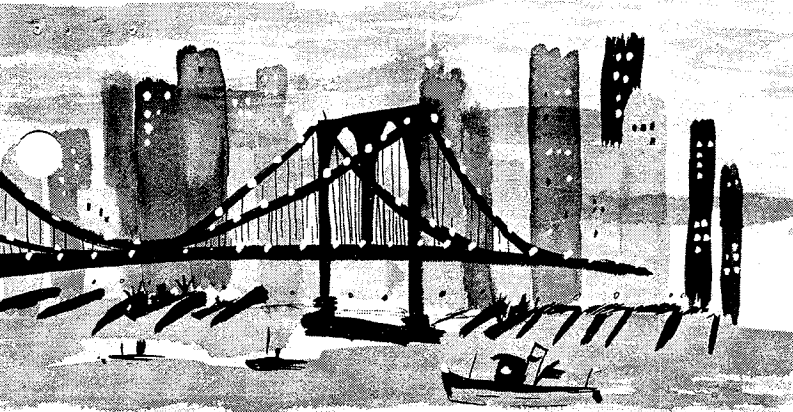


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March 1975



"Watchman, what of the night?"

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

THE HARVEST PRINCIPLE

In the January thought paper, we called attention to a presentation at the 1974 Bible Conferences by Dr. Herbert E. Douglass entitled - "The Unique Contribution of Adventist Eschatology." This paper presented what is now being accepted as the reason for the delay in Christ's Second Coming. Concisely stated by the author it reads - "The reason for the delay in the Advent is contained in the harvest principle."¹ This thought paper will examine this principle, and the application made by Dr. Douglass.

"The Harvest Principle" is Biblically based. Jesus taught - "The harvest is the end of the world."² In the book of Revelation, Christ is pictured sitting upon a white cloud holding in His hand a sharp sickle. An angel from the temple calls to Him - "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of earth is ripe."³ Turning to the Spirit of Prophecy, we find that the divine Husbandman is looking for a harvest - the reproduction of "Himself in the hearts and lives of His followers."⁴ When this is realized, "He will come to claim them as His own."⁵ The conclusions by Douglass are rightly stated. "Historic Adventist theology" consists of two points in this regard:- 1) "Jesus delays His coming, waiting for a quality people to whom He may impart the immeasurable power of the latter rain;" and 2) "God has left His church in the person of Jesus an Example of the quality people for whom He is waiting."⁶ But have all the factors been considered?

Closely associated with the principle of the harvest is the fact that it is God who gives the increase. Paul clearly enunciated this factor. He wrote:- "Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."⁷ "The growth and perfection of the seed rests not with the husbandman. God *alone* can ripen the harvest."⁸ It was God's design that through the agency of the church this ripening of the harvest should be accomplished. He set His hand to bring about this objective through the message of righteousness by faith that He sent to the Church in 1888. Of this message it is written - "The present message - Justification by Faith - is a message from God; it bears the divine credentials, for its fruit is unto holiness."⁹

The supreme question of this present hour, and one to which one must find the answer is - Does God still plan to use the agency of the Church in its present corporate state for the accomplishment of this objective, or has He chosen to take the reins into His own hands to accomplish the objective through other agencies and means? This is no idle question. It is fraught with eternal consequences.

Douglass in his presentation states what we all theoretically believe. "The principle of conditional prophecy recognizes that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional."¹⁰ God has made great promises to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a corporate body. We dwell at length on these. But He has also made some threatening statements. It is written - "If her [Seventh-day Adventist Church] spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be pronounced the sentence, 'Found wanting.'"¹¹

To this principle of conditional prophecy, Douglass adds a reciprocal. He states - "The correlate to the principle of conditional prophecy is the principle of the harvest - - - that God will wait for the maturing of Christian character in a significant number of people as the chief condition determining the time of the

advent."¹⁰ He then concludes that "the mission of highest priority in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" is first "to produce the rich harvest of men and women who truly represent Jesus, thus vindicating the honor, justice, and love of God."¹² By so concluding, he rejected the question which he himself suggested would be projected, to wit, "how long the Church's failure can postpone the will and plan of the Lord for the Advent. That is, will there come a time when God's justice will demand that His mercy give way, recognizing that there is a time when 'the inhabitants of the earth have filled up the cup of their iniquity?'"¹³ Thus, "the harvest principle" as defined by Douglass can be made to delay the coming of the Lord, and theoretically, extend the Second Advent into future generations of time, depending on the decision of the Church.

Every sincere and devoted Seventh-day Adventist whose heart is attune to the Spirit of God must ask seriously the question - What factors, if any, have been overlooked in the presentation of "the harvest principle" as the answer to why we are still here in this world?

The work of the Church was clearly defined. Those who understood what happened in 1844 - that their great High Priest entered upon another work of ministration - "were led to understand also the closing work of the church, and were prepared to receive and give to the world the warning of the third angel of Revelation 14."¹⁴ Now the work of the Third Angel "is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner."¹⁵ In other words, the Third Angel is the angel of the harvest, to prepare a people to reflect fully the image of Jesus. This work was committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and defined as "the closing work *of* the church."

God intended to finish the work through His church following 1888. But He warned through His servant - "All heaven is represented to me as watching the un-

folding of events. A crisis is to be revealed in the great and prolonged controversy in the government of God on earth. Something great and decisive is to take place, and that right early. If any *delay*, the character of God and His throne will be compromised."¹⁶

There has been a delay. We can write and say all we want, but we cannot erase the fact that with each passing year, the credibility gap in our doctrine of the Investigative Judgment widens. To have God in judgment one hundred and thirty years looking over records, making decisions when the deeds of each mortal have been entered with unerring accuracy by angels with all accounts current, is to test the most credulous mind. To so assume gives validity to the charge that Barnhouse made indicating that our doctrine of the sanctuary was a face-saving device to cover the disappointment of 1888.¹⁷ Let's face it; in the continuing delay, we have compromised the character and throne of God. In the government of God on earth - His church - there has been a great & prolonged controversy over the message of righteousness by faith. This controversy has been heightened in the last decades since 1950 with the introduction of false doctrines regarding the incarnation, the atonement, and the remnant. Is God going to sit idly by and wait for the accomplishment of what is now called "the harvest principle"?

The answer is - NO! Through Ezekiel, God revealed Himself as arising from the cherub "whereupon He was", and going to the threshold of the sanctuary ordering the sealing work to begin for the church.¹⁸ It must never be forgotten that those who are sealed have written on their foreheads their destination - "New Jerusalem".¹⁹ Thus two things stand out clearly from the prophecy of Ezekiel. The city of Jerusalem - the church in the prophetic symbolism of the book of Ezekiel - does not receive the seal; it does not go through. Neither do all who dwell in her midst, but those only who sigh and cry for "all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof."²⁰

This work is defined in contradiction to the closing work *of* the church as the closing work *for* the church. When this takes place there are two distinct groups of people; 1) "the true people of God", and 2) "God's professed people." Note carefully how these two groups and the work for the church are described:

The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord, and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God's professed people.²¹

If the church were in a position to accomplish the work assigned to her - the giving of the message of Revelation 14, to prepare the harvest of earth - she would not have to have a special work done in the midst of her - the gathering of the 144,000 who will glorify and give honor to the Throne of God, and who will not compromise God's character in the final struggle of earth. In the light of this, can we not see why the servant of the Lord wrote: - "Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand"²² - and not - "Let us strive with all our power to keep our names on the church records of God's professed people." One record is written in heaven, and the other is recorded on earth.

Is there a time indicated when we can know that God has taken the work into His own hands, removing from His professed people their responsibility of the closing work of the church, and instituting the closing work for the church, the sealing time of the 144,000? We shall give consideration to this in future thought papers.

¹Herbert E. Douglass, "The Unique Contribution of Adventist Eschatology", p. 15, North American Division Bible Conferences, 1974

²Matthew 13:39

³Revelation 14:14-15 ("the" omitted before "earth")

- ⁴Ellen G. White, Education, p. 106
⁵Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 69
⁶Douglass, op. cit., p. 29 ⁷I Corinthians 3:7
⁸Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers, p. 508
⁹Ellen G. White, Review & Herald, September 3, 1889
¹⁰Douglass, op. cit., p. iv
¹¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 8, p. 247
¹²Douglass, op. cit., p. vi
¹³Ibid., p. 12
¹⁴Ellen G. White, Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. IV, p. 272
¹⁵Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 118
¹⁶Ellen G. White, Special Testimony read by A. T. Jones, R & H, June 21, 1892
¹⁷Donald G. Barnhouse, "Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?", Eternity, September, 1956. Barnhouse wrote - "The latter doctrine ["the investigative judgment"], to me, is the most colossal, psychological, face-saving phenomenon in religious history!"
¹⁸Ezekiel 9:3-4
¹⁹Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 15
²⁰Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 212; See also Vol. 3, p. 267 - "Mark this point with care: . . ."
²¹Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 266
²²Ellen G. White, Review & Herald, March 9, 1905 (7BC:970)

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VIII-3 (March, 75)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Erratum - Footnote #10 in the November, 1974, Thought Paper should read - "Ellen G. White, In Heavenly Places, p. 163"

More Colorful - Through the cooperation of a local printer, we have been able to obtain some colored mimeograph paper of the same quality as the white at a lesser cost. This will mean that the thought papers during the coming months will be more colorful.

Available - Fundamental Principles of Health Reform. This is a sixty-one page facsimile reprint of an original publication dated, 1916, Takoma Park. It contains a Pledge all were asked to sign in regard to Health Reform, and the reason for so signing. Write to Reformation Herald Publishing Association, P. O. Box 749, Monterey Park, Calif., 91754 for further information. Prices for single copies, and quantity orders will be supplied.

Bauer Tape - A second taped message entitled - "Wilt Thou Be Made Whole?" - can be obtained by writing to Ms. Jeanne Colston, Gen. Del. Al Tahoe Sta, South Lake Tahoe, Calif., 95705. Send \$2.00 with your order.

New Printing - A Facsimile reprinting of 1888 Re-Examined by Elders R. J. Wieland and D. K. Short will be available in the next few weeks. The price is \$3.50. Write for a price list of publications available through the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Miss., P. O. Box 237, Florence, Miss., 39073. When ordering make all checks payable to the Foundation.