted mind.

But his hopeful rationalizations had not really brought him any peace because he said: “. . . The ministers’ school is almost over. The investigation on the covenant question closed up with no better satisfaction than before it begun [*sic.*].”<sup>24</sup> Poor Dan Jones! Once the Spirit of truth had been shut out, it became easier for him to walk in the light of his own kindling. The truth became too confusing for him.

On Sunday, March 16, another meeting was held in the office chapel. Some of the leading brethren assembled. Ellen White reported what happened. She wrote to her son W. C. White:

Brother Dan Jones then spoke. He stated that he had been tempted to give up the testimonies; but if he did this, he knew he should yield everything, for we had regarded the testimonies as interwoven with the third angel’s message; and he spoke of terrible scenes of temptations. I really pitied the man.<sup>25</sup>

This must have been a sad scene for her to witness. Ellen White spoke of the stubborn resistance on the part of some leaders to the message of God.

Sunday morning, although weary and almost discouraged, I ventured into the meeting. . . . I kept before them what they had done to make of none effect that which the Lord was trying to do and why. The law in Galatians was their only plea.

“Why,” I asked, “is your interpretation of the law in Galatians more dear to you, and you more zealous to maintain your ideas on this point, than to acknowledge the workings of the Spirit of God? You have been weighing every precious heaven-sent testimony by your own scales as you interpreted the law in Galatians.” Nothing could come to you in regard to the truth and the power of God unless it should bear your imprint, the precious ideas you had *idolized* on the law of Galatians.

These testimonies of the Spirit of God, the fruits of the Spirit of God, have no weight unless they are stamped with your ideas of the law in Galatians. I am afraid of you and I am afraid of your interpretation of any scripture which has revealed itself in such an unchristlike spirit as you have manifested and has cost me so much unnecessary labor. If you are such very cautious men and so very critical lest you shall receive something not in accordance with the Scriptures, I want your minds to look on these things in the true light. Let your caution be exercised in the line of fear lest you are committing the *sin against the Holy Ghost*. Have your critical minds taken this view of the subject? I say if *your views on the law in Galatians*, and the fruits, are of the character I have seen in Minneapolis and ever since up to this time, my prayer is that I may be as far from your understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures as it is possible for me to be. I am afraid of any application of Scripture that needs such a spirit and bears such fruit as you

have manifested. One thing is certain, I shall never come into harmony with such a spirit as long as God gives me my reason....

Now brethren, I have nothing to say, no burden in regard to the *law in Galatians*. This matter looks to me of *minor consequence in comparison with the spirit* you have brought into your faith. It is exactly of the same piece that was manifested by the Jews in reference to the work and mission of Jesus Christ. The most convincing testimony that we can bear to others that we have the truth is the spirit which attends the advocacy of that truth. If it sanctifies the heart of the receiver, if it makes him gentle, kind, forbearing, true and Christlike, then he will give some evidence of the fact that he has the genuine truth. But if he acts as did the Jews when their opinions and ideas were crossed, then we certainly cannot receive such testimony, for it does not produce the fruits of righteousness. Their own interpretations of Scripture were not correct, yet the Jews would receive no evidence from the revelation of the Spirit of God, but would, when their ideas were contradicted, even *murder the Son of God*.<sup>26</sup>

It was clear that error brought with it a spirit of persecution. Truth was evidenced by the Spirit of God manifested in the life. Ellen White had the gift of discernment. She wanted nothing to do with human interpretations of the Bible which bore such an attitude that if given free reign would “murder the Son of God.”

The Holy Spirit was leading them into further truth in regard to the distinction of the two covenants and righteousness by faith, but they were resisting the light.<sup>27</sup> They were afraid, that if they believed the two covenants as taught by Waggoner, they would have to give up their cherished notions about the ceremonial law in Galatians 3.

It was clear up to this point that Ellen White had not come out with a position on the law in Galatians 3. She *had* taken a public position on the distinction between the two covenants, endorsing Waggoner’s view. The brethren were holding to their cherished interpretations of the law ceremonial in Galatians 3. They would not so much as budge on the covenants issue for

fear of what they would have to do on the law issue, and they had become mean-spirited toward the Lord's messengers over the matter.

In this context, Ellen White said: "The law in Galatians is not a vital question and never has been."<sup>28</sup> She made it clear what she was rejecting. "I am forced, by the attitude my brethren have taken and the spirit evidenced, to say, God deliver me from your ideas of the law in Galatians. . . ."<sup>29</sup>

She was moving away from their position on the ceremonial law. She discerned the tragic results of what it was doing to the church. The Holy Spirit and truth were being rejected. She sensed "their view" could not be right.

By failing to cherish the Spirit of Christ, by taking *wrong positions* in the controversy over the law in Galatians—a question that many have not fully understood before taking a *wrong position*—the church has sustained a sad loss.<sup>30</sup>

On February 27, 1891, Ellen White was now firmly stating that the position on the ceremonial law in Galatians was wrong. Ellen White was quite forceful on Sabbath, March 8, when she endorsed the covenants as presented by Waggoner.

Now I tell you here before God, that the covenant question, as it has been presented, is the truth. It is the light. In clear lines it has been laid before me. And those that have been resisting the light, I ask you whether they have been working for God, or for the devil. . . . I told Brother Dan Jones, I will not tell you my opinion; my faith. Dig in the Bible.<sup>31</sup>

She did not tell Dan Jones her opinion. She endorsed light that came from the Bible on the two covenants. In addition, she was very concerned about the harsh spirit being displayed. She connected it with their erroneous views of the law and the covenants.

These testimonies of the Spirit of God, the fruits of the Spirit of God, have no weight unless they are stamped with your ideas of the law in Galatians. I am afraid of you and I am afraid of

your interpretation of any scripture which has revealed itself in such an unchristlike spirit as you have manifested and has cost me so much unnecessary labor. . . . I say if your views on the law in Galatians, and the fruits, are of the character I have seen in Minneapolis and ever since up to this time, my prayer is that I may be as far from your understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures as it is possible for me to be. I am afraid of any application of Scripture that needs such a spirit and bears such fruit as you have manifested. One thing is certain, I shall never come into harmony with such a spirit as long as God gives me my reason.<sup>32</sup>

She connected their doctrines as being the source of their spirit. False teachings required a harsh, dictatorial spirit to enforce them because they could not be demonstrated from the Scriptures. To discount truth for the sake of experience was a false dilemma. Both were absolutely essential in order to produce a Christ-like outcome.

Four years later (June 1, 1894), Ellen White said of both Butler and Smith, that they had “taken their own course” when it came to the light from God.

The Lord’s work needed every jot and tittle of experience that he had given Eld. Butler and Eld. Smith; but they have taken their own course in some things irrespective of the light God has given.<sup>33</sup>

This more than confirmed the value of the confessions offered to the church by Elders Butler and Smith. However sincere they were in their apologies, they continued to oppose the message and messengers.

They never supported the key concepts of the distinction between the two covenants, as endorsed by Ellen White. A. G. Daniells wrote to W. C. White about this fact years later (1902).

Not only the older men who were at work when Brother Butler, Brother Morrison, and others fought this battle, but some of the younger fellows who are coming on, have imbibed these old

heresies from the men in the field, who are still unconverted to this new light.<sup>34</sup>

And so the resistance to the light on righteousness by faith and its relation to the two covenants continued for decades.

E. J. Waggoner's concept of the two covenants was inclusive of two scriptural models. First, the first or old covenant ratified by animal sacrifice was made with the ancient Israelite nation, having as its foundation the promise of the people, "all that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). To this covenant God graciously attached superadditions; namely, the Levitical priesthood, the tabernacle, the ten commandments written on stone, the law of sacrifices and feasts, in order that it might teach Israel regarding their need of God's gracious promise found alone in His everlasting covenant.

Second, Waggoner taught the equally biblical model of the old and the new covenants as two distinct heart experiences particularly derived from Galatians 3. The old covenant heart experience was the self-sufficient promise of the people to obey; whereas, the new covenant or everlasting covenant heart experience was faith-affirming, "Amen," founded upon the unilateral promise of God.

Although written three years after the ministers' institute Waggoner's article entitled "The Day of Rest" expressed these two heart experiences calling them two different experiential dispensations:

... The "Christian dispensation" began for man as soon, at least, as the fall. There are indeed, two dispensations, a dispensation of sin and death, and a dispensation of righteousness and life, but these two dispensations have run parallel from the fall. God deals with men as individuals, and not as nations, nor according to the century in which they live. No matter what the period of the world's history, a man can at any time pass from the old dispensation into the new.<sup>35</sup>

The old covenant and the new covenant were two parallel experiences that ran down through the corridors of time: both in the chronological old dispensation and the new dispensation.

Waggoner wrote: “The law and the Gospel were united at Sinai, as everywhere else. The glory of Calvary was shining at Sinai, as clearly as it shines now.”<sup>36</sup> Calvary at Sinai expressed the unity of the gospel and law revealed to ancient Israel. Sinai was the gospel and the law combined in Christ. Christ in the law, and the law in Christ.

The two dispensations were two parallel tracks that had run alongside each other ever since the Fall. “The old dispensation is self, but the new dispensation is Christ.”<sup>37</sup> The dispensations were two different principles at work in human hearts. They were conditions of the heart. How beautiful and simple was God’s everlasting covenant.

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## Endnotes:

1. E. G. White, Letter to Mary White, November 4, 1888, Minneapolis, Minnesota, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
2. Ellen White, Letter to Uriah Smith, March 8, 1890, Battle Creek, Mich., Letter 59, 1890, *op. cit.*, p. 604.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 599.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 605.
5. Uriah Smith, Letter to E. G. White, February 17, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan. *MMM*, p.154.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 152, 153. The articles to which Elder Smith referred were E. J. Waggoner’s nine-part series “Comments on Galatians 3,” *ST* 12 (July 8-September 2, 1886).
7. E. G. White, Letter to W. C. White and Mary White, March 9, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, *op. cit.*, p. 617.
8. *Ibid.*
9. E. G. White, Letter to W. C. White and Mary White, March 10, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, *op. cit.*, p. 623.
10. Olsen reported: “. . . I think that probably there is more to this covenant question than we are aware of in some things. Sr. White has come out very pointedly.” O. A. Olsen, Letter to R. A. Underwood, March 18, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan.
11. Letter E. G. White to W. C. White and Mary White, March 9, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan. *EGW 1888*, p. 617.
12. Unfortunately, an important leader was not there for that meeting. Dan Jones missed this pivotal announcement by two days. Ellen White wrote to her son W. C. White: “I learn Brother Jones has come home this afternoon.” That was

- March 10. E. G. White, Letter to W. C. White and Mary White, March 10, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, *op. cit.*, p. 623. He had been in Tennessee for the King trial. Dan T. Jones, Letter to R. M. Kilgore, March 16, 1890.
13. E. G. White, Sermon, March 8, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, *op. cit.*, pp. 593, 594, 596.
  14. E. G. White, "The Law and the Covenants," *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Pacific Press Publishing Company, Oakland, California: 1890), pp. 363-373.
  15. Tim Crosby, "Ellen G. White and the Law in Galatians: A Study in the Dynamics of Present Truth," p. 28.
  16. See Ron Duffield, "The Return of the Latter Rain," unpublished mss.
  17. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370, 371.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 371.
  19. *Ibid.*, pp. 371, 372. Emphasis supplied.
  20. Dan T. Jones, Letter to J. H. Morrison, March 17, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan, p. 3.
  21. *Ibid.*, p. 4
  22. *Ibid.*
  23. Dan T. Jones, Letter to R. M. Kilgore, March 16, 1890, p. 2.
  24. *Ibid.*
  25. E. G. White, Letter to W. C. White and Mary White, March 16, 1890, Battle Creek, Michigan. *EGW 1888*, pp. 629.
  26. *Ibid.*, pp. 631, 632. Emphasis supplied.
  27. At this Sunday morning meetings Ellen White spoke before the ministerial institute saying: "I know that He has a blessing for us. He had it at Minneapolis, and He had it for us at the time of the General Conference here. But there was no reception. Some received the light for the people, and rejoiced in it. Then there were others that stood right back, and their position has given confidence to others to talk unbelief. . . ." *EGW 1888*, p. 640
  28. *Ibid.*, p. 841
  29. *Ibid.*
  30. E. G. White, Diary Entry, February 27, 1891. *EGW 1888*, p. 894. Emphasis added.
  31. E. G. White, "Sermon," March 8, 1890, *op. cit.*, pp. 596, 597.
  32. E. G. White, Letter to W. C. White and Wife, March 13, 1890, *EGW 1888*, pp. 631, 632. Here she discussed the attitudes of the opposing brethren.
  33. E. G. White, Letter to S. N. Haskell, June 1, 1894. *op. cit.*, p. 1248.
  34. A. G. Daniells, Letter to W. C. White, April 14, 1902, Battle Creek, Michigan. *MMM*, p. 320.
  35. E. J. Waggoner, "The Day of Rest," *PT* 9, 23 (September 7, 1893), p. 356.
  36. *Ibid.*, p. 357.
  37. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

## chapter fourteen

# “Justification by Faith Is the Third Angels’ Message in Verity”

Ellen White was overjoyed when she heard the message of the Everlasting covenant and justification by faith from the lips of A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. To her this clear teaching was consonant with the message of the three angels. “The hour of His judgment is come” and our Priest is cleansing the heavenly sanctuary. To her the sanctuary message was the way to be prepared for the second coming of Jesus. The cleansing of the people of their sins and the consequent cleansing of sin from the heavenly sanctuary was the fulfillment of God’s everlasting covenant to forgive their sins and write His laws upon their hearts and minds. The covenant message was a translation message.

Like a drumbeat over the course of the weeks that the 1890 ministers’ institute was conducted in Battle Creek, Sr. White wrote in the columns of the REVIEW during 1890 of her enthusiasm for the message of the everlasting covenant which she was hearing.

Notice her statements:

We are in the day of atonement, and we are to work in harmony with Christ’s work of cleansing the sanctuary from the sins

of the people. Let no man who desires to be found with the wedding garment on, resist our Lord in His office work. As He is, so will His followers be in this world. We must now set before the people the work which by faith we see our great High Priest accomplishing in the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>1</sup>

The important issue looming is that wedding—the marriage of the Lamb—which has been postponed so long. The time had come, for Christ’s people to awake and sense the time in which they were living. The time had come when the bride must “make herself ready” for the wedding by receiving the gift of His wedding garment. This garment was the High Priest’s message of His righteousness.

One week later while the covenant issue was raging at the institute Ellen White again directed the people’s attention to the sanctuary on the front page of the *Review*.

Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary, and He is there to make an atonement for His people. . . . He is cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. What is our work?—It is our work to be in harmony with the work of Christ. By faith we are to work with Him, to be in union with Him. . . . A people is to be prepared for the great day of God.<sup>2</sup>

Christ is cleansing the temple in heaven from the sins of the people, and we must work in harmony with Him upon the earth, cleansing the soul temple from its moral defilement.<sup>3</sup>

“The people have not entered into the holy place, where Jesus has gone to make an atonement for His children. We need the Holy Spirit in order to understand the truths for this time; but there is spiritual drought in the churches.”<sup>4</sup>

Notice that entering the sanctuary with Jesus by faith in the day of atonement meant progressing with the light which Jesus was giving on earth to His people. The truth of the everlasting covenant and justification

by faith which Jones and Waggoner were bringing to God's people was to be understood in connection with Jesus' day of atonement ministry in the sanctuary.

On March 4, 1890, she emphasized again the translation theme:

Light is flashing from the throne of God, and what is this for?—  
It is that a people may be prepared to stand in the day of God.<sup>5</sup>

If our brethren were all laborers together with God, they would not doubt but that the message He has sent to us during these last two years is from heaven. . . . Suppose that you blot out the testimony that has been going during these last two years proclaiming the righteousness of Christ, who can you point to as bringing out special light for the people?<sup>6</sup>

The present message of justification by faith was the third angel's message in verity giving power and force to the cleansing of the sanctuary.

Many spoke of the law, the law, and were concerned there was too much talk about justification by faith.<sup>7</sup> They ridiculed, spoke slightly, and denounced justification as fanaticism. They inquired of Sister White

. . . if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity." The prophet declares, "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory [Rev. 18:1]."<sup>8</sup>

"The third angel's message in verity" was clearly identified with the angel of Revelation 18:1 and that is "the third angel's message in verity." What was the significance of this statement? What did she mean by the affirmation "in verity"?

Justification by faith in connection with the sanctuary cleansing was the third angel's message in verity. It prepared the way for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. It prepared a people to stand in the hour of crisis and to be translated without seeing death at the second coming of Jesus. It

was and still is the shaking message to the Laodicean church. It bore with it all the prospect of the loud cry and latter rain of the Holy Spirit.

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### Endnotes:

1. Ellen G. White, "The Need of Complete Consecration," *RH* 67, 3 (January 21, 1890), p. 33.
2. Ellen G. White, "The Lord Must Be Our Light," *RH* 67, 4 (January 28, 1890), p. 49.
3. Ellen G. White, "The Danger of Talking Doubt," *RH* 67, 6 (February 11, 1890), p. 81.
4. Ellen G. White, "Need of Earnestness in the Cause of God," *RH* 67, 8 (February 25, 1890), p. 113.
5. Ellen G. White, "Draw Nigh to God," *RH* 67, 9 (March 4, 1890), p. 129.
6. Ellen G. White, "The Present Message," *RH* 67, 11 (March 18, 1890), p. 161.
7. "It is true men will say, 'You are too excited; you are making too much of this matter, and you do not think enough of the law; now, you must think more of the law; don't be all the time reaching for this righteousness of Christ, but build up the law.'  
"Let the law take care of itself. We have been at work on the law until we get as dry as the hills of Gilboa, without dew or rain." Ellen G. White, *EGW 1888 Materials*, p. 557.
8. Ellen G. White, "Repentance the Gift of God," *RH* 67, 13 (April 1, 1890), pp. 193, 194.

## chapter fifteen

# The Law Was Our Schoolmaster

In the year 1896, Ellen White clarified the “schoolmaster” law. She instructed Marian Davis, her secretary, to send Elder Uriah Smith the most definitive statement on the law in Galatians heretofore. It endorsed E. J. Waggoner’s position on the moral law in the Epistle to the Galatians. The statement from Ellen White reads thus in its entirety:

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ, and to flee unto him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord’s message through Brethren Waggoner and Jones. By exciting that opposition, Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit

that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.<sup>1</sup>

The first paragraph expounded Galatians 3:24 as Waggoner had explained it from the Bible. The law convicted the guilty sinner. The law then drove the sinner to the only relief possible. Christ's righteousness—justification by faith—the only remedy for the violated law.

Her next statement was much more sobering. It indicated that preconceived opinions of the law in Galatians at Minneapolis excited opposition to Waggoner and Jones' message which would have been accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. It was the "Lord's message" which the Holy Spirit wanted to use in lighting the whole earth with His glory. The reception of the truth would have been accompanied by the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit as on the day of Pentecost. But the enemy prevented this from happening by stirring up the brethren against the truth that God wanted to go to the world.

Her reference to Revelation 18:1 was unmistakable:

The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.<sup>2</sup>

It was the message of this mighty angel that joined in with the three angels of Revelation 14 in calling out, preparing, and maturing the harvest of the world for the coming of the Lord. The power of this message was to strengthen the first three angels' messages.

As early as 1856 she had seen the message of Revelation 18:1 coming in the near future as an addition to the third angels' message and affirmed it as the "loud cry."

The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message as it swells to a loud cry. . . . This message seemed to be an *addition* to the third message, joining it . . . .<sup>3</sup>

This was exactly as God had designed it should be.

The message brought by God's messengers was appointed by Him. They were ordained by the Holy Spirit. God came to His friends, the Seventh-day Adventist leadership. He gave them additional light that was absolutely essential to their mission. Had the light been accepted, it would have been accompanied by the power to accomplish the task. However, the "action of our own brethren" had kept it "away from the world" "in a great degree."

Completing the survey of the law in Galatians during the decade of the 1890's it is noted that in 1899 A. T. Jones summarized with these words the reason why Galatians was written:

. . . The book of Galatians was written to set the ceremonial law, the moral law, and the gospel, in their true and relative positions; and to annihilate ceremonialism forever.<sup>4</sup>

In the view of Jones, Galatians dealt with both the moral and ceremonial law. The Galatians were being enticed to add circumcision to the gospel as an additional means of salvation. This legalism or ceremonialism was a substitute for the true heart experience of the everlasting covenant.

Ellen White affirmed the "schoolmaster" to be both the moral and the ceremonial law. Sometime during the year 1900 she said:

I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. "What law is the school-master to bring us to Christ?" I answer: "Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments."<sup>5</sup>

This was the position which Stephen Pierce had taken "in the 1850s, namely, . . . that the schoolmaster was all forms of law."<sup>6</sup> The law in Galatians 3:24 was both moral and ceremonial.<sup>7</sup>

In this respect both A. T. Jones and E. G. White were building on the foundation laid by E. J. Waggoner, in a manner which did not negate the position she had taken in regard to J. H. Waggoner. E. J. Waggoner had initially limited the “schoolmaster” to primarily the moral law of God, as had his father. No doubt this was what Ellen White’s “guide” had in mind back in 1888 when he directed her to write to Elder Butler:

He<sup>8</sup> stretched out his arms toward Dr. Waggoner and to you, Elder Butler, and said in substance as follows: “Neither have all the light upon the law; neither position is perfect.”<sup>9</sup>

Waggoner was beginning to receive the rays of light on righteousness by faith and the law which God planned would develop into the complete message God had for His people.

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## Endnotes:

1. E. G. White, Letter to Uriah Smith, June 6, 1896, Cooranbong, N.S.W., *op. cit.*, p. 1575.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 277, 278.
4. A. T. Jones, “Editorial,” *RH* 76, 33 (August 15, 1899), p. 524.
5. E. G. White, Manuscript 87, 1900 in *Selected Messages*, Book One, (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D. C.: 1958), p. 233
6. C. Mervyn Maxwell (February 27, 1983) statement attached to: Tim Crosby, “Ellen G. White and the Law in Galatians: A Study in the Dynamics of Present Truth,” p. 48.
7. Tim Crosby, “The Law of the Prophet,” *RH* 163, 21 (May 22, 1986), p. 549.
8. This was Ellen White’s guide while in vision.
9. E. G. White, Letter to G. I. Butler, October 14, 1888, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *EGW 1888*, p. 93.

## chapter sixteen

# The Third Angel's Message

**I**n 1891 E. J. Waggoner connected the everlasting covenant with the third angel's message and justification by faith this way:

We must . . . preach 'Christ and him crucified' is the sum of the 'gospel of the kingdom,' or, . . . the third angel's message. . . . Show from the covenant that God made with Abraham, the sacrifice of Christ, justification by faith. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This was the way to reach the Jews—by showing them what God wanted to do with Israel in leading them out of Egypt into the promised land. This is the same work that God would do in gathering His own out of the world and leading them into the possession of the eternal inheritance.

In 1895 Ellen White connected the "most precious message" of Waggoner and Jones with the third angel's message and the everlasting covenant.

The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the

uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. . . . It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit. . . .

The uplifted Saviour is to appear in His efficacious work as the Lamb slain, sitting upon the throne, to dispense the priceless covenant blessings. . . .<sup>2</sup>

This statement connects the third angel's message with justification by faith and the everlasting covenant.

W. W. Prescott was the last of a generation who had been eyewitnesses to the events of 1888. He published a series of articles on the covenants in biblical history.<sup>3</sup> Prescott recognized how important the covenants were in understanding the third angel's message. He wrote:

We have been plainly instructed that justification by faith "is the third angel's message in verity," and inasmuch as justification by faith is the essential feature of the covenant with Abraham, as is taught in Galatians 3:8 . . . the covenant with Abraham is the very essence of the third angel's message. . . . We should proclaim the fullness of the meaning of that covenant developed from the time of Abraham until now. This is "the everlasting gospel" which is to be preached to the whole world in preparation for the great consummation.<sup>4</sup>

Everything that was necessary to prepare Christ's body; from every nation, kindred, tongue and people; for translation, and the second coming of Christ, was contained in God's promise to Abraham. Ellen White, E. J. Waggoner and W. W. Prescott connected the third angel's message with God's everlasting covenant.

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**Endnotes:**

1. E. J. Waggoner, "How Shall We Reach the Jews?" *PT* 7, 26 (December 17, 1891), p. 413.
2. E. G. White, "Testimony to the Battle Creek Church," Letter 57, May 1, 1895. *op. cit.*, pp. 1336, 1337.
3. W. W. Prescott, "The Gospel of the Covenant," *RH* 113 (August 20-October 8, 1936).
4. W. W. Prescott, "The Gospel of the Covenant. IV—The Doctrine of the Promise-Covenant," *RH* 113, 47 (September 10, 1936), p. 8.

## chapter seventeen

# The Two Covenants

The following issues related to the two covenants have been demonstrated:

1. Salvation comes only through Christ's promise in the everlasting covenant.
2. No one has ever been saved under man's promises of the old covenant.
3. The two covenants in this context are not dispensational, i.e., sequential to one another, nor are they bound by time.
4. While the divinely-ordained expressions of faith in Christ have changed, the means of salvation in Christ have never changed.
5. The two covenants are descriptive of two conditions of the heart which run parallel to each other throughout the course of human history.
6. The everlasting covenant is the three angel's message.
7. The old covenant is based on man's promises to obey. God allows this covenant of "obey and live" in order to show man the futility of working in his own power. It is a covenant of works which "gendereth to bondage."

8. The old covenant is not to be confused with the everlasting covenant, in which God writes the law on the heart through the indwelling Christ, and by which He provides the heart-motivating power of love for obedience to His law.

Why are the old and the new covenants a mystery to many Christians? Because most have assumed that the old covenant was God's way of saving people during the Old Testament and the new covenant was God's means of saving people during the New Testament. This confusion, combined with humanity's natural disposition toward ceremonialism (making the symbol the means rather than the expression of faith), has led to the notion of a covenantal dispensationalism in which the gospel is distorted.

The everlasting covenant is the same as the new covenant. It is the good news of the gospel. Christ crucified is the sinner's representative, Substitute, and Surety. The sinner is unable in his own power to fulfill his/her obligations regarding the law. Christ, the Surety of the covenant, fulfilled the righteousness of the law on behalf of the sinner, as his representative Substitute.

The restoration of what man lost is complete, is sure, already in Christ. Now every man, woman, and child can by faith experience Calvary at Sinai—as the great law of love, the Ten Commandments, is written on their hearts by the One who has fulfilled His everlasting covenant in and through Christ.

## chapter eighteen

# Calvary at Sinai

On the surface it may appear that the pre-history of the 1888 Minneapolis Conference, the conference itself, and the subsequent 1890 ministers' institute, was an intra-church conflict over the law, justification by faith, and the covenants. In fact, it was the heart-stirring truth of God's love reaching all the way to sinful humanity, and through the cross, and the high priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, effecting an atonement that would, by their individual choice, unanimously bring a body of believers into harmony with God and the foundation of His government—the ten commandments. The law and the gospel, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, are united. They are the promise of God's everlasting covenant. Calvary at Sinai expresses this unity.<sup>1</sup>

The years preceding the 1888 Minneapolis Conference were filled with mission outreach; both domestic and foreign for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The primary target audience for evangelism were evangelical Christians. The relationship between the law and the gospel were constant challenges. The evangelical antinomians interpreted the Scriptures in such a way as to abolish the law at the transition point between the old covenant and the new covenant; namely, the death of Christ upon the cross.

Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic apologetics used the Scriptures for one purpose; that is, to prove the perpetuity of the ten commandment law following the cross. They taught the biblical paradigm of typological covenant dispensationalism. In other words, the law of types and ceremonies, priesthood, and sacrifices, etc., were abolished with the old covenant when Christ died upon the cross; but, the new covenant which Christ instituted, had for its basis the law of ten commandments. This doctrinal-polemical understanding of the relationship between the two covenants and the two laws in Scripture tended to move the denomination in the direction of covenant nomism; i.e., legalism. The law must be preserved at all costs.

The law without the gospel of Jesus Christ is legalism. The law without the faith of Jesus results in an old covenant heart experience. That which drives such evangelism is fear. When the great truth of God's love recedes, the motivation of fear fills the vacuum. Of course, fear is the common lot of sinful humanity. Losing the gospel focus tinctures the message with the toxic self-motivation of fear. Obey and live. Disobey and die.

The law and the covenant crisis of 1888 went to the very heart of Seventh-day Adventist's evangelistic message and its own personal heart experience of that message. It was not primarily a polemical message focused on the law of God. It was a message that was to be characterized and known for its emphasis upon the gospel of Jesus Christ and His cross. Seventh-day Adventists would become known foremost as those who proclaimed the cross and the atoning ministry of Christ in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

This shift was beginning to take place in the 1888 era, with E. J. Waggoner's emphasis upon the equally biblical paradigm of the old covenant and the new covenant as two distinct heart experiences. These two experiences, he characterized, as being two dispensations—the old and the new. They were parallel and timeless, running from the fall to the second coming of Christ.

Justification by faith which was God's promise in the everlasting covenant was what Jesus taught Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." This continuing, life-long, subjective Christian fellowship with Christ produces absolute loyalty to Him.

For eighteen hundred years Jesus ministered in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary where Christians looked to Him for the forgiveness

of their sins based upon His shed blood at Calvary. Thus Jesus' ministry prepared such Christians to die, awaiting the resurrection of the just at the second coming of Christ.

However, Jesus' high priestly ministry since 1844 in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, was the fulfillment of God's everlasting covenant to "put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people . . . and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:10, 12). This is what the apostle Peter spoke of on the day of Pentecost when he prophesied "that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ" (Acts 3:19, 20). Notice these events were to take place before the Lord sent Jesus, an obvious reference to His second coming.

The blotting out of sins was the cosmic Day of Atonement heart experience of individuals spontaneously joining together as the body of Christ in repentance for sin. "The times of refreshing" is what produces such repentance. The Holy Spirit convicts the heart by using the law of God. He convicts of sin; both known and unknown; whatever enmity against God which separates the soul from Him. The repentant heart comes into agreement with the Holy Spirit and responds, I would rather have Jesus than that sin. Here, take it, and cleanse me from all unrighteousness.

Thus, when Jesus has effected the individual atonement in hearts which have been the source of the heavenly sanctuary's pollution, then He can finish the cleansing of the cosmic tabernacle. This is the heart experience of justification by faith promised by God in the everlasting covenant. This was the motivating message of Revelation 18:1 that was essential in order for the third angels' message of Revelation 14 to complete its evangelistic mission. Ellen White had seen this message of Revelation 18 coming in at just the right time, joining with and as an addition to the third angels' message.

May the unity of the law and the gospel be effected by the focus of God's people upon Calvary at Sinai.

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### **Endnote:**

1. See page 82.