Selected Aspects of Ellet J. Waggoner's Eschatology and Their Relation to His Understanding of Righteousness by Faith, 1882-1895

Clinton L. Wahlen
Andrews University

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Selected aspects of Ellet J. Waggoner's eschatology and their relation to his understanding of righteousness by faith, 1882-1895

Wahlen, Clinton L., M.Div.

Andrews University, 1989

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SELECTED ASPECTS OF ELLET J. WAGGONER'S ESCHATOLOGY
AND THEIR RELATION TO HIS UNDERSTANDING
OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH, 1882-1895

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Divinity

by
Clinton L. Wahlen
July 1988
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ABSTRACT

SELECTED ASPECTS OF ELLET J. WAGGONER'S ESCHATOLOGY
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by

Clinton L. Wahlen

Adviser: C. Mervyn Maxwell
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Department of Church History

Title: SELECTED ASPECTS OF ELLET J. WAGGONER'S ESCHATOLOGY AND THEIR RELATION TO HIS UNDERSTANDING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH, 1882-1895

Name of researcher: Clinton L. Wahlen

Name and degree of faculty adviser: C. Mervyn Maxwell, Ph.D.

Date completed: July 1988

The purpose of this study is to examine Ellet Joseph Waggoner's (1855-1916) understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist concepts of a "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary and preparation for Christ's return as they relate to his understanding of righteousness by faith. Waggoner's published material from 1882 to 1895 are given thorough consideration, as well as other pertinent documents.

Important findings of this study include: justification by faith, according to Waggoner, involves a transformation of life and is the work of a moment while sanctification is the work of a lifetime and culminates with Christ's perfection being seen in his followers; Waggoner clearly and consistently taught important features of the Adventist sanctuary doctrine including a pre-advent, investigative judgment. In addition, this study documents much of what Waggoner probably presented at the Minneapolis
General Conference session and it finds that by the mid 1890s, Waggoner began emphasizing the immanence of God in order to counter a growing tendency of assigning naturalistic causes to phenomena which Scripture attributes to God.

This study concludes that Waggoner synthesized the Biblical concepts of justification by faith and the final judgment, thereby making a significant contribution to Seventh-day Adventist theology. His presentations in Minneapolis continue to be significant for the doctrinal content involved as well as a reminder of the importance of Christian charity in doctrinal discussions. In view of the controversies that have arisen since Waggoner's day over the subjects of justification and judgment, his synthesis may assist current Adventist attempts at reconciling these important concepts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance and Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Delimitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey of Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE EARLY PERIOD INCLUDING THE MINNEAPOLIS GENERAL CONFERENCE, 1882-1888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey of Waggoner and His Eschatology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Sketch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eschatological Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antichrist and Sunday Legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gospel Proclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification by Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waggoner’s Concept of Sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctification—Overcoming Sin, Obedience and Perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “Holiness” Movement a Contextual Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waggoner’s Understanding of Sanctification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Significance of Christ’s Humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Two Covenants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Aspects of Waggoner’s Eschatology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctuary Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ’s Work in Heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Investigative Judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for Christ’s Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1888 Minneapolis General Conference Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Leading up to the Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waggoner’s Presentations at Minneapolis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records of the Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronology of Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen White’s Concept of Waggoner’s Message</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## II. 1889-1895: YEARS OF CLARITY OR OF TRANSITION?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey of Waggoner and His Eschatology</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Sketch</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Institute of 1889-90</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waggoner's Move to England</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eschatological Framework</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gospel Proclamation</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification by Faith</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waggoner's Concept of Sin</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Powerlessness and Divine Acceptance</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification—Forgiveness and Transformation</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming Sin</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation of Faith and Works</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Perfection</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ as Divine-Human Saviour and Exemplar</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Divinity of Christ</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Humanity of Christ</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Manifested in His People</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atonement and Reconciliation</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective Aspect of the Atonement</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Aspects of the Atonement</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Two Covenants</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covenants Defined Relationally</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison of the Two Covenants</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Aspects of Waggoner's Eschatology</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sanctuary in Heaven—Mediation and Judgment</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Heavenly Sanctuary and Priesthood</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Work of Judgment</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of God's People on Earth for Christ's Second Advent</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God and Nature in Creation and Redemption</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of God</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's Word</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative and Redemptive Power</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God and Nature</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God Pervading Nature</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Recognizing God's Presence</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waggoner's <em>Confession of Faith</em></td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Conclusions</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CONCLUSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Findings</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beginning—Justification by Faith</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The End—Fitness for the Judgment</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bond—A Reconciliation of Justification and Judgment</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIX 1

WAGGONER'S LECTURES, AS TRANSCRIBED FROM "NOTES BY W. C. WHITE TAKEN AT MINNEAPOLIS"  

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**APPENDIX 2** COMPARISON OF "NOTES BY W. C. WHITE TAKEN AT MINNEAPOLIS" WITH ELLEN G. WHITE'S PUBLISHED SERMON 218

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Published Books and Pamphlets</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Articles</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpublished Material</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1888M</td>
<td><em>The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHC</td>
<td>Adventist Heritage Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATJ</td>
<td>Alonzo T. Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td><em>Bible Echo and Signs of the Times</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td><em>Confession of Faith</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHR</td>
<td><em>Christ and His Righteousness</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGW</td>
<td>Ellen G. White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJW</td>
<td>Ellet J. Waggoner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCB</td>
<td><em>General Conference Bulletin</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCDB</td>
<td><em>General Conference Daily Bulletin</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG</td>
<td><em>The Gospel in Galatians</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIB</td>
<td>George I. Butler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIC</td>
<td><em>The Gospel in Creation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG</td>
<td><em>The Law in the Book of Galatians</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ltr</td>
<td>Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMM</td>
<td><em>Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWCW</td>
<td>Notes by W. C. White Taken at Minneapolis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td><em>The Present Truth</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RH</td>
<td><em>Advent Review and Sabbath Herald</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td><em>The Signs of the Times</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Uriah Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCW</td>
<td>William C. White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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PREFACE

Significance and Purpose

No one can study the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church without reckoning with the impact of the General Conference session at Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1888 and its aftermath. Two key figures at the Minneapolis Conference were Ellet Joseph Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones. After the session ended, they began striking responsive chords almost everywhere they went with their message of the righteousness of Christ in relation to God's law. These men remained in the forefront of attention until the early part of the twentieth century. Backed with glowing endorsements by Ellen G. White, whom Seventh-day Adventists consider to have been divinely inspired, they made a lasting impact on the Adventist church.

Eric C. Webster has written that both men "made an indelible mark on the church by their theological presentations at the [1888] session." He went on to observe:

Up to the present these two men have haunted the conscience of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, resulting in numerous and continued attempts to uncover and unravel their messages, to analyse the truthfulness of their positions and to relate the present situation of the church to their theological views.¹

One reason their message has enjoyed such a persistent interest among Adventists is the widespread perception by the membership at large that what they said carries deep import for the completion of the gospel commission and the nearness of the end of the world.² And yet, although much has been written about Waggoner and Jones, no thorough


² Historical documentation for this assertion is most evident from a survey of the pertinent literature. See below, pp. xiii–xxxiv.
study has been made of the eschatology of either of these men. The most extensive works specifically related to this subject show a considerable concern for apologetics, which at times seriously hampers a more objective consideration of available facts. Some investigations have been more thorough and accurate, but do not primarily consider the eschatological explications and implications involved in the preaching of Waggoner and Jones, which should be an important consideration in any study of their theology.\(^1\) Because Ellen White strongly supported Waggoner's preaching in 1888 and for several years thereafter, analyzing the extent of her support for his ideas may prove helpful in understanding Waggoner's emphasis.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship of selected aspects of E. J. Waggoner's eschatology to his message of righteousness by faith. Contextual factors inside and outside the Adventist Church are considered. These include, but are not limited to, the effect of contemporary "holiness" groups upon Waggoner's understanding and also Ellen White's support of him. A matter that cannot be ignored is the perceived role of pantheism in Waggoner's formulation of his ideas of righteousness by faith and eschatology.

**Scope and Delimitations**

Waggoner was one of the more prolific Seventh-day Adventist writers, having served the denomination in editorial capacities for over twenty years. It is, therefore, impossible for a study of this kind to take into account the full length, depth, and breadth of his theological works. The principal delimitation of this study, therefore, is that thorough consideration is given only to Waggoner's published material from 1882 (when Waggoner had his "Damascus road" experience) through 1895 (after his theology had matured considerably), although unpublished letters regarding Waggoner, that seem to be significant, may also be considered. The aspects of his eschatology that are examined in the

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\(^1\) Webster, pp. 244-46, apparently thought EJW's eschatology could not be overlooked in examining his Christology.
context of his proclamation of the gospel are: (1) the "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary, which includes the Adventist concept of the investigative judgment; and (2) the preparation incumbent upon God's people in order to be ready for Christ's return. The study is primarily descriptive.

Methodology

Preliminary to any meaningful assessment of the theological impact, past and present, of E. J. Waggoner upon Seventh-day Adventists is an understanding of what he believed and preached. Unfortunately, too many investigations appear to have been satisfied with only a small sampling of his writings, presumably because they were deemed representative enough for their purposes. In this study, none of Waggoner's published works in the period under investigation have deliberately been overlooked. Even seemingly unrelated articles have been considered in an attempt to avoid dependence upon isolated statements by Waggoner that would actually amount to a distortion of his overall views. Richard Schlatter, in his study of Puritanism, has articulated an important principle in historical research. He reacted to the tendency to "ask what was truly American in the Puritan tradition instead of asking what Puritanism was, in its own terms."¹ A similar situation has existed in the study of Waggoner's theology; the question has been pursued as to what extent he was "truly Adventist," bringing to the study preconceptions of what true Adventism is rather than seeking to understand what Waggoner believed and taught in his own context.

I have divided the period under scrutiny into two chapters, concluding the first with an examination of Waggoner's role at the Minneapolis General Conference session in 1888. The second chapter includes the last years spent by Waggoner as editor of The Signs of

the Times and his first four years in London. The chapters are introduced by a biographical sketch and a brief survey of trends in Waggoner's eschatology to orient the reader to important events in Waggoner's life and emphases in his thought. The study is organized under headings determined by the material for each period.

Historical Background

For a study of this kind, an acquaintance with the history and motivations of Seventh-day Adventists is necessary; but rather than exploring such matters in detail, when others have done so more thoroughly than could be achieved here, only a brief survey is made of factors relevant to this study, with appropriate references to the literature should further information be desired. Following this, a more detailed introduction to Waggoner himself is provided.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was not officially organized until the 1860s, but the nucleus of the denomination was in existence much earlier, having been spawned by the Millerite movement of the early 1840s. The Millerites, as they were known because of their advocacy of the teachings of William Miller, were at first ecumenical in character, coming as they did from a variety of denominations and theological persuasions. The central theme that welded them together was their belief in the imminent return of Christ sometime around 1843 or 1844. When Christ did not come at that time, most of the Millerites returned to their churches, while others continued to focus on successive dates for the expected event. A third group, some of whom later formed the Seventh-day Adventist Church, held to the original scheme of Miller (who eventually settled on the date of October 22, 1844 for Christ's return), but understood the event commencing in 1844 as a work of judgment to decide the destinies of all prior to the second advent. Closely integrated with their understanding were the eschatological importance of the Seventh-day Sabbath and the imminent, pre-millennial, personal, and visible appearance of Christ in the clouds above the earth to gather His people and bestow immortality on them. In Adventist understanding, those
receiving the gift of immortality will reign in judgment with Christ in heaven for a thousand years. The earth itself will be devoid of human life until the close of the millennium, when the unsaved will be resurrected, convicted of their sins, and annihilated. God will then restore the earth to its pristine condition and establish His kingdom upon it forever.¹

Various individuals within the Adventist denomination have challenged aspects of this theological framework throughout its history. One of the earliest groups to challenge the sanctuary doctrine, among other things, was the so-called “Marion Party” that contributed to the formation of the Church of God (Adventist) in the 1860s.² The next major attack came from D. M. Canright, who left the Adventist Church for the final time during the law-in-Galatians controversy of 1886-1888. He disparagingly referred to the “sanctuary theory” as an “absurdity.”³ Albion Fox Ballenger leveled the first attack of the twentieth century to the Adventist doctrine in 1905, but was by no means the last to challenge it. He was followed by W. W. Fletcher around 1930 and Louis R. Conradi soon thereafter. Unlike Ballenger, who promoted a modified view of the sanctuary doctrine, Fletcher and Conradi


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completely abandoned Adventism and its sanctuary teaching.¹ E. B. Jones posed the question: "How can one enjoy the Good News of salvation if he must wait until God examines the books to see whether he is worthy of receiving it?"² The most prominent attacks in recent years have come from Robert D. Brinsmead³ and Desmond Ford.⁴ Both have asserted that the Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment is opposed to the gospel. Ford argued that the investigative judgment was unnecessary, everyone's decision being immediately accepted as he responds to the proclamation of the gospel and "confirmed either by death or the close of probation through our High Priest's recognition of whether we are at that climactic moment abiding in Him or not."⁵

The denomination has been relatively unmoved by these challenges, defending the sanctuary doctrine with greater alacrity and confidence as each new assault has arisen. The most recent response consists of several volumes, reflecting the work of its Daniel and Revelation Committee.⁶ It is interesting to observe that the two best-known dates in Seventh-day Adventist Church history (1844 and 1888) symbolize for the denomination the

¹ Ibid., p. 591.
² Ibid., p. 592.
⁴ Desmond Ford, Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment (Casselberry, Florida: Euangelion Press, 1980). Ford also documents others who have had difficulty with the doctrine or some aspect of it (pp. 25-72).
⁵ Ibid., pp. 403-4.
two areas of its theology that have caused the most friction. Justification and Judgment are doctrines that have been associated down through church history with some of the most serious heresies. It is not surprising that difficulty in these areas has been experienced by the Adventist Church. In fact, the recent importance of these two topics and the unclear relationship between the two is illustrated by the controversies in the Adventist Church during the past two decades. Adventists hotly debated the doctrine of justification by faith during the 1970s. Since 1980, the sanctuary doctrine has been at issue and is still being studied. It seems timely, therefore, to investigate the relationship between justification and judgment. Waggoner synthesized these concepts with a clarity and beauty that aroused the attention of his audiences and continues to arouse readers of his writings at the present time. Being a key figure at a significant juncture of Adventist history, Waggoner and his message deserve further attention and may provide helpful insights for current questions.

Ellet Joseph Waggoner, the sixth child of Joseph Harvey Waggoner and Maryetta Hall Waggoner, was born on January 12, 1855, in Baraboo, Wisconsin.1 Ellet attended Battle Creek College in the fall of 1874—its opening year—and registered for classes in the "Collegiate Department."2 Absent from the roster of students for the 1875-76 school year, his name appears just once more—as a student in the first year of the "Classical Course" in 1876-77.3 Waggoner then left Battle Creek to pursue a medical degree,4 which he obtained

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3 "Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the Battle Creek College," 1876-77, p. 22. Elder G. C. Tenney, in his biographical sketch at EJW's funeral, indicates that he "attended Battle Creek College in its earliest days, and received a classical education." See "Funeral Service," The Gathering Call, November, 1916, p. 5.

4 Ibid.
at Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn, New York, graduating in 1878.\footnote{All of the published sources are inaccurate in stating that EJW received his M.D. from Bellevue Medical College, although he apparently took one session of classwork there. See Pearl W. Howard, Winterhaven, California to L.E. Froom, Washington, D.C., 17 January 1962, Document File #236, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C.} After receiving his M.D. degree, Waggoner served as a physician at the Battle Creek Sanitarium. It was at this time that he married Jessie Fremont Moser, whom he had probably met during his last year at Battle Creek College.\footnote{Jessie was sixteen when she enrolled in the “Teachers’ Course” and German at the college. See “Catalogue of Battle Creek College,” 1876-77, pp. 27, 33.} Shortly thereafter, in 1880, they moved to California. The following chapter takes up his life and work at this point.

### Survey of Literature

A study of E. J. Waggoner necessarily involves a study of the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session. Literature about Waggoner reflects this. Thousands of pages have been published about the Minneapolis General Conference, while comparatively little attention has been directed to Waggoner himself and the message he preached. On the surface, it would appear that the study of the Minneapolis Conference would be a historian’s dream. So much historical material is available in the form of records of the Conference, letters about it, and manuscripts connected with it, that it is difficult to assimilate it all. As one examines the evidence more closely, however, a different picture emerges. The evidence is so colored by interpretation, even in the immediate period of study, that it is difficult to separate fact from fiction, truth from opinion. Judging from the literature on the subject, this area has been in actuality a historian’s nightmare.

Daniells classified the delegates at Minneapolis in three groups: (1) those who “saw great light” in what was presented “and gladly accepted it”; (2) those who were “uncertain” about what they viewed as a “new teaching” and “neither accepted nor rejected the message at that time”; and (3) “others who were decidedly opposed to the presentation of the message,” and “claimed that the truth of righteousness by faith had been recognized by our people from the very first.”

Daniells believed that the message of justification by faith, as it was presented during the Minneapolis era, “marked the starting point” for “the finishing of His [God’s] work in the earth.” The reason why the work had not yet been finished, he said, was that “the message has never been received, nor proclaimed, nor given free course as it should have been in order to convey to the church the measureless blessings that were wrapped within it.” Daniells observed that many in his day were still deeply interested in the message and still “cherished a fond hope” that it would be “given great prominence” and “do the cleansing, regenerating work” which they believed the Lord had sent it to accomplish. According to Daniells, “the application of this message was not limited to the time of the Minneapolis Conference, but . . . extends to the close of time; and consequently it is of greater significance to the church at the present time than it could have been in 1888.” He firmly believed that since God’s purposes could not fail, sooner or later the Minneapolis message would be understood, accepted, and given its proper place.

In 1930, Taylor G. Bunch carried this interpretation by Daniells even further, describing the 1888 Minneapolis conference as the “Kadesh-barnea” of the Seventh-day

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1 Ibid., pp. 41-42.
2 Ibid., pp. 62-63.
3 Ibid., p. 47.
Adventist Church.¹ Israel's refusal to believe in God's leading and her consequent wandering for forty years before entering the promised land (Num. 14:32-34) Bunch saw as typifying the Minneapolis experience in Adventist history. When Bunch presented his ideas, it had been about forty years since 1888. Some feared that people would begin speculating as to the time "either for the outpouring of the Spirit or of the second coming of Christ."² Bunch himself said:

While we cannot set any definite time for the final triumph of the Advent movement we do know that the end is very near. The message of 1888 continued for several years before it was finally rejected and the Advent people turned back into the wilderness. The Lord alone knows the exact time but He has promised evidence by which we may "know when He is near, even at the door." The cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him," should be delayed no longer. There should be no uncertainty in the sound of the gospel trumpet that is to awaken the remnant of the church for her final triumph.³

If nothing else, Bunch's work spurred a number of persons who had been present at the Minneapolis Conference to write out their recollections.⁴

¹ Presented in a Week of Prayer at the College of Medical Evangelists in Loma Linda, California and later published as a forty-five page pamphlet, Taylor G. Bunch, Forty Years in the Wilderness in Type and Antitype, n.p., n.d. See WCW to T. G. Bunch, December 30, 1930, MMM, pp. 333-35. W. A. Spicer, Certainties of the Advent Movement (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1929) also presented parallels between the Exodus and Advent movements, but likened Israel's turning back toward Egypt to "Christendom [which] has been led to set aside God's holy Sabbath, and to follow traditions that have made void the law of God" (p. 67).

² WCW to T. G. Bunch, December 30, 1930, MMM, p. 335.

³ Bunch, p. 37.

Interest in Minneapolis and its attendant issues seems to have waned for over a decade until Norval Frederick Pease wrote his M.A. thesis on the subject. Pease was the first person to really investigate and thoroughly document the various responses to the preaching of Waggoner and Jones at Minneapolis and through the 1890s to the turn of the century. His coverage of the Minneapolis Conference itself primarily deals with Ellen White's sermons, although references to the eyewitness accounts written in the 1930s and Daniells' book do supply helpful details of what took place. His subsequent analysis, suggesting reasons for the controversy in 1888 is probably his weakest section. Pease explains the opposition to Jones and Waggoner on the bases that the men "were young, and their revolutionary message seemed iconoclastic," and that some were confused in comparing issues like the law in Galatians and the ten kingdoms to "the old landmarks." In his discussion of the 1890s, Pease provides a well-documented, blow-by-blow account of the struggle between those preaching justification by faith (Ellen White, Jones, and Waggoner) and the traditionalists who thought the landmarks were in jeopardy. Some of his conclusions about the period are worth noticing:

During this decade, many had accepted the doctrine of justification by faith in its fullness. The revival cannot be considered a failure, as it influenced the lives of large numbers of laymen and leaders alike. It can hardly be said, however, that the doctrine of justification by faith had taken its place as a major tenet of the denomination. In order for the doctrine to have achieved this status, it would have had to have become part of the teaching of practically all accredited spokesmen of the denomination. Such was not the case. During the nineties, the revival centering about this great doctrine was largely the work of the same three people, Mrs. [Ellen] White, E. J. Waggoner, and A. T. Jones. True, there were other harmonizing voices

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1 Norval Frederick Pease, "Justification and Righteousness by Faith in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Before 1900" (M.A. thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1945).

2 Ibid., pp. 65-66.

3 Ibid., pp. 68-88.
here and there, but no Elishas were in evidence by 1900 ready to assume the mantle in case something should happen to the three principal champions of the doctrine.\(^1\)

Pease goes on to observe that the effect of their efforts “were soon lost in the archives” and that it is only the influence of Ellen White’s four books on Christ and His righteousness published in that decade that have preserved to some extent the spiritual emphasis for future generations.\(^2\)

Lewis Harrison Christian, in a book published in 1947 (just two years after Pease’s thesis), came to sharply different conclusions from those of his predecessors. The Minneapolis General Conference of 1888, Christian stated, “was really like crossing a continental divide into a new country,” “a glorious victory,” and “the beginning of larger and better things for the advent church.”\(^3\) At the ministerial institute that preceded the conference, said Christian erroneously, justification by faith was not in the forefront; instead, he claimed, “it was a session of outstanding doctrinal controversy.” Jones and Waggoner brought in confusion with “extreme” positions on the covenants, which “little by little our church came to see . . . were unsound and should be given up.”\(^4\) Christian quoted a letter written by Ellen White to the effect that the covenant question should not be revived, apparently under the impression that it was directed against Waggoner’s view. In actual

\(^1\) Ibid., pp. 88-89.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 89. He referred to EGW, Steps to Christ (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1892); idem, The Desire of Ages (Oakland, California: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1898); idem, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing (Battle Creek: International Tract Society, 1896); idem, Christ’s Object Lessons (Oakland, California: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1900). To his list should also be added, idem, Patriarchs and Prophets (Oakland, California: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1890), which contains, Pease said, “one of the clearest definitions of justification by faith [pp. 372-73] to be found anywhere in her writings” (p. 77).


\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 229-30. Christian supplied no evidence for these assertions. He was obviously unfamiliar with the historical material and could have been relying on misconceptions by those who held negative opinions of ATJ and EJW.
fact, the view taught by Waggoner had carried the day by that time and was directed against an article in the *Review and Herald*, published with Uriah Smith's approval, taking the old view of the covenants.\(^1\) Christian used responses to the preaching of Ellen White, Waggoner, and Jones, as well as the records of the 1889 and 1893 General Conference sessions as evidence that Minneapolis "was the beginning of a great spiritual awakening among Adventists" and certainly not the "apostasy" some contended it was.\(^2\)

Arthur W. Spalding carried Christian's rosy interpretation further in 1949,\(^3\) although his work was a more informed and accurate portrayal of the Minneapolis Conference and its aftermath than was Christian's. His basic contention was that justification by faith "is an experience, not an argument." Many accepted the theory of truth "without experiencing its power." According to Spalding, "there could have been no Seventh-day Adventism without Christ, no allegiance to His law without His grace, no power to endure and to progress without His outstretched hand." Therefore, it was inconceivable to him that it was not taught and experienced, at least by some.\(^4\) Waggoner and Jones were depicted by Spalding as being poles apart in terms of their personalities: Jones was largely self-taught and blunt in his speaking style; Waggoner on the other hand, was highly educated and had a way with words which charmed many who heard him speak. They were an unlikely duo to trigger a revival; yet, said Spalding, they "caught the

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\(^2\) Christian, pp. 233-42.


flame of the gospel together” and managed to set the church “on fire.”\(^1\) Spalding considered the controversy that existed to be “too much under cover to reach open conflict” and seemingly not very significant. Both sides were blamed for giving evidence that “however much they were justified, . . . they were not wholly sanctified.”\(^2\) It was “the rancors aroused by personalities, much more than the differences in beliefs, which caused the difficulty.” Spalding appears to reduce the perceived differences to a question of semantics\(^3\) and, like Christian before him, considered the teaching of Jones and Waggoner to be “extreme.”\(^4\)

In retrospect, the above treatments of the issues of Minneapolis, while wrestling with the personalities involved, signally failed to look more than skin deep. One looks in vain, even in the work by Pease, for evidence of what was actually being said by Waggoner and Jones. The above writers uniformly understood the “new” teaching to be merely recovering for Adventists the message of the Protestant Reformers on justification by faith. It also seems they felt there was no excuse for anyone’s failure to appreciate and experience the teaching of justification by faith, as they were in general agreement in their assumptions as to what the doctrine was.

Differences of opinion over the significance of 1888 turned into sharp conflict in 1950 with the presentation to Adventist officials of a manuscript by Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short.\(^5\) It began with a pungent statement of what they believed to be the

\(^1\) Ibid., pp. 289-91. J. H. Waggoner seems to be given more credit than anyone else.

\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 292-93.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 300.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 302.

\(^5\) [Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short], “1888 Re-Examined,” [1950], AHC, James White Memorial Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. This has been updated with more restrained rhetoric and additional evidence, idem, 1888 Re-Examined, rev. ed. (Leominster, Massachusetts: Eusey Press, 1987).
problem: “The Advent Movement has thus far not made progress consistent with its prophetic destiny. The world has not as yet been truly stirred by the three-fold message of Revelation 14. . . . What is the reason for our failure, and how can the difficulty be rectified?”¹ Their answer to that question was that Adventists did not really understand the history or the message of 1888. “The Minneapolis episode of our history has been enveloped in the foggy mists of tradition. Fact must be separated from fancy.” They labeled what had been published up to that time about 1888 as “contradictory confusion.”² An even more basic misunderstanding, according to Wieland and Short, is the question as to “what the message of Jones and Waggoner really was.” They asserted that the attitude of suspicion toward Waggoner and Jones that existed in 1888 was unchanged in 1950 and were the first to suggest a reprinting of the studies given by Waggoner and Jones, insofar as they were sound.³ They also contrasted righteousness by faith in the writings of Waggoner and Jones with what they considered a faulty understanding of the concept by Christianity and, in particular, by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁴ Wieland and Short concluded: “It is now abundantly clear that ‘we’ have traveled the road of disillusionment since the Minneapolis meeting of 1888. Infatuation with false teachings has taken the place of clear, cogent, heaven-inspired truth, as regards ‘righteousness by faith.’” Heartfelt repentance, they said, was the solution.⁵

¹ [Wieland and Short], “1888 Re-Examined,” p. 1.
² Ibid., pp. 3, 21.
³ Ibid., pp. 39-41, 120.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 150-200.
⁵ Ibid., pp. 201-2. Note also p. 2: “Every failure of God’s people to follow the light shining upon their pathway for the past century must be completely rectified by the present generation.”
In a report dated December 4, 1951, the Defense Literature Committee of the Adventist denomination, chaired by W. E. Read, rejected "1888 Re-examined" as being historically and theologically inaccurate, too "critical," and having potential to unsettle confidence in church leadership.¹ The Wieland and Short manuscript, however, was widely circulated (against the wishes of the authors) until Adventist leaders felt the need to issue another response to the study, claiming that the two men had used statements by Ellen G. White out of context.² The dialogue continued until Wieland and Short decided "to resign the whole matter to the disposition of providence."³

In 1962 there appeared what was apparently considered the definitive answer to "1888 Re-examined." The bulk of this answer was Pease's M.A. thesis in published form, although his earlier statement to the effect that justification by faith had not become a major tenet of the Adventist Church was omitted.⁴ Pease traced his interest in 1888 to a confrontation with "a splinter organization that taught the theory that the Seventh-day Adventist Church rejected the doctrine of justification by faith in 1888."⁵ Perhaps this may account for some of the unwillingness to admit that 1888 did not represent a victory


² "Further Appraisal of the Manuscript '1888 Re-Examined','" A Warning and Its Reception, pp. 256-305.


⁵ Pease, By Faith Alone, pp. x-xi.
(Christian and Spalding) or even the beginning of a greater emphasis on justification by faith (Pease).\(^1\)

In 1966, another book was published that seemed to substantiate what was quickly becoming the official denominational interpretation of 1888, entitled *Through Crisis to Victory*. Arthur L. White, in the foreword, said that although the years from 1888 to 1901 were “fraught with conflict . . . it was a period over which Providence could spell out the word *victory*.”\(^2\) Olson admitted that some leaders opposed the message of Waggoner and Jones in 1888, but he attempted to show, by documenting the attitudes of ministers at the 1889 General Conference, and at the ministerial institutes which followed, and the “confessions” that came in the 1890s, how the tide turned and the opposition which was aroused at Minneapolis ebbed away.\(^3\) With regard to the 1888 conference itself and what our relation to it is, Olson was emphatic.

Unfortunately, the impression exists in some minds today that the General Conference session in 1888 officially rejected the message of righteousness by faith presented to it. This is a serious mistake. No action whatever was taken by vote of the delegates to accept it or reject it. Its acceptance or rejection by the people present at the session was an individual matter. And the acceptance or rejection of this teaching is still an individual matter.\(^4\)

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1 Cf. Bruno William Steinweg, "Developments in the Teaching of Justification and Righteousness by Faith in the Seventh-day Adventist Church After 1900," (M.A. thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1948), p. 70, which suggested that “extreme attitudes taken by some ministers” during 1922-36 and even 1888-90 was responsible for hindering acceptance of and greater emphasis to the doctrine of justification and righteousness by faith (A. G. Daniells exempted).


3 Olson, *Through Crisis to Victory*. pp. 56-114.

4 Ibid., p. 36.
Though the main text of the book added little that was new, a sixty-one page appendix of the transcripts of Ellen White's sermons at the Minneapolis General Conference was included. These added significant historical material.¹

In 1969, Pease wrote still another book, *The Faith that Saves*, to promote his interpretation of the Minneapolis Conference. Little was added; the book mainly reiterated points he and Olson had already published. He did respond, however, to the query as to why the writings of Waggoner and Jones themselves should not be republished: "I have read hundreds of pages of their material and recognize its worth. But when compared with the writings of Ellen White during the same period, it is not an overstatement to say that there is nothing said by Waggoner and Jones but that she said better!"² Pease seemed to hint at another reason, namely, that it might tarnish the evangelical image church leaders had sought so diligently to cultivate during the past two decades. "Adventism, rightly understood," he said, "is evangelical to the core."³ For Pease, the issues were different for the Church of the twentieth century than for the Church of the nineteenth century.⁴

In 1971, just two years after the appearance of *The Faith that Saves*, LeRoy Edwin Froom contributed the results of a lifetime of research on the subject of the Minneapolis Conference and the relationship of the Adventist Church to it. Tremendous expectation greeted the publication of this volume. Froom claimed that he had been commissioned to write such a book by A. G. Daniells many years before. "Accepting the assignment," Froom recalled, "I first sent out a questionnaire to all delegates to the '88 Conference then still living, obtaining their attestations on various items. These were to be held, pending the

¹ Ibid., pp. 242-302 (expanded in the revised edition).


³ Ibid., p. 54.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 61-64.
time of use” and formed the bases for two chapters of his book. Froom offered many interesting anecdotes which he says he took from these materials.¹ In addition to this, Froom was the first to respond in print with an analysis of what Waggoner and Jones actually said, concentrating almost exclusively on Waggoner.²

Froom’s conclusions included that Adventists did not take a leading role “in uplifting Christ and His righteousness pre-eminently before the world” in the late nineteenth century and that God used others such as Andrew Murray, A. B. Simpson, and F. B. Meyer. On the other hand, said Froom, “1888 unmistakably marked the turn in the tide. . . . It began the re-establishment of the supreme provision of Righteousness by Faith in Christ as ‘all the fulness of the Godhead.’³ There was “a slow but ultimate acceptance of the light presented, and the correction of positions of error.”⁴ In what appears to be an obvious reference to Wieland and Short, Froom asserted:

The charge, still sometimes made, that the teaching of Righteousness by Faith was rejected in 1888 by the denomination, or at least by its leadership, is therefore refuted by the personal participants at the Conference, and is an unwarranted and unsupported assumption. It simply is not true historically. This our most thorough and competent investigators attest.

Minneapolis, Froom continued, “introduced a new epoch, leading to an advanced experience and attitude in Adventism. It was the beginning of a new awakening—a period of growing

¹ Le Roy Edwin Froom, Movement of Destiny (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), pp. 237-68. He refers to letters written to him from nineteen individuals, some of whom wrote to him on more than one occasion. Unfortunately, the disposition of these letters is unknown.

² Ibid., pp. 188-217, 269-99. For Froom, the significance of EJW’s message included more than righteousness by faith in Christ, but also that Christ was divine in His person and equal with the Father.

³ Ibid., pp. 255-58.

⁴ Ibid., p. 260.
‘revival and reformation’... It opened up sublime heights and unfathomable depths of the Everlasting Gospel.”

In view of the apparently official endorsement given to Froom’s book, after its publication Wieland and Short broke public silence on the subject of 1888. From that time to the present they have published numerous books and papers dealing with the subject in an effort to further substantiate their contentions and to correct what they consider to be an inaccurate portrayal of Adventist history. Largely as a result of their efforts, many articles, books, and sermons written by Waggoner and Jones have been reprinted in various forms. The widespread interest generated in the subject of 1888 is also reflected by the numerous term papers written at Andrews University from 1969 to 1979 on this topic, which are preserved in the Adventist Heritage Center—sixteen by this writer’s count.

C. Mervyn Maxwell, in his treatment of Adventist church history, saw the significance of Minneapolis summed up in a phrase Ellen White used to describe the gospel message presented in 1888, “the matchless charms of Christ.” He considered a comparison of Waggoner’s published works before and after the conference to be the best way of arriving at his “actual message.” “Christ is our Saviour in the fullest sense of the word,” is how

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1 Ibid., pp. 266-67. Froom also included an appendix to further refute the charge of “leadership rejection” (pp. 681-86).


Maxwell described it. Clothed with divinity, Jesus “desires to fill us too with divine power.” He offers “freely to forgive all our sins and to clothe us with His righteousness.” And God’s forgiveness is not “‘make-believe.’ . . . When he is forgiven, a sinner becomes a new creature.” Jesus has paid the highest price possible for us and will not suddenly decide he does not want us. “You can be certain that He will accept you!” Thus Maxwell described Waggoner’s message. “Waggoner showed that righteousness by faith happens when Christians claim God’s promises,” he said.\(^1\) Better than anyone else, Maxwell has captured the spirit of Waggoner’s Minneapolis presentations, if not the precise content.\(^2\)

In 1979, R. W. Schwarz outlined the history leading up to the conference and presented some of the issues involved at Minneapolis in an even-handed way. “Many delegates,” he said, found Waggoner’s views “to be far different from what they had expected. The real point, he affirmed, is that all any law can do is to demonstrate man’s sinfulness and inability to justify himself before God.” According to Schwarz, Waggoner presented the divine Christ, who “stood anxious to cover the repentant sinner with His own robe of righteousness. . . . Christ also stood just as ready to impart victory over future sins as to forgive those that were past.”\(^3\) Although church leaders stood against what Jones and Waggoner were preaching, Schwarz attempts to show how the tide eventually turned—so much so that the two men were “virtual heroes” throughout the 1890s.\(^4\) Unfortunately, said Schwarz, the spiritual awakening “faltered, wavered—and got side-tracked for a quarter of a century.” He suggested a number of reasons for the revival’s demise: persistent pockets

\(^{1}\) Ibid., pp. 237-40.

\(^{2}\) This undoubtedly results from Maxwell’s opinion that EJW’s 1888 message is best represented by CHR, published just two years after the conference. Probably, however, this book reflects more closely EJW’s presentations at the ministerial institutes of 1889-1890.

\(^{3}\) Schwarz, *Light Bearers*, p. 188.

\(^{4}\) Ibid., pp. 189-94.
of resistance to the message, the apostasy of Jones and Waggoner, a continuation of the
"spirit of Minneapolis" in the church, as well as problems with pantheistic heresies and
rapid denominational growth.¹

David P. McMahon has made a major study of E. J. Waggoner's theology from 1884 to
1902, which has set the direction for others who have examined Waggoner's writings.
McMahon viewed Waggoner in his early years as "moving toward the recovery of
Reformation theology." Three months before the 1888 Conference, "Waggoner . . . was
struggling to recover the light given to Luther." He believed that "Waggoner's pre-1888
material best represents his mind at the [Minneapolis] conference."² According to
McMahon, this was the view that the law "can only condemn and never justify the sinner"
and that the righteousness by which we are saved is only forensic.³ McMahon asserted that
soon after the Minneapolis General Conference (1889-1891) Waggoner "advanced
theological positions which effectively laid the basis for his later pantheism." These
positions included: "effective" justification (making the believer righteous); Christ's
human nature as "sinful"; Christ as making atonement by mystically conveying His "life" to
us; sanctification as achieved without the believer's activity; and the law as an
"exhaustive expression of God's righteousness."⁴ McMahon declared that Waggoner moved
farther and farther in these directions until he eventually lost important distinctions
between justification and sanctification, law and gospel, the human nature of Christ and the
nature of all men, Christ's work on the cross and His work in human hearts, believers and

¹ Ibid., pp. 195-96. Schwarz implies that sometime after the turn of the century the
church got back on track, but is unclear as to how it occurred. Succeeding chapters of the
book, which expound on advances in the United States and abroad, may be what he had in
mind.

² McMahon, pp. 79-84.

³ Ibid., pp. 83, 186-88

⁴ Ibid., pp. 94-115.

xxvii
unbelievers, physical and spiritual realities, the temple of God in heaven and the temple of the church and the believer, and so on.¹

Wieland has made the most thorough study to date of the theology of both Waggoner and Jones and has come to very different conclusions. He has seen their message as the beginning of the “loud cry” of Rev. 18:1-4, which Adventists have understood to be the final warning for the world before Christ’s second advent. His main point appears to be that

what the sixteenth century Reformers never did, Jones and Waggoner went on to do. They built upon this foundation a grand edifice of truth that is unique and distinctly Seventh-day Adventist, toward the completion of the Reformation begun long ago. They went on to develop a message of righteousness by faith parallel to and consistent with the unique Adventist truth of the cleansing of the sanctuary. “The message of Christ’s righteousness” that is to enlighten the earth with glory is ministered from the most holy apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ our High Priest is completing His work of atonement.²

The message, according to Wieland, has several main features: (1) that Christ our Saviour, who was tempted as we are because He took our sinful nature,³ is the “heart” of the message; (2) that justification involves “two phases”—a forensic aspect and “an effective transformation of the heart,” making a person “an obedient doer of the law”;⁴ (3) that perfection of character, understood to be “sinless living in mortal flesh,” is within reach of those who have Christ;⁵ (4) that faith working by love makes carrying Christ’s burden light, “for we appreciate the heaviness it was to Him”;⁶ (5) that the doctrine of “the

¹ Ibid., pp. 118-19.
³ Ibid., pp. 38-39, 41-42.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 74, 77.
⁵ Ibid., pp. 96-97; this “sinless” living was said to include overcoming “all sin, even that which is now unknown.” (pp. 105-6).
⁶ Ibid., p. 138.
cleansing of the sanctuary" teaches that "there is no way that the record of our sins could be blotted out of the books in heaven unless first of all the sin itself is blotted out of the human heart." Wieland saw Ellen White, Jones, and Waggoner in complete agreement on these five points and cites evidence to substantiate that all three believed and taught them.

Eric Webster studied Waggoner's Christology, along with the views of three other Adventist writers, for his doctoral dissertation which was published in 1984. Webster summarized what he considered Waggoner's clear Christological convictions in 1890 as follows: (1) the essential deity of Christ; (2) the actuality of the humanity of Christ in that He took upon Himself man's sinful nature and was actually made sin on account of the sinful human race; (3) the sinlessness of Christ in action, thought, and deed; (4) the consistency of the plan of salvation throughout history. "During the 1890s," Webster concluded, "Waggoner moved steadily from an emphasis on the historical events of Christ and the cross to an emphasis on the existential event of the cross in a believer's heart. The internal and immanent Christ appeared to gather greater importance than the Christ of history." In Webster's view, this trend in Waggoner's theology encouraged a growing emphasis on the doctrine of perfection and a loss of the distinction between Deity and humanity, "a hallmark of pantheism." Webster parted company with McMahon, however, when he made the significant observation that defining righteousness by faith as both justification and sanctification does not lead inevitably to the quagmire of pantheism.

Webster seems to pinpoint Waggoner's Christology as his downfall. Sanctification should not be the "end purpose" of Christology; but, according to Webster, Waggoner's view of Christ was "man-centered" and became increasingly so during the 1890s. Webster also concluded that viewing Christ's human nature as sinful was "not an essential element for Waggoner's total Christology and soteriology," because of Waggoner's stress on Christ's

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1 Ibid., p. 146.

2 Webster, pp. 233, 236; cf. p. 247.

xxix
divinity. 1 Webster touched on Waggoner’s eschatology when he concluded, contrary to Wieland’s thesis, that Waggoner did not base his concept of an end of time “demonstration” on the doctrine of the sanctuary; it was more likely based on the great controversy motif or the call to obedience in the three angels’ messages of Rev. 14. 2

Two additional historical treatments of periods in Adventist history that overlap the years relevant to this study have been published recently: a volume of Arthur L. White’s biography of his grandmother, Ellen White, which covers the Minneapolis Conference and its aftermath; and a chapter by Richard W. Schwarz in the book Adventism in America. 3 Arthur White did not deal with the theology of either Jones or Waggoner, and he de-emphasized the importance of Minneapolis. The denomination did not reject the message of righteousness by faith; it was received favorably after the Minneapolis Conference. Truths Adventists had always believed were merely “reemphasized at the session.” 4 Thus he sided with the interpretation of Christian, Spalding, and others. Schwarz, in his treatment of the period from 1886 to 1905, appears to place the blame for the problems at Minneapolis squarely on Waggoner and Jones. Had they “simply kept their views to themselves, there would have been no controversy.” 5 While true, there would also have been no progress had they done so. Gradually, Schwarz said, “resistance to placing major emphasis on righteousness by faith disappeared from the Adventist ministry,

1 Ibid., pp. 237-42.
2 Ibid., p. 246.
5 Schwarz, “The Perils of Growth,” in Adventism in America, p. 98. His earlier treatment of the subject seems to be more even-handed (see pp. xxvi-xxvii above).
although pockets of resistance continued until early in the twentieth century."¹ But even no resistance is far from acceptance. Schwarz’s treatment of Waggoner’s message in this chapter connected it with extremes. Waggoner became involved, said Schwarz, with the holiness movement’s concept of “faith healing” in the 1890s and came close to teaching perfection of the flesh, when “he professed to believe that the sanctuary was a type of the human body, and the sanctuary’s cleansing (Dan. 8:14) related to the development of health teachings among Seventh-day Adventists.”²

George R. Knight in his biography of Waggoner’s comrade, A. T. Jones, has included several helpful chapters relating to the Minneapolis General Conference. Vividly depicting a clash of personalities and issues at a momentous time in Adventist history, Knight traced the development of the controversy over the law in Galatians, leading up to the showdown at Minneapolis. In addition, the Protestant drive for a “Christian America,” differences among Adventists over the proper interpretation of the ten horns of Dan 7, and deep-seated suspicions among church leaders about Jones’ and Waggoner’s intentions (which Knight calls the “California conspiracy”) contributed to the emotionally charged atmosphere in Minneapolis.³ In discussing the conference itself, Knight asserted that none of the existing records demonstrate that the divinity of Christ, the human nature of Christ, or ‘sinless living’ were topics of emphasis or discussion at the 1888 meetings. Persons holding that those topics were central to the theology of the meetings generally read subsequent developments in Jones and Waggoner’s treatment of righteousness by faith back into the 1888 meetings.

¹ Ibid., p. 101.

² Ibid., p. 103.

Recently discovered records of the conference, according to Knight, make such an
interpretation "ever more difficult to sustain."\(^1\)

According to Knight, J. H. Morrison, "an expert debater" who represented the
traditionalists, claimed that Adventists "had always believed in justification by faith,"
but feared that the subject had been "overstressed" and "was afraid that the law might lose
its important place in Adventist theology." Waggoner opposed him, said Knight,
presenting the Galatians issue as "gospel" rather than law.\(^2\) Knight represents Ellen
White's view of Waggoner's contribution to Adventist theology as the building of "a bridge
between law and gospel by making explicit the gospel function of the ten-commandment law
(i.e., to lead individuals to Christ for forgiveness and justification)." But unlike Waggoner,
he said, Ellen White "had no burden for the law in Galatians."\(^3\)

In treating the meaning of Minneapolis, Knight questioned whether it can fairly be
said that the 1888 message was "rejected." The idea that the Adventist church as a
corporate body must repent is misguided because "since the beginning of the gospel era God
has worked with individuals rather than nations or groups. People must accept and apply
righteousness by faith as individuals." Further, Knight maintained that efforts to
reconstruct what was said at Minneapolis are "wrongheaded," not only because Waggoner's
exact message has been irretrievably lost, but also because "the main issues in the 1888
righteousness by faith meetings were not doctrinal but experiential."\(^4\) The most promising
way of ascertaining the significance of 1888 for Adventists today is through the eyes of

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 37.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 38. In actual fact, EJW presented his views, which were then attacked by
Morrison.

\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 39-40.

\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 64-65. As a correction to what could be perceived as an extreme on that
viewpoint, Knight is currently developing a manuscript on what he views as the doctrinal
implications of the 1888 meetings, particularly as they relate to Revelation 14:12.

xxxii
Ellen White. Knight concluded his examination of her understanding of the conference's implications by saying:

The meaning of 1888 is to learn its central lessons and to start living the caring Christian life now. The meaning of 1888 is to face forward, not backward. The meaning of 1888 is the call for Adventists to put away their theological disputes as being all-important, and to treat each other like Christians even though they disagree. Only then will they be in a position to testify convincingly that they have Christ's message for a dying world.

Yet another book specifically dealing with the issues of the Minneapolis conference came off the press in 1988. Arnold Valentin Wallenkampf has presented his view of the history and issues surrounding 1888. Salvation through faith in Christ, he wrote, was “an unspoken premise” in the Adventist church prior to Minneapolis and consequently many of the conference attendees were “apparently in a state of spiritual death.” He assumed that Waggoner presented the essence of Christ and His Righteousness at the conference, and Wallenkampf devoted an entire chapter to summarizing its contents. Ellen White’s appraisal of Minneapolis, he said, was that opposition prevailed; furthermore, it appeared to grow “sharper” with the passage of time.

Wallenkampf denied that any “corporate guilt” was incurred at that time, asserting that responsibility for what happened in 1888 and the years that followed rests with individuals, not the church. However, “we are accountable for continued misportrayal of the 1888 General Conference session and its aftermath. . . . If we do not forthrightly present the history of the 1888 General Conference session and its aftermath, we as a denomination perpetuate the sin committed at Minneapolis in 1888.” Unfortunately,

1 Ibid., p. 71.
3 Ibid., pp. 18-24.
4 Ibid., pp. 35-35, 40.

xxxiii

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Wallenkampf seems to have stressed the importance of understanding the history of the conference apart from the messages there presented.1 "Genuine Christianity is not primarily a message. It is a Person, and that Person is Jesus." More than a "relationship" with Jesus is needed, he said. "Salvation results only from a friendship relationship." What we need is a "peace-imparting fellowship with Jesus. Then the experience of righteousness by faith is ours, and only then have you and I in reality accepted, and not rejected, the 1888 message."2 Wallenkampf's consideration of implications never went beyond such vague generalities and constitutes the weakest aspect of his treatment of the subject.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the Ellen G. White Estate has recently released five very important volumes relating to the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session. Together, they provide invaluable historical insight into the thoughts and emotions of the participants in the conference and its aftermath. Four of the volumes, amounting to over eighteen hundred pages, are a compilation of Ellen White's letters, manuscripts, articles, and sermons dealing with Minneapolis.3 The fifth volume includes letters and manuscripts of other participants, as well as some published documents bearing on the subject. Especially important in this fifth volume are notes taken by W. C. White during the Minneapolis Conference.4 These recent publications reflect continuing interest in the subject of 1888 and its aftermath.

From the above survey, several points should be noted. First, not until 1950 was any widespread attention given to the theology of either Jones or Waggoner; prior to this, many

1 Ibid., pp. 50-56, 75 (italics supplied).
2 Ibid., pp. 83, 86, 88-89.
assumed that they taught the same doctrine as the Protestant reformers. Second, few have studied the theology of Waggoner in detail, and those who have done so have come to varying conclusions. Third, the relationship between Waggoner's doctrine of righteousness by faith and his eschatology remains unclear. Fourth, significant collation of material relevant to Minneapolis and the discovery of W. C. White's notes of Waggoner's lectures has not yet been addressed.

This present study is intended as a step toward a better understanding of Waggoner's theology in its historical context, with sensitivity toward the questions that have been raised surrounding him. It is fervently hoped that understanding certain aspects of his message and their interrelationship will aid in bringing greater clarity to the proclamation of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of the hour of God's judgment.
CHAPTER I

THE EARLY PERIOD INCLUDING THE MINNEAPOLIS
GENERAL CONFERENCE, 1882-1888

We begin our study with an analysis of E. J. Waggoner's theology from 1882 to 1888. During that time, Waggoner became the focus of controversy as a result of interpreting the book of Galatians in a manner at variance with what most Seventh-day Adventists believed at the time. The ensuing turmoil culminated in a series of historic presentations delivered by Waggoner at the 1888 General Conference session.

Volumes have been written about this important conference and its aftermath. But, often, researchers have focused primarily on the Galatians controversy in studying Waggoner and the conference, whereas Waggoner himself was concerned with much more than the relative importance of a given view of Galatians. The articles that provoked the controversy in the first place appeared during a twelve-week period in 1886. During the seven years examined in this chapter, Waggoner wrote nothing else on this subject, except an earlier series of ten articles in 1884, that apparently provoked no controversy, and a "letter", later distributed more widely, to George I. Butler (President of the General

1 E. g., Knight; Wieland and Short, 1888 Re-Examined, rev. ed.; Wieland, The 1888 Message: An Introduction; Olson, Thirteen Crisis Years; Pease, By Faith Alone; and Daniells.

2 A series of lessons in The Youth's Instructor on the law appeared from April 14 to July 14, 1886, but only two articles deal with Galatians—June 23 and June 30. A series of nine articles on Galatians 3 appeared in ST of July 8 through September 2, 1886. Cf. EJW, "Christ and the Law," July 29 and August 5, 1886; idem, "In the Law," September 16, 1886.

3 These appeared in ST, June 19, 26; July 3, 17, 24; August 7, 28; September 4, 11, 18 of 1884.
Conference), who vigorously opposed his “new” teaching.\(^1\) It therefore seems inappropriate to use the “law-in-Galatians” controversy as the prism through which to examine Waggoner’s theology of the period. Nevertheless, this controversy certainly deserves significant consideration, enough to justify separate consideration. The history of and the issues surrounding the 1888 Minneapolis Conference are treated under a separate heading at the end of this chapter. Before considering the relationship between Waggoner’s understanding of righteousness by faith and his understanding of eschatology, a brief biographical sketch and a survey of his overall views of eschatology for the period is offered to show the context into which the more specific elements being examined fit.

**Survey of Waggoner and His Eschatology**

**Biographical Sketch**

The year 1882 marked a significant turning point in E. J. Waggoner’s life. At a camp meeting in Healdsburg during October, 1882, he had a most remarkable religious experience. Many years ago, the writer sat in a tent one dismal rainy afternoon, where a servant of the Lord was presenting the Gospel of His grace; not a word of the text or texts used, nor of what was said by the speaker, has remained with me, and I have never been conscious of having heard a word; but, in the midst of the discourse an experience came to me that was the turning point in my life. Suddenly a light shone about me, and the tent seemed illumined, as though the sun were shining; I saw Christ crucified for me, and to me was revealed for the first time in my life the fact that God loved me and that Christ gave Himself for me personally. It was all for me. If I could describe my feelings, they would not be understood by those who have not had a similar experience, and to such no explanation is necessary.\(^2\)

Waggoner later said of this experience: “I am sure that Paul’s experience on the way to Damascus was no more real than mine.”\(^3\) Sometime earlier he had changed his vocation

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\(^1\) EJW, *GG* (Oakland, California: n.p., 1888).


\(^3\) EJW, *CF*, Unpub. MS, p. 4, AHC, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. This typewritten manuscript is reputed to have been found on EJW’s desk following his sudden death on May 28, 1916. It was later published.
from medicine to ministry. His scientific training undoubtedly contributed to his ability to open the Scriptures to inquiring minds. Already in 1882, Waggoner had contributed many articles to *The Signs of the Times*. He had also written a tract against the agitation in California for a Sunday law, which W. C. White praised as being uniquely able "to secure the candid consideration of business men." On October 1, 1883, one year after his camp meeting experience, Waggoner began teaching Bible at Healdsburg College, which had opened on April 11, 1882. Somehow he also found time to pastor the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Church and to help his father edit *The Signs of the Times*. Waggoner soon became widely known through

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1 WCW, *ST* 8 (March 9, 1882): 120. The illustration on this page was drawn by Mike Hakanson on an Apple® Macintosh™ computer.

2 *ST* 9 (September 27, 1883): 426.


4 In *ST* 9 (May 10, 1883): 210 his name first appears on the masthead as "Assistant Editor."
his many articles. A. T. Jones came to California in 1884 and relieved Waggoner of his teaching responsibilities. However, Waggoner returned to the biblical department of Healdsburg College in the fall of 1888. He worked successively as assistant editor, co-editor, and editor of The Signs of the Times, as well as co-editing (with A. T. Jones) the American Sentinel from its inception in 1886. Several of Waggoner's articles in the Signs were reprinted in Australia in The Bible Echo; and in 1888 Waggoner began to be listed as one of the Echo's three corresponding editors. Several books and pamphlets were published between 1882 and 1888 bearing Waggoner's name, although they are, for the most part, a compilation of his articles on those subjects.

**Eschatological Framework**

Waggoner's eschatology was already well-developed in this early period. Articles from his pen dealt with the second advent and its imminence, with prophetic fulfillment throughout history to the present and near future, and with the Antichrist and the mark of the beast. They set forth the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation in harmony with the

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1 ST 14 (August 17, 1888): 506.


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standard Adventist teaching, best represented at the time by Uriah Smith. In addition, Waggoner held standard Seventh-day Adventist views of the final judgment in its investigative, second advent, millennial, and executive phases.

The Last Days

Waggoner's definition of “the last days” was not limited to the interval between 1844 and the second advent. He said the expression “may include the greater part of the last half of the world’s history. In the Bible it is often used of the entire period between the first and second advent (Hob. 1:1, 2 quoted).” But this does not mean that Christ could have returned at any time in the past: “It is just as contrary to the Bible to say that people might with propriety have expected Christ to come at any period in the past, since his first advent, as it is to say that he will not come at all.” The apostles did not teach the possibility of Christ's return in the first century. Some were deceived “by a pretended epistle from Paul (see 2 Thess. 2:1-3), and this led Paul to repeat . . . that Christ would not come until after the Papacy had arisen, and had run its course of persecution and blasphemy. Certainly, then, we have no chance to be deceived, and to suppose that the immediate

1 US, The 2300 Days and the Sanctuary (Rochester, New York: Advent Review Office, 1854); idem, Thoughts, Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation (Battle Creek, Michigan: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1865); idem, The United States in the Light of Prophecy; or, an Exposition of Revelation 13:11-17 (Battle Creek, Michigan: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872); idem, Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Daniel (Battle Creek, Michigan: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1873).

2 The most convenient source of evidence for this is EJW, Prophetic Lights. A lengthy series on the prophecies of Daniel, consisting of fourteen articles in ST from August 27 to December 17, 1885, also substantiate this. See also EJW, “Unity of the Eighth and Ninth of Daniel,” ST 13 (June 9, 1887): 343.


coming of the Lord was preached in the first century."¹ In spite of this, Waggoner could say: "It was true then that the coming of the Lord was 'at hand,' although not immediately at hand; it is a thousand fold more true now."²

Antichrist and Sunday Legislation

Waggoner did not identify the Antichrist with one person or power exclusively. He considered spiritualism as one manifestation. But, in addition, he noted that "by the expressions 'that man of sin,' and 'the son of perdition' in 2 Thess. 2:3, the apostle makes undoubted reference to the Papacy."³ In line with Seventh-day Adventist distrust of Sunday legislation as a child of the Papacy, Waggoner spoke out against legislation which opposed the selling of liquor on Sunday, and which also restricted the freedoms of Sabbath-keeping Adventists. For example, W. C. White was arrested for working on Sunday at the Pacific Press.⁴ When asked about the Adventist position on legislation to prohibit Sunday liquor sales, Waggoner finessed the issue:

Seventh-day Adventists take no sides in this controversy. . . . We say "God speed" to every effort to prohibit liquor traffic, but cannot join a purely Sunday movement. . . . it is ours simply to watch the fulfillment of prophecy that we may not be taken unawares, and to "fear God, and keep his commandments," for this, and nothing less, is our "whole duty."⁵

Another statement also indicated an attitude of reserve toward Sunday sacredness:

The "sure word of prophecy" shows that a religious persecution will come, and we see at present the premonitory symptoms. We would do nothing to either help or

² Ibid.
³ EJW, "The Spirit of Antichrist. No. 13," ST 14 (March 16, 1888): 571. EJW's belaboring the former identification may indicate a desire to understand prophetic fulfillment in more contemporary terms.
⁵ EJW, "Sunday Law Sentiment," ST 8 (April 27, 1882): 199. Later, this legislation was viewed as a result of the "hand of God" that all may be "thoroughly warned."
hinder the movement, except to sound the warning cry, that in that time of trouble all who will may have the truth of God for their shield and buckler.1 In fact, the people of God not only would do nothing, they "could" do nothing but "earnestly proclaim the truth," without "any hope of hindering or preventing that which they saw must take place."2 Because of the popular sentiment for legislation to venerate Sunday, Waggoner believed that the image to the beast was quickly being formed. He claimed that "a few years at most will suffice to bring it to completion. When that takes place, the world will have been fully warned, and the harvest of the earth will be reaped. Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; Rev. 14:9-15."3

How were Adventists supposed to relate to legislation requiring Sunday observance? In 1888, when national legislation was being considered, Waggoner asserted that while the fourth commandment "does not compel us to work every minute of those [other] six days," we are not to recognize a government’s authority to command Sunday observance by resting from work on that day. Otherwise, "we recognize that power as of equal authority with God; and that would nullify our keeping of the seventh day, by showing that we did not do it as an act of worship to the only God." In addition, it would indicate a Sabbath observance motivated by fear rather than love and would contribute to a greater culpability compared to those who thought Sunday was the true Sabbath.4

While Adventists saw the fulfillment of prophecy in these efforts to enforce Sunday observance, they believed other events were still to take place. As a result, Adventists did not need to be always "momentarily expecting the coming of the Lord," nor "deceived by

4 EJW, “‘Him Only Shalt Thou Serve,’” ST 14 (December 21, 1888): 774.
those who set time." Waggoner affirmed that history was making rapid progress and that "the student of prophecy will not have long to wait to see what shall be the end of all these things." Yet, in Waggoner’s mind, there was no conflict between such an attitude and the building of churches and schools:

We are to be active in using the talents God has given us, till the coming of Christ... The idea that activity in our every-day work is incompatible with true godliness is a remnant of the papish custom of going into utter seclusion in order to serve God fully... God requires all who would work for him to have the necessary preparation. And if we are diligent in this preparation, it matters not if the Master comes before it is completed. If we have been obeying orders,—doing his will—it is well. Activity in the work that is given us is not inconsistent with a belief in the near coming of our Lord, but idleness and negligence are.

Although an understanding of the mark of the beast as Sunday worship was formulated shortly after 1844, Adventists apparently gave little thought to the details of how they would live when the prophecy of Rev 13 was fulfilled until they began to see it happening. Official opposition to and efforts to counteract Sunday legislation has been a consistent position of the Adventist Church since that time.

The Gospel Proclamation

Waggoner’s understanding of the gospel in the years leading up to 1888, while certainly not new to Seventh-day Adventists, sounded new to many. His writings on the subject included the familiar categories of justification and sanctification. He made Christ’s life on earth central. He referred to the old and new covenants frequently, using them as a framework for the interplay of justification, sanctification, and Christ’s life on earth. Once

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1 Ibid.


3 EJW, “Occupy Till I Come,” ST 14 (November 9, 1888): 679. It would be interesting to know how innovative EJW’s ideas were, whether Adventists had developed a theology of the “delay” since 1844, and to what extent Adventists were instructed by the church to comply with Sunday legislation.
we analyze these elements we note their close relationship, in Waggoner’s theology, to Christ’s work in heaven.

E. J. Waggoner clearly enunciated what may be considered two central pillars of salvation; first, that God takes the initiative in saving man: he “does not wait for sinners to desire pardon, before he makes an effort to save them”;1 second, that man is totally undeserving of salvation: “God was not under obligation to save us, and we could not atone for past sins, and thus earn salvation. Our salvation is wholly due to the infinite mercy of God through the merits of Christ.”2

Man also has a part in salvation. Christ does not do everything for us.3

Righteousness is required of us, and that means that there is something for us to do, for righteousness is simply right doing. But Christ says, “Without me ye can do nothing.” Our own righteousness, that is, the good that we attempt to do by our own unaided efforts, amounts to nothing. It is not righteousness at all, but unrighteousness. When, however, we join the strength of Christ to our weakness, we can truly say “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”4

Waggoner also wrote that “nothing is required of any man, but that he should keep the commandments; but no man can keep the commandments except by the help of Christ.”5 During this period, Waggoner never separated the gospel from obedience to God’s law, nor is Christ ever said to have obeyed for us: “The gospel is simply the good news of how men who have broken the law may be saved, through Christ, and enabled to keep it.”6

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3 Ibid.


6 EJW, “Christ the End of the Law,” ST 10 (August 7, 1884): 473. Cf. idem, “Judged by the Law,” ST 11 (November 26, 1885): 713. “The work of the gospel is to bring men back to their lost allegiance, to reconcile them to God (2 Cor. 5:20), and write the entire law once more in their hearts (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10), that thus they may be wholly conformed to God’s image,—‘partakers of the divine nature.’”
Waggoner's Concept of Sin

Sin originated with Adam. "When Adam sinned," Waggoner said, "he suffered a complete moral fall. He placed himself in direct antagonism to God, and in perfect accord with Satan." In such a condition, Adam was helpless and, "if he had been left to himself, his desires would have been as fully toward the ways of the devil as are those of the fallen angels. But God in his mercy interposed." By His intervention, God provides not only "a way of escape from sin, but the desire to escape." In every person's heart, He has placed "enmity" toward sin, "some knowledge of right and wrong, and some natural desire for the right." Therefore, according to Waggoner, while Adam's fall affects human nature, God intervened so that it would not be totally depraved.

In addition, sin caused the earth and everything in it to be corrupted. "Because of Adam's sin, the curse passed upon the earth. This curse was that it should bring forth thorns and thistles. Gen. 3:17, 18." For Christ to redeem the earth, "he must bear the curse under which it groaned, and which was taking its life. So when he was about to die, his tormentors placed upon his brow a crown of thorns (Matt. 27:29, 30), and he thus bore at the same time the curse of the earth and the curse of man."  

Another consequence of Adam's fall is that human beings are born with an inherent inclination to sin.

These Scriptures [Eph 2:1-3; Gal 5:19-21; Gen 8:21; Jer 17:9; Matt 15:19; Rom 8:7] most clearly prove that man is by nature corrupt and depraved. The evil things recorded in Gal. 5:18-21 are "the works of the flesh;" not those which man has acquired, but things which proceed out of his heart; things which are inherent in his very nature. This being the case, it will be seen at once that whenever a person

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follows his natural inclination, and makes his own mind the criterion of right and wrong, he must inevitably do that which is evil.1

Notice that Waggoner did not say evil is inevitable, except as one follows “natural inclination.” Waggoner, therefore, perceived a difference between sin which is inherited and sin which is chosen. In terms of the nature people inherit, no one is sinless. “The seeds of sin are in the heart of every child that is born.”2 Waggoner could even say that “all are by nature children of disobedience, and consequently of wrath.” All are “children of disobedience”, however, because “it is in the nature of man to sin,—to obey Satan rather than God,” emphasizing sin as a decision—the decision to obey Satan. Waggoner seems to be saying that the nature which all inherit at birth pulls them into choosing to disobey God. Consequently, said Waggoner, everyone is born “under the law,—condemned to death.”3

Such a statement seems to suggest that commission of sin is inevitable for every fallen human being. The reason for sin’s inevitability must inescapably be traced back to Adam.

Adam was the one man by whom sin entered into the world. The stream, unassisted, cannot rise higher than the fountain, and therefore Adam’s posterity were necessarily born into a state of condemnation. When Adam sinned, God looked down the ages and saw the whole human race in a state of rebellion, and, consequently, of condemnation; and then it was that his great love was manifested, in giving his only begotten Son to die for a rebellious world.4

On the other hand, “no one is to blame for being the descendant of Adam,” said Waggoner.5

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1 EJW, Fathers of the Catholic Church, pp. 42-43.


3 EJW, “The Relation of the World to God,” ST 13 (November 17, 1887), p. 695. Cf. idem, “Lesson for the Pacific Coast. ‘Inheritance of the Saints,’” ST 11 (March 19, 1885), p. 182: “By his sin, Adam not only lost the dominion for himself, but he made it impossible for any of his posterity to possess it. For since it was forfeited through sin, his descendents could not possess it, because they were born sinful. Moreover his whole posterity were, with himself [sic], doomed to death.”


Therefore, God does not destroy the race. He wants all to have the opportunity of accepting His provision for their salvation. Waggoner wrote:

If God had not so loved the world, the sentence would have been executed, Adam would have died that very day, and we, his posterity, would never have existed. It was not Adam alone whom God loved, but the whole race whom he had created in him. On account of this great love, the execution of the sentence was stayed, and man was granted another trial. . . . Bear in mind the fact that God did not revoke the penalty; he merely stayed its execution, in order to give man a chance to accept the conditions of pardon.¹

This is why Waggoner could affirm that only known sin brings condemnation.

No one will be condemned for not doing what he did not know, and had no means of knowing was commanded. Both Christians and heathen are on a level, so far as this is concerned. If they have conscientiously lived up to that, it will be well with them, for their secret sins will be forgiven.

Yet, “God does not excuse sin. Every sin whether known or unknown must be atoned for by the blood of Christ; there is no other way by which anybody can be freed from its guilt.”²

But forgiveness depends on choice. Those who do not accept pardon for their sins will receive the penalty of death, which “still hangs over the fallen race.” And “when Christ shall cease to interpose in man’s behalf, it will fall upon all who have not hidden in him.”³ Therefore, if people are lost, it is by their own choice, not Adam’s.

That Waggoner did not believe in a thoroughgoing concept of “original sin” also seems evident from two additional aspects of his theology: (1) that temptation itself is not sin; and (2) that salvation can be retained only through obedience. Temptation, Waggoner said, is actually a good thing when it is resisted: “The temptations . . . which work patience, and which strengthen, are those which meet with no response in our own hearts,

¹ Ibid.


⁴ Ingemar Linden, The Last Trump (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978), p. 247 has also recognized EJW’s restrained concept of “original sin”: “Waggoner rejected the concept of total depravity, or original sin, as a major obstacle in the lives of born again Christians.”
but which are instantly repelled." On the other hand, temptations "which are entertained in the heart" bring condemnation.

The sin presents itself, and the mind goes out toward it, and longs for it. It may be that the overt act is never committed, but since "the thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. 24:9), the one who only in imagination does the sinful act is in the sight of God accounted guilty. Such temptations as these are natural to every human being, "for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts."³

Choice is the crucial element in whether temptation is an aid or a hindrance to spiritual growth. Waggoner also that salvation can be retained only through obedience.

The man that keeps the commandments of God shall live. See Lev. 18:5. But no man has kept them; consequently the curse has fallen upon all. "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5:12. From this curse we can be redeemed only by Christ. And the person thus redeemed from the curse must keep the law, or else he will again bring himself under the curse; for those only have life who keep the law.²

Justification, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness

In spite of the fact that Waggoner frequently discussed justification, it is difficult to understand precisely what he meant by the term. Quoting Webster's dictionary definition, he said that justification is "a showing to be just or conformable to law, rectitude or propriety."³ Those who are doers of the law will be justified "wherever and whenever they are found. . . . But in this world, there are no doers of the law." Furthermore, since everyone has sinned at one time or another, no one can be considered a doer of the law.

The law requires that all there is of us shall be devoted to it all the time. Then if a man gets behind, he can never catch up. Since all our strength is required each hour, it is plain that the perfect performance of duty during any hour will not in the least degree make up for the non-performance of duty during any other hour. There can be no such thing as works of supererogation. While the law, justifies us in the performance of good deeds, it cannot as a matter of fact, justify us for a single moment, no matter how good our present actions may be, since on its very first application to us, it must detect the past sin, and consequently must at once condemn

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² EJW, "Under the Law (Concluded)," ST 10 (September 18, 1884), p. 570.

³ EJW, "Under the Law," ST 10 (September 11, 1884): 553.
us. Justification and condemnation have reference to our whole lives; and since, however good we may be for a portion of our lives, at the end it will be seen that we have not done all our duty, we must therefore stand condemned.\(^1\)

How then can anyone be justified? Waggoner replied: “Christ's righteousness is declared for the remission—taking away—of those sins.” In this way, “a man's whole life” is “made to appear in perfect harmony with the law.”\(^2\) In saying that justification has reference to the “whole life,” Waggoner hastened to add that he did not mean to suggest justification for future sins.

It must not be forgotten that we are now speaking only of the sins that are past. It is impossible that remission of sins could have reference to anything else, for that which does not exist cannot be taken away; and to justify a man for sins not yet committed, in other words, to grant indulgence for sins would throw contempt on the law and bring in anarchy and ruin.

For a man to be justified, he must “acknowledge the justice of the law which condemns his sins, and repenting of them, promise obedience to the law.”\(^3\) “Indeed, the very act of reconciliation implies submission on our part to the requirements of God.”\(^4\) Reconciliation includes becoming “a new creature in Christ; it is to put away the old life of sin, and to become reconciled to God by keeping his law.”\(^5\) Justification is not a long process. To obtain it, all that is necessary is “to have sincere faith in Christ. It takes just as long to be justified as it does to have faith in Christ and no longer.”\(^6\) Yet, Waggoner could speak of the need to

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\(^1\) EJW, “Justified by Faith,” ST 12 (March 25, 1886): 183.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 184.


\(^5\) Ibid.

continue in the "state of justification by faith;" a state in which a person "must retain a sense of his own unworthiness."  

Justification appears to include more than just a legal change for the believer:

Divine pardon is justification; God pardons the believer in Christ, by imputing his righteousness "for the remission of sins that are past." The pardoned one is as though he had never sinned; where there was nothing but guilt before, God beholds nothing but righteousness,—righteousness put there through his own wonderful love.2

While the "righteousness" in the above statement may not include the new birth, Waggoner penned an article in which he identified pardon with establishing "a connection with Christ," which "does not cease, if we walk in the narrow way."3 It should also be recognized that Waggoner could speak of "justification" as a "making righteous" by faith.4 In one article he claimed that being justified was both being "made righteous" and being "declared righteous."

To free man from condemnation is to free him from sin, and this taking away of sin is what is meant by condemning sin. . . . To such there is no condemnation. And why? Because in them sin has been condemned or destroyed. . . . When that is done, he is freed from condemnation, and not till then can the righteousness of the law be fulfilled or manifested in him.5

Some would say that Waggoner was confused when he included God’s work in the believer in his definition of justification.6 But Waggoner believed that when God declares a person to be in harmony with the law, He is describing a reality, not just a legal fiction.

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1 EJW, “Faith and Humility,” ST 13 (June 2, 1887): 326.
3 EJW, “Solemn Warnings,” ST 13 (September 1, 1887): 538.
6 McMahon, pp. 94-102; Webster, pp. 236-38. McMahon would entirely exclude sanctification as a consideration in salvation, whereas Webster would not. However, both of them understand transforming grace as a part of sanctification, rather than justification.
The law could not cleanse a man's past record, and make him sinless; and poor, fallen man had no strength resting in his flesh to enable him to keep the law. And so God imputes to believers the righteousness of Christ, who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, so that "the righteousness of the law" might be fulfilled in their lives.¹

Through justification, believers undergo a definite change:

The moment that we implicitly believe that Christ loves us individually, with a love that is able to save us, we are free. The chains that bind us . . . are severed, and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We are now new creatures in Christ, and must henceforth walk in newness of life, no longer, "under the law," but "under grace."

A believer can be considered "saved" only after such a transformation takes place:

When one has been forgiven for all his past transgressions—when the burden of sin that clung to him as a body of death, has been removed,—and a new heart has been given him,—a heart loving righteousness and hating iniquity,—it is proper to say that he is saved.²

In an appeal to the reader, Waggoner described a prayer for forgiveness: "If with sincerity you pray with the psalmist, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me,' he will for Christ's sake pardon all your iniquity, and then, being a new creature in Christ, you can say, 'O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' Ps. 119:97."³ Waggoner strongly opposed any understanding of forgiveness that involved no change in the person himself:

It would be simply impossible for God to forgive an unforgiving man. Because when God forgives, it is not a mere form, but a cleansing from sin. But God does not cleanse anyone from sin who does not repent of it and desire freedom from it. He does not force forgiveness upon anybody.⁴

Early in 1888, Waggoner spoke of a kind of ongoing justification, citing Abraham who at first "was justified by simple faith, without any works. Works could not have entered into that justification. Afterwards when he offered Isaac, he was justified by works." He reconciled the two thus: "that work was the outcome of his faith; it was the evidence of perfected faith. If it had not been for Abraham's faith, he never would have performed that work.\ldots So faith is necessarily first. There cannot be works that will justify, without underlying faith."\(^1\) In a similar vein, Waggoner insisted that "forgiveness must precede a righteous life," and that "no man can be righteous before his sins are forgiven."\(^2\)

Waggoner did not consider salvation to be confined to the work of justification. Faith and works are so closely united "that the possession of one presupposes the possession of the other. Yet it must not be forgotten that faith is first. There can be no works where there is no faith." Faith "may be said to comprise all that is necessary for salvation, because works are included in faith; they follow it as surely as flowers follow the showers of spring."\(^3\)

Sanctification—Overcoming Sin, Obedience and Perfection

The "Holiness" Movement
A Contextual Factor

Waggoner's understanding of sanctification is best understood against the background of the "holiness" movement that exerted a strong influence on American Christianity during the 1880s. This factor, especially in the pre-Minneapolis period, has

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generally been ignored by historians who have studied Waggoner. But many of his clearest
statements on sanctification appear to be directed against the popular views of the time,
which is important when considering his idea of Christian perfection.

**Historical development**

George M. Marsden identifies two main strands of holiness advocates in America. The first, he says, took the objective authority of Scripture for granted and accentuated the
experiential, namely, Methodists and, later, Pentecostals. The second group,
dispensationalists, tried to emphasize both. For the purposes of this study, only the former
group need be surveyed. Donald W. Dayton, in a premiere analysis of the theological
development of the holiness movement, has articulated four key elements at work:
salvation, healing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the second coming of Christ.

The “holiness” movement derived from the teaching of John Wesley, who believed that a
state of perfection, or “entire sanctification,” could be attained which included freedom
from sinful motives and from the “power” of sin as well as from sinful acts. Wesley
emphasized that sin is a voluntary act of will and described righteousness as perfect love.

According to Dayton; “When Wesley wished to describe ‘one that is perfect’ he often spoke

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1 Knight, pp. 167-171, compares the teaching of ATJ, and to a lesser extent EJW, with
the surrounding holiness fervor of the 1890s, but does not mention it as an important factor
earlier. Schwarz, *Light Bearers*, pp. 446-48, also confines the discussion to the 1890s,
specifically focusing on the impact of the “holy flesh” movement that arose from the fringes
of Adventism. Froom, pp. 319-22, briefly discusses this factor, but overlooks some of the
extreme tendencies that were exhibited. See also, McMahon, pp. 126-32.

2 George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford

3 Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids,

4 Marsden, p. 75.
first of 'one in whom is the mind which was in Christ and who so walketh as He walked.'

Yet, Wesley argued that within the process of sanctification there was a "moment" of entire sanctification. H. K. La Rondelle summarized the implications of Wesley's concept of perfection with regard to Christ's mediatorial ministry in heaven:

Wesley's perfect Christian has perfect love and therefore does not need Christ as Priest for any sinful act, word, or thought any more, since he is essentially holy, each sinful prompting (original sin) being annihilated. The only reason why Wesley still maintains Christ as a Mediator for the Christian is for the sake of his physical infirmities and shortcomings, which are, however, no sins "in the Scripture sense."3

Methodist holiness advocates of the 1840s, such as Phoebe Palmer, took the idea of entire sanctification to an extreme. "If you have faith to be sanctified," they claimed, "you are sanctified."4 This is a position which amounted to believing in an instantaneous purification from all sin. Some other extreme holiness advocates, such as John Humphrey Noyes, insisted that the ten commandments were abrogated by the law of love.5 In some


2 Wesley, Sermon 85, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," pt. 2, sect. 1, in the Jackson edition of Wesley's *Works*, 6:509, quoted in Dayton, p. 48. See also, ibid., p. 46. Salvation is "both instantaneous and gradual. It begins in the moment we are justified in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God on man. It gradually increases from that moment . . . till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we 'grow up in all things into Him that is our Head'; till we attain 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'"


4 Marsden, p. 75.

holiness gatherings, uncontrolled emotionalism prevailed, including dropping to the floor and wild, tearful embraces.¹

Essentially, the Methodist holiness movement in America was a reaction against the mechanical, permissive, and formal worship of the times.² Beginning with the first "National Camp Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness" in 1867, it gave birth to the holiness and (later) Pentecostal movements.³ By 1887, there were scores of holiness camp meetings being held from coast to coast. The 1880s and 1890s are acknowledged as the peak of the movement's acceptance and popularity in America. One holiness preacher stirred the entire city of Augusta, Georgia, with a sermon in which he discussed the question: "Is it possible for one to live without sin?" A tangible expression of the doctrine of holiness was its condemnation of activities such as drinking, dancing, theater-going, and card playing. Another, was social activism on the part of groups like the Salvation Army. By 1888 there were at least four publishing houses devoted exclusively to publishing holiness literature.⁴ According to one historian, the ultimate goal of the movement was "a revival of holiness which would Christianize America; the nation and the churches could then fulfill America's redemptive mission to the whole world. The age of the Holy Spirit and a new

"complex marriage" which regarded "each woman in the group as the wife of every man and every man as the husband of every woman" and resulted in sexual promiscuity.


³ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 42-45.
millennium would be ushered in.”¹ A newspaper reporter described the attractive atmosphere of a Texas holiness camp meeting:

Whatever may be said of the beliefs of the Holiness people or of their relations to other worship, the simplicity of their nature, their profound belief in the actual presence of the Spirit of God in their midst, the intensity of their piety, and it may be safely said the integrity of their lives, make them a pleasing study and the hours spent with them are profitable ones. To escape from the arid doubts and sneers and materialism of daily life and sit among a people who whether in reality or imagination walk and talk with God, is, as if one, lost in an arid desert, should suddenly find himself on the banks of a great river amid the umbrageous shade of laughing trees and the aroma of singing flowers.²

Instantaneous sanctification

In such a diverse movement, extremes were common. Testimonies would be given such as: “I am not tempted,” “I cannot sin,” “I am infallibly saved, I cannot fall.”³ An emphasis predominated that stressed instantaneous sanctification. Attempts were made to mollify this position, by either denying complete deliverance from inbred sin⁴ or considering the general experience to be a gradual work,⁵ but they did not prevail, except within the mainline churches.⁶

³ Dieter, p. 222.
⁴ Keswick teachers opposed the possibility of being totally without sin, emphasizing sin’s presence in the sinful nature and the necessity of repeated emptyings by consecration and “fillings” with the Holy Spirit to counteract it. See Dayton, pp. 104-6; Marsden, p. 78.
⁶ Ibid., pp. 192-93.
Related to instantaneous sanctification was the stress on baptism by the Holy Spirit. Various bases for this were detailed. The Rev. Edwin Pope in 1885 distinguished between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and a "baptism of fire." His distinction became so characteristic of holiness groups that, according to Dayton, "by the mid-1890s almost every branch of the Holiness and 'higher life' movements of the [late] nineteenth century, as well as the revivalism of the period in general, was teaching a variation of some sort or another on the baptism of the Holy Spirit." In addition, because illness is the physical manifestation of sin, holiness groups began to believe that forgiveness would bring healing of the body as well as healing of the soul—a view that enjoyed favor especially in the 1880s.

In spite of their stated opposition to dividing into separate organizations, the various holiness groups gradually defined their differences more and more sharply until they separated into independent denominations during the 1880s and 1890s. It has been said that the last two decades of the nineteenth century generated more new church organizations than any other comparable period in American history.

Seventh-day Adventists warned against the holiness movement's teaching of instantaneous sanctification and its antinomian tendency. Waggoner was one who denounced it vigorously:

1 Edwin Pope, "'With fire' as well as 'with the Holy Ghost,'" Divine Life (October 1885): 95, quoted in Dayton, p. 97.

2 Dayton, pp. 107-8.

3 Ibid., pp. 122-30.

4 According to Dieter, p. 241, calls for unity were made. "A unity not in ordinances; a unity not in church government; a unity not in forms of worship; a unity not in mere letter of creed—but in . . . the baptism of the Holy Spirit."

5 Marsden, p. 95.

6 Dieter, p. 274.
The so-called "holiness" movement, which teaches instantaneous sanctification, without any change of habit on the part of the individual, is rapidly gaining ground, and Oakland is the headquarters of the delusion on this coast. . . . This modern "holiness" movement is a deception of Satan, to cause men to be satisfied with themselves while trampling on God's law.1

In an editorial, Uriah Smith charged many in the holiness advocates with believing "they may come into such a position as to be incapable of sin." They refuse to obey the fourth commandment, allegedly because they are already sanctified.

They have in their own minds something which holds a position of greater importance than the word of God. Oh! they are sanctified! they have received the blessing of sanctification! they are saved, and "saved now" (a phrase harped upon ad nauseum)! they are accepted of the Lord! they are holy! they are led by the Spirit! they are all right!

Thus they inclose themselves in an impenetrable shell of self-righteousness.

"Virtually it amounts to this," Smith concluded, "The blessing may be forfeited by disobedience; but we never disobey; certain privileges may be lost by sin; but we never sin."2

J. H. Waggoner also analyzed the doctrine of salvation held by holiness advocates.

Modern "holiness" teachers make no distinction between justification and sanctification. . . . They treat sanctification precisely as Paul treats justification. . . . They say that holiness is without works—without the deeds of the law. . . . Their ideas of the gospel of salvation are partial or one-sided. The gospel makes provision for the past and for the future. . . . For the past it absolves from sin; for the future it prevents sin.

Holiness advocates claimed to believe in obedience, but "not in holiness acquired by obedience."3 According to Waggoner, "the self-styled 'holiness' people . . . "think that all one has to do to be beyond the reach of sin is to profess to be born again."4

E. M. Aldrich, a Review and Herald correspondent, after visiting a holiness camp meeting in August 1886 at Storm Lake, Iowa, reported that fully one thousand who were in

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attendance there professed holiness, most attaining to that state during the camp meeting.

"Such exclamations as, 'I'm holy! I'm saved! I'm fully sanctified!' were heard on every hand. But when we come to measure them by the word of God," he commented, "we find they cannot stand the most simple test!"¹ Ellen White, as early as 1881, had spoken against the influence of these ideas, warning of several errors: (1) "When persons claim that they are sanctified, it is sufficient evidence that they are far from being holy"; (2) "Those who are truly sanctified will not set up their own opinion as a standard of right and wrong"; (3) "Sanctification does not consist in strong emotional feelings"; and (4) "There is no such thing as instantaneous sanctification. True sanctification is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last."²

Waggoner's Understanding of Sanctification

It is in this "Holiness" context that Waggoner articulated his understanding of sanctification. In contrast to justification, which is complete the moment faith is exercised, Waggoner insisted that "the change to holiness is a gradual work. 'Heaven is not reached at a single bound.' The work of sanctification is a progressive work."³ He emphasized this strongly in several places, directly countering the idea of "holiness now." Waggoner insisted on leaving room for sinning without excusing it.

¹ E. M. Aldrich, quoted in US, "Holiness—Peculiar," RH 63 (October 19, 1886): 648. Aldrich goes on to describe them as premillennialists, believing that the work of holiness would soon spread "until righteousness covers the whole earth," that "miracles ... will be a common occurrence," and that Christ would soon come to set up his earthly kingdom. Aldrich lamented their progress: "wherever they go, they gain their adherents. ... They push their work with great vigor, and cause great excitement wherever they go" (pp. 648-49).

² EGW, "Sanctification," RH 57 (January 18, 1881): 251. Cf. idem, The Spirit of Prophecy: The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan, vol. 4, From the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Controversy (Oakland, California: Pacific Press, 1884), 300: "Sanctification is believed by many to be instantaneously accomplished. 'Only believe,' say they, 'and the blessing is yours.' No further effort on the part of the receiver is supposed to be required."

³ EJW, "Holiness of the Angels," ST 13 (February 10, 1887): 90.
Great changes are not made instantaneously. Even though men are converted, they need instruction, since they are then but babes in the truth; and this fact shows that old habits of thought and practice cannot at once be entirely forgotten. We do not mean to intimate that the converted man has any license to sin, or any excuse for it; but pardon for sins is not sanctification; the one who has been pardoned is not perfect, but is to 'go on to perfection;' and he still needs an advocate with the Father, that his imperfections may still be pardoned and overcome.  

Waggoner's appeal for good works centered on Christ's work: "Christ has overcome the world. He has had a contest with Satan, and has come off victorious. That is our only ground of hope. Because he has overcome, we shall overcome. 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'" Love is the motivation for good works: "A person can no more love God and fail to manifest it by deeds, than he can live without breathing. . . . Salvation is indeed free, but it has cost a price beyond the comprehension even of angels, and when men begin to realize its value, they will not be anxious to avoid making sacrifices." Righteousness will make itself evident; there is no need to announce its presence.

Religion is to make men better, and if it does not accomplish this, it is of no use whatever. Nor is it necessary for the Christian to call attention to himself in order that men may see his light. If there were any necessity for this, it would argue the absence [sic] of light. . . . If a street lamp required a gong attached to it, so that people might know its location, we would say that it needed oil.

Waggoner did not limit the possibilities available for the Christian in overcoming sin. He positively stated, "It is not a question of whether we can overcome, but whether we will overcome." He objected strongly, however, to the holiness concept of the "baptism of

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3 EJW, The Honor Due to God, p. 4.

4 EJW, "How to Be Missionaries," ST 8 (December 21, 1882): 572.

the Holy Spirit by fire.” There is a baptism by fire, but it is that which will finally destroy the wicked.

Only those who are pure can dwell with the devouring fire. If they were not already pure, the fire would not purify them, but would destroy them. . . . Let no one, then, wait for fire from heaven to come and consume his evil nature. His evil nature is a part of himself, and when it dies, he must die too. . . . His evil nature must indeed be crucified, and he must be crucified with it; but far better to suffer the painful process now, in Christ, than to suffer it in person, with none to help. Better to be baptized now into Christ's death, than to be baptized in the lake of fire, from which none can rescue. Let the heart be purified by faith, purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit, and when the fire comes it will find nothing to devour.¹

What may be achieved by the Christian is not dependent upon human power, but the power of God as it is manifested in many and varied ways, including "overthrowing armies, upholding or changing the course of nature, or healing the sick and raising the dead." This power, when asked for in faith will enable him "to overcome all his faults, to endure all his trials."² Heaven, in fact, is only open to those who are victorious over all their sins.

Although eternal life is the gift of God through Christ, it will not be bestowed upon us unless we gain the victory over our sins. God could not admit us to Heaven with our sins upon us, nor could we be happy if he did. But selfishness is at the bottom of all sin (See 2 Timothy 3:1-5), and no one can enter Heaven with the least taint of it about him. Christ is our pattern.³

This last statement especially evidenced Waggoner's struggle to maintain both salvation as a free gift and its being conditional upon obedience. He still based the condition on our interests—namely, that only those who obey would be happy in heaven.

Perhaps to counter holiness advocates who emphasized salvation now, Waggoner said:

³ EJW, The Honor Due To God, p. 48.
We are really saved only when we are given the victory over death, and are made immortal in the kingdom of God. This salvation is brought to us “at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:13. But since this everlasting salvation is given only to those who overcome their sins (Revelation 3:21), we are said to be saved when we are freed from our past sins through the pardoning mercy of God. If we continue in this condition, we will receive our full salvation.¹

This confirms that, in the previous statement, when Waggoner stated that eternal life is bestowed only after victory over sin is gained he had reference to the gift of immortality at the second advent.

According to Waggoner, this obedience is possible through the very message which calls for it. “The gospel of Christ teaches obedience . . . [and] carries with it the assistance which makes it possible.” Christians may obey by “using the strength which Christ bestows.”² Man’s salvation is not a result of human power, because, “without Christ our efforts to obey God are vain struggles.” On the other hand, “with the strength which he gives we can do all things, and at last stand ‘complete in him.’”³

Such power from God is not difficult to obtain: “We are not obliged to arouse God to an interest in us, for his heart of love went out to fallen man and provided help before he asked for it.”⁴ Yet, human effort is essential to final victory: “‘Strive to enter in.’ The original is agonizesthe—agonize; put forth every effort; exert all your powers, both

³ Ibid. Cf. a statement made just one week later in, idem, “Christ the End of the Law,” ST 10 (July 24, 1884): 442. “Without him our best efforts are failures; with him to strengthen us, we can do all things; and when at last we stand before God holy and without blemish, ‘not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,’ it will be because we have been made ‘complete in him.’” EJW understood the phrase “complete in him” to include holiness resulting from Christ’s indwelling.
physical and mental; contend, as with a personal foe. . . . If the gate is so narrow, we shall have to become very small—to rid ourselves of everything that would hinder our progress."¹

Perfection

Waggoner unmistakably taught that Christians may attain to a condition of perfection in this life. Two components appeared in his discussion: (1) Perfect obedience to God's perfect law, which is a representation of Christ's character, will make a man perfect in character. (2) This perfection can only be achieved through faith which lays hold of Christ's power.

Perfect obedience yields a perfect character. Waggoner defined the standard of perfection in terms of the ten commandment law. Regarding the law's comprehensiveness, he said: "It is utterly impossible to conceive of any sin which is not forbidden by some one of the commandments."² But, in addition, they are much broader than their letter indicates. The law is perfect (Ps 19:7): "A perfect law, if kept, will form a perfect character. If a man has a perfect character, he is a perfect man, and that is all that God requires . . . of anyone."³ To keep the commandments is "to walk with God."⁴ The commandments represent "the divine ideal." Keeping them, therefore, "is the highest ideal that any man can set for

² EJW, "What Condemns Men?" ST 13 (June 30, 1887): 390. Refusal to participate in the sanctuary ritual during Old Testament times or baptism and communion during New Testament times is not sin per se; rejection of these is a refusal of pardon for sins already committed. "As Christ said, 'He that believeth not is condemned already'" (ibid.).
³ EJW, "Nature of the Law," ST 10 (June 26, 1884): 392. Cf. idem, "Condemned and Justified," ST 10 (July 3, 1884): 408: "Obedience to a perfect law must produce a perfect character, and perfection is all that can be required of anybody." See also idem, "What Condemns Men?" ST 13 (June 30, 1887): 390.
himself."\(^1\) Waggoner, in fact, equated the character of the law with the character of

Christ.

The beautiful character of Christ, 'who went about doing good,' and his life of
sweet humility, and tender, self-denying love, was due to the fact that the law of
God was in his heart. Every act of his life was simply the natural working of the
law of God. If anybody wants to know just how much is required by the ten
commandments, let him study the life of Christ. It requires no less of love and mercy
and justice than was manifested in the character of Jesus.\(^2\)

Elsewhere, Christ was described as "the law personified."\(^3\) "In his life we see a living
exemplification of the law."\(^4\)

Waggoner understood perfection in terms of the degree to which the law is written
in the heart. There is a trace of God's law in everyone, because "everybody by nature knows
something of right and wrong." But, the Spirit of God must convict of sin, since it is a
"natural tendency" to forget. Some, by yielding to the Spirit's influence, will have
"perfected" in them the "fruit of the Spirit."\(^5\) On the other hand, if a person ignores the
Spirit, "each successive sin makes an additional blot upon that copy of the law in the heart,
until, by a long course of sin, it is completely obliterated."\(^6\) The Spirit "finally ceases to

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\(^1\) EJW, "The Rich Young Ruler," ST 14 (February 10, 1888): 90. "God himself requires
no more of any man" (ibid).

\(^2\) EJW, "Notes on the International Lesson," ST 14 (January 27, 1888): 58. Cf. idem,
"Nature of the Law (Concluded)" ST 12 (January 28, 1886): 55. "The law is a transcript of
God's character, a photograph of character which is infinite in its perfection. It is his
nature represented in words, for the benefit of his creatures, so that they may know what is
required of them if they would be partakers of the divine nature."

\(^3\) EJW, "Solemn Warnings," ST 13 (September 1, 1887): 538.


\(^6\) EJW, "Judged by the Law," ST 11 (November 26, 1885): 713.
strive" with these (who are "by far the greater number") because they are "unable to see any difference between right and wrong."\(^1\)

**Perfection only through faith in Christ.** As part of sanctification, Waggoner taught that perfection is not possible through human power, nor even through the law, but only through divine power. The law itself has "no power ... to make sinful men perfect."\(^2\) Rather, it "drives the sinner to Christ that Christ may free him from his past sins and enable him to keep the law."\(^3\) Through Christ he "may attain all the perfection which the law requires."\(^4\) "They who seek righteousness in any other way than by faith will come short of it."\(^5\) With respect to character, "no man has by nature anything that is worthy of the approbation of God. ... God respects an upright character, but since there can be no perfect character except ‘through the faith of Jesus Christ,’ it is evident that his promises and favor must be extended to the one whose faith gives promise of a growth toward perfection."\(^6\)

**The Meaning of Perfection.** Waggoner mentions several biblical characters as examples of perfection, including Abraham,\(^7\) Noah,\(^8\) Enoch, Job, Zacharias, and

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3. EJW, "Brief Comments on Romans 7 (Concluded)," ST 12 (June 24, 1886): 374. See also idem, "General Review," ST 13 (December 8, 1887): 746.
Elizabeth.¹ Even so, none have equaled the example of Christ.

Of all those who have trod this earth, he alone had no sin; in him religion was revealed pure and undefiled. There have been men “of whom the world was not worthy,” and yet the record of their lives is not altogether perfect. If we should take for a model the most perfect mortal, we should be led into error.²

The good men of the Bible also “had to depend on Christ and go on unto perfection.” Their failures are recorded so that “we might learn not to look even to the best of men for an example.” The difference between Christ’s perfection and that of His followers is that Christ never sinned and man’s perfection is derived from Him.³

This state of perfection is “in one sense a passive state, in that it is an entire yielding of self to God,” but that does not mean it is “a state of inactivity.” There is to be “constant watchfulness” against Satan’s assaults. “A reaching out after God implies a drawing away from sin.”⁴ Perfection is “not a gift suddenly bestowed.” It is “a constant work,” a “state of righteousness” that is “progressive.” “The Christian can never arrive at a place beyond which there is nothing.” Waggoner understood that there would always be room for further growth and development. Otherwise the Christian “becomes satisfied with his condition, ceases to hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . and consequently becomes empty.”

It would seem that Waggoner feared that the concept of perfection could inevitably lead to an elitist, condescending attitude. That there is no stopping place in the Christian’s

¹ EJW, “Practical Thoughts on Psalm 63,” ST 12 (July 1, 1886): 390-91. Of Job, he says, “the fact that there was one such man shows that there might have been more; and if there might have been more there ought to have been more.”

² EJW, “The Apostolic Church,” ST 14 (September 21, 1888): 582-83. Also found in idem, Fathers of the Catholic Church, p. 46.

³ EJW, “The True Standard,” ST 13 (November 3, 1887): 662. “Christ is the only one who ever lived on earth who never did an act that was contrary to the law of God; and he is the only one through whom others may attain unto like perfection.”

experience mitigates the danger somewhat, but Waggoner mentioned another factor as well:

"The nearer one gets to God, the greater will seem the contrast between God and himself. If it were not so, there would come a time when he would cease to say 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,' and would ascribe worthiness to himself. That time can never come."¹ Since man may be perfect only through Christ's power, Christ alone will receive all the credit.

Those who at last stand 'without fault' before the throne of God, will be complete in Christ; and although the Lord himself will commend them before the assembled hosts of Heaven and earth, they will never commend themselves, but will ever say: 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood [not by absolving us from obedience to the law], and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever; Amen.'²

Perhaps the best overall statement of Waggoner's view of perfection is found in his exposition of 1 John 3:9, which says that the born-again person cannot sin. He opposed the "holiness" advocates who used this verse as a warrant for teaching that perfection would come instantaneously; but, aside from this, he did not dispute the concept.

From this brief study it will be seen that 1 Jn. 3:9 does call for perfect obedience. So does the whole Bible. That book makes no provision for a little sin to be retained. Christ died that he might present to himself, that is, find when he comes for it, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:27. This is the requirement. And surely if one abides in Christ, and if the word of truth by which he was turned from sin, still remains in him, it will continue to have the same effect that it had at first, and will keep him from sin. This does not mean the individual will necessarily be perfect in knowledge, nor that he will be in a position where there is nothing more to gain; but it does mean that so far as he has knowledge of the law of God he will walk in it. He will be one of the "undefiled in the way." Ps. 119:1.

Such an one will never boast of his goodness. He will be too much occupied in keeping from falling, to boast, and how will he keep from falling? "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." The more he beholds Christ, the more will he feel his own nothingness in comparison; this will beget humility; humility will beget trustfulness; and trustfulness will bring strength. Thus he will be "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," and going on from strength to strength, will at last appear in Zion before God.³

¹ EJW, "Practical Thoughts on Psalm 63," ST 12 (July 1, 1886): 391.
The very fact that our perfection depends upon Christ, is itself an encouragement that it may be attained: “Christ was unsullied by the strongest of Satan’s temptations, and if he dwells in our hearts, why may not we likewise repel all of Satan’s advances?”

How to attain perfection

Waggoner believed that the greatest obstacle to overcoming sin is one’s attitude toward it. The prayer “lead us not into temptation” “implies a renunciation and hatred of sin, and a desire to have the heart cleansed from it.” The Christian must be strengthened against sin so that it does not “pass the shield of faith, and gain access to the heart.” Being freed from the guilt of sin is not enough; “we must be freed from the love of sin.” With directness and insight, Waggoner pinpointed a common failing:

Instead of having an intense desire and longing for righteousness, we are simply passively willing to have righteousness. We ask the Lord to help us overcome some sin, with a mental reservation that we may indulge in it once in a while. We don’t like to say, “I hate the sins that made thee mourn.” Hate seems too strong a word; we still cherish a secret love for the sin. We want (so we think) to be righteous, and yet we feel loth [sic] to part with that darling sin. That is very far from hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Such halfway desire will never result in anything except final defeat.

Meditation on God’s word is the only way “whereby we may be kept from sin.” On the other hand, “anything different from the Bible, or that is not contained therein will tend to imperfection.” If a belief or practice is not endorsed or sanctioned by the Bible, that

1 EJW, “Practical Thoughts on Psalm 63,” ST 12 (July 1, 1886): 390. Cf. idem, “The Lord’s Prayer: The Doxology,” ST 14 (August 17, 1888): 502. “We should be able to resist all evil, and to keep it out of our hearts. But how can we do this, seeing we are weak? Why, God will strengthen us with might by his Spirit. . . . What confidence we may have when we remember that God’s honor and glory are pledged to the support of those who trust him. What excuse can we have for not overcoming?”


3 EJW, “Practical Thoughts on Psalm 63,” ST 12 (July 1, 1886): 390.

4 EJW, “Importance of Bible Study,” BE 3 (June 1888): 83.
fact "is sufficient to condemn it."¹ But perfect teaching alone does not guarantee perfection unless it is followed.²

Human effort is also an indispensable element in practicing righteousness. Even though a duty is irksome, we must "do it faithfully and make ourselves do it." Once we so choose, "God will give us grace to find in it our highest pleasure." But at every point, the will must be freely exercised.

If God should transform us into the divine image, by an act of his mighty power, we would not be the gainers thereby, for we would be liable to fall with the first temptation that presented itself; and if, having transformed us, he should keep us in that condition by the same power, we would be mere machines. God designs that we shall work out our own salvation, in order that we may have a moral character of our own; he will give us assistance, without which we can do nothing, yet we must do the work ourselves.³

The Significance of Christ's Humanity

An essential part of the plan of salvation, according to Waggoner, was Christ's assumption of man's human nature. This was necessary to Christ's vicarious atonement as well as to His life as our example.

Christ's bearing of sin

Jesus saves us from sin and its penalty. But, in order to do this, "he had to put himself in the exact condition of those whom he would save... He came not to redeem angels but man [Heb. 2:17 quoted]." On the basis of Gal 4:4, Waggoner said that Christ "was made 'in all things' like those whom he came to redeem." Waggoner continued:

Some one may exclaim, "What! do you think that Christ was a sinner?" By no means; he was in all points tempted "like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15); he was absolutely good, the embodiment of goodness, yet he was counted as a sinner...
[2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:6 quoted]. He bore the sins of the world as though they were his own. If it were not so, he would not have died. . . . And herein is the unspeakable love of Christ, that the innocent should assume the crimes of the guilty, and die in his stead.

This is the only way humanity could be redeemed. “In order to save those who, on account of having violated the law, were under the condemnation of death, Christ put himself in their place and suffered the penalty of the law.”¹

Christ’s human nature

More than merely bearing the penalty of sin from birth, Christ also bore our nature with its liability to sin. He took upon himself “the same bonds” that we have.

The spotless Son of God took upon himself the form of a servant of sin, and consented to be covered with the same degradation into which man had plunged himself. What for? “That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Cor. 5:21. In order that we might be made without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27),—perfectly conformable to the holy Law of God; and that thus being enabled, in Christ, to keep the commandments, we might through him have eternal life. Matt. 19:17.²

It was necessary “for Christ to assume the condition of those whom he would redeem. . . .

Christ redeems none who occupy a position different from that which he took.”³

At the same time, Waggoner was careful to stress Christ’s uniqueness in that He was sinless. “If there had been the least trace of sin in him, he could not have been manifested to take away our sin, and we could not in him attain to the perfect righteousness of God. . . . he asked ‘Which of you convinceth me of sin?’ John 8:46. It will not do to say that Jesus was one

¹ EJW, “Under the Law (Concluded),” ST 10 (September 18, 1884): 569. He reiterated this two years later in “Comments on Galatians 3. No. 2,” ST 12 (July 15, 1886): 422. “It was absolutely necessary that Christ should be made in all respects like those whom he would redeem. Heb. 2:17. He came to save sinners; therefore, he was counted as a sinner.”


³ Ibid. See also EJW, “A New Creature in Christ,” ST 10 (July 17, 1884): 425: “God made Christ (the sinless one) to be sin for us. He was made in all things ‘like unto his brethren,’ and that means not simply as to the outward, physical frame, but that he bore sin, just as we do. The sins that he bore were not his own, but ours.”

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jot below divine perfection."¹ On His divine side, Jesus was "absolutely good; the perfection and embodiment of goodness." Christ is God and "partakes of the divine attributes. . . . He was never on probation, as a candidate for life, as are all created beings, but has 'life in himself' (John 5:26), being the creator of all things." In addition, the oneness that exists between the Father and the Son is that "of two distinct individuals having the same thoughts, the same purposes, the same attributes. . . . They never worked at cross purposes."² That Christ was sinless in His humanity is not contradictory to Waggoner's belief that Christ assumed the nature of those he came to redeem. Waggoner could affirm that Jesus inherited the same nature which every child of Adam inherits, since he believed God condemns people because of their sinful choices, not because they inherit a sinful nature (see above, pp. 10-13).

It was on the basis that Christ lived a sinless life in human nature that Waggoner called for Christ's life to be seen in his followers. "We must remember that it was as a man that Christ endured the temptations of Satan, and the mockings and persecutions of his enemies. He took upon himself 'the form of a servant;' in all things he was 'made like unto his brethren.' He came to show that it is possible for man to resist temptation, and to overcome."³ It was through faith that Christ "came off unscathed in his contest with Satan." In the same way, the Christian who holds up the shield of faith to block the assaults of Satan "will keep himself untouched."⁴

² EJW, "An Important Question," ST 10 (June 19, 1884): 377. Cf. idem, "Immortality of Angels," ST 13 (February 17, 1887): 107: "Whatever attributes belong to the Father, belong also to the Son."
Christ as our pattern

Christians are to have Christ as their model: "We must be like Christ if we would inherit the kingdom of God."\(^1\) We must come to Christ that we may be changed into "the same image, having like him, the law of God completely formed" in the heart.\(^2\) Waggoner often referred to Christ as "our pattern."\(^3\)

Unfortunately, many Christians look to other believers for their pattern. Waggoner likened the result to a schoolboy in penmanship who copies his teacher's line of writing, repeating it over and over, but looking more and more at his own lines and less and less at the copy. Then,

by the time he is halfway down the page he is following, not the master's beautifully written copy, but his own scarcely legible scrawl, and each line is a little worse than the one preceding it. Those lines are fitting emblem of the lives of those who follow the learners in the school of Christ, instead of following only the life of the great Master himself.\(^4\)

Only "Christ is the perfect pattern. . . . He 'did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' 1 Peter 2:22. This was because the law was in his heart. Psa. 40:8. Then if we would walk 'uprightly,' as Christ walked, we must also have the law of God in our hearts."\(^5\)

The law requires a life like Christ's and "if perfect obedience to the law's requirements makes a man like Christ, then certainly the law will condemn the one whose life is not like Christ's."\(^6\) This was also seen in the context of Christ's return. "It is not only

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1 EJW, The Honor Due to God, p. 56.
3 E. g., EJW, "The Apostolic Church (Concluded)," ST 14 (September 28, 1888): 598; idem, The Honor Due to God, p. 48.
4 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
the privilege but the duty of all to be like Christ, so that when he sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, he may rejoice to see his own image reflected in us, that when he shall appear we may be able to see him as he is.”

The Two Covenants

Much of what Waggoner believed concerning salvation can be summarized in his understanding of the two covenants. Under the old covenant, he said, the people of Israel explicitly agreed to keep the law of God, by which sin is known. But the Jews “had already broken the law many times, and were sinful by nature, so that it was utterly impossible for them, in their own strength, to yield perfect obedience to it.” In the old covenant there was “no provision for forgiveness for sins. It was ratified by the blood of beasts, which could never take away sin.” “Only the perfect can have life, and their ministration made nothing perfect.” Therefore, if the people trusted to their obedience, they would find only condemnation and death. This does not mean that forgiveness was unavailable: “Sins were forgiven (Lev. 4:26, 31, 35), and this forgiveness was real, but it was obtained solely by virtue of faith in the promised sacrifice of Christ, and not because of anything in the old covenant [Heb. 9:15 quoted].”

The new covenant also enjoined obedience to God’s law, according to Waggoner, but it rests on better promises than the old covenant. It promises cleansing from sin “by securing the remission of past sins (Rom. 3:24, 25), and enabling us to walk in harmony with the law.

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3 EJW, “Under the Law (Concluded),” ST 12 (June 3, 1886): 326.
5 EJW, “Exposition of 2 Cor. 3:7-11,” ST 13 (June 2, 1887): 327.
Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 13:20, 21.1 In saying thus, Waggoner, as we saw earlier, never separated forgiveness from obedience; he considered both forgiveness and obedience integral to the new covenant. In this covenant "there is forgiveness of sins, and the blotting out of transgressions. More than this, the law is to be written in the hearts of the people, and that means that they will be enabled to keep it perfectly. See Ps. 40:8. This work is done by Christ. Through him pardon is secured, and he enables us to be made the righteousness of God.2 "Christ is the minister of the new covenant (Heb. 8:1, 2) and is now performing the ministration in the true sanctuary in heaven. Heb. 9:24." However, "the letter" of the new covenant kills because "holding the mere letter of the new covenant,—the performance of the gospel ordinances while not receiving Christ in the heart,—is really a rejection of Christ. . . . If the ministration which could not cleanse from sin, was glorious, the ministration of the Spirit, which gives freedom from sin, must be more glorious."3

The only difference between the two covenants, that Waggoner saw, is that the first did not include pardon for sin, or the writing of the law on the heart. Of the new covenant, Waggoner wrote:

this covenant makes it possible to arrive at perfection, for that is what is meant by the writing of the law in the heart. Forgiveness of sins is an instantaneous work, but the writing of the law in the heart is a progressive work, the work of a lifetime.

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1 Ibid., p. 328. Cf. idem, "God's Covenant With Israel," ST 14 (June 22, 1888): 379. "It provided forgiveness for transgression of the law concerning which the covenant was made, and also help to keep the law."

2 EJW, "Under the Law (Concluded)," ST 12 (June 3, 1886): 326.

3 EJW, "Exposition of 2 Cor. 3:7-11," ST 13 (June 2, 1887): 328.
When the law is fully written in the heart, then the individual is indeed sanctified; he is like Christ (Psa. 40:8), and is ready for translation.¹

**Selected Aspects of Waggoner’s Eschatology**

**Sanctuary Theology**

The sanctuary on earth, which typified the sanctuary in heaven, made an important contribution to Waggoner’s eschatology. In Christ’s one sacrifice, all the animal sacrifices “found their complete fulfillment.”² In contrast to the then-dominant Adventist views of the atonement, Waggoner considered the cross to be more than just the preparation for an atoning work in heaven; it was at the cross that the work of atonement began.

However, Waggoner strongly denounced the idea that the whole atonement was made and completed on the cross.³ Christ was the antitype of the paschal lamb; at the death of Christ, when the veil was rent in the earthly temple, type met antitype and the work of atonement was, from then on, to be carried forward in heaven.⁴ The sanctuary in heaven is the true tabernacle of which the sanctuary “built by Moses was only a miniature

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¹ EJW, “Bondage and Freedom,” _ST_ 11 (September 3, 1885): 538. Cf. EGW’s similar view in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372: “The terms of the ‘old covenant’ were, Obey and live: ‘If a man do, he shall even live in them’ (Ezekiel 20:11; Leviticus 18:5); but ‘cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.’ Deuteronomy 27:26. 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.” “Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth ‘the fruits of the Spirit.’ Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked.”


³ In discussing the type, EJW said the sacrifice “was only the preparation for the atonement.” He used slightly different terminology for Christ’s sacrifice; e.g., “The atonement was only begun and was not completed on the cross” (ibid).

representation.” The ark and the mercy seat “were a representation of God’s throne,” the decalogue being the “foundation,” i.e., “the basis of God’s Government.”¹

Not only the earthly building and its sacrifices foreshadowed New Testament realities, but also the ministry during each year of service “was a type of the whole gospel dispensation. The day of atonement, closing the year of sanctuary service, was a type of the general judgment, closing the period of human probation.”² Waggoner, however, considered the Old Testament services to provide only a “figurative atonement.”³

Christ’s Work in Heaven

Waggoner did not describe Christ’s work in heaven in much detail, but when he did touch on it, he did so in terms of its purpose and its effect on believers. In answer to a reader who had heard a professed Adventist say that there is no need for Christ to intercede for us in heaven, and that “it belittles the character of God to suppose that he could be influenced to change his decision by the intercession of Christ,” Waggoner replied:

However confident others may be of their power to stand and plead their own case before God, we are glad for the promise that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” ¹John 2:1. [1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:24; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25 also quoted.] These texts plainly teach that man has an advocate; that that advocate is Christ; and that he is now making intercession for us. To call his intercession puerile and unnecessary is simply blasphemy.

Man is unable to properly present his own case. There is nothing that would recommend him to God, for he has forfeited all claim upon his mercy. God cannot look upon sin with any allowance. . . . A just God could not endure a sinful being in his presence, even to beg for mercy. Therefore we now have to come to God through the intercession of Christ. . . . Christ is the sinner’s only hope.⁴

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¹ EJW, “The Sure Foundation,” ST 11 (October 8, 1885): 601. In idem, “The Oracles of God,” ST 14 (March 9, 1888): 151, “judgment and justice” are also said to be the foundation.

² EJW, “Cut Off from Among His People,” ST 13 (June 30, 1887): 391 (italics supplied).


Based on Zech 6:13, Waggoner described Christ's heavenly ministry in terms of a "counsel of peace": "this presents a wonderful scene,—the Father and the Son counseling together for the peace of mankind." But while God does not want any to perish, "he will not force men to repent and become reconciled." On the other hand, those who respond to Christ's work in their behalf will enjoy in reality what was symbolized by the "Jewish tabernacle and temple service [which] was a type of Christ's service in the real work of taking away sin." Whoever comes to Christ will "find pardon for his sins, and have them finally blotted out." The last statement suggests that pardon is not the same as the blotting out of sins and that the latter takes place in connection with Christ's closing work of atonement in heaven.

Waggoner definitely believed forgiveness to be conditional, subject to the "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844. In his published lectures at Healdsburg College, the following questions and answers appear:

154. Is there a cleansing work performed for the heavenly sanctuary? Heb. 9:23.
155. When was this work of cleansing the Sanctuary to commence? Dan. 8:14; in 1844. See questions on Daniel 9.
156. Since the Jewish temple was destroyed in A. D. 70, to what must this cleansing have reference? ANS.—To the heavenly Sanctuary.

"Failure to accept the gospel," as revealed in the earthly sanctuary services, left the individual "to bear his sins, and it was for those sins that he was cut off, "not for refusing pardon. Thus it is, when the final judgment closes, that "the finally impenitent . . . are found with their sins upon them."

4 EJW, Bible Readings, No. 1, p. 32; cf. ibid., pp. 24-25.
5 EJW, "Cut Off from Among His People," ST 13 (June 30, 1887): 391.
Furthermore, on the basis of the type, Waggoner concluded that the antitypical day
of atonement involves a work of "investigative judgment." He wrote:

We have seen that there was a distinction made on the day of atonement,—
some were counted worthy to have their sins blotted out, and some were cut off from
the people,—then what else must the day of atonement be? ANS.—An
investigative judgment.¹

Those who refused to participate in the humiliation of heart required on the day of
atonement were put to death, "just as will be done to those who, at the close of the real
Judgment, shall be found impenitent." "Thus the type of the real work connected with the
sanctuary in Heaven was completed."² This work of cleansing the sanctuary "must all be
completed before the coming of the Lord" on the basis of 1 Cor 15:51, 52.³

The Investigative Judgment

Issues of chronology

A critical question that must be answered regarding Waggoner's eschatology relates
to the time for the commencement of the final judgment. From the beginning, Seventh-day
Adventists have held that in 1844 there began a pre-advent, investigative judgment to
determine or reveal who are to be saved and who lost. Sometimes, however, Waggoner's
statements were not always clear as to the time for the commencement of the judgment. Even
in this early period from 1882 to 1888 they are liable to misunderstanding if not read in the
light of all that he wrote on the subject.

On occasion, Waggoner placed the judgment at the time of the second advent. In

Prophetic Lights he stated:

¹ EJW, Bible Readings, No. 1, p. 33.
² EJW, "Cut Off from Among His People," ST 13 (June 30, 1887): 391 (italics supplied).
³ EJW, Bible Readings, No. 1, p. 33.
We are all here expecting the Judge soon to come to decide our eternal destiny. The position we occupy when he comes will determine our fate. If we are humbly working, he will say “Well done, good and faithful servant.” If we are striving with one another, instead of against sin, he will say, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

In this passage, certainly, there is no hint of a judgment before Christ’s return. Elsewhere, Waggoner stressed a judgment at the second advent, contradicting the popular notion that judgment occurs at death. Heb 9:27 says it comes after death. (Waggoner admitted, however, that in this text “how long after the death of any man the Judgment will take place is not stated.”) He continued:

the fact that all are to be judged at one time is evident from the statement that God has “appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world.” Acts 17:31. Paul tells us, also, that the Lord will judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.‘ 2 Tim. 4:1. And the coming of Christ is at “the end of the world.” Matt. 24:3. These Scriptures, which are but samples, show that the dead will not be judged before the living are judged, and that the judgment of all takes place at the end of the world.

In addition, Waggoner observed, the parable of the wheat and tares and the parable of the fishnet in Matt 13:40-49 teach that both good and bad people will live together in the world “until the final judgment” and in the church “until they shall be separated by the decisions of the Judgment.” In both parables this segregation occurs at the second advent. In an examination of 2 Tim 4:1, 2, Waggoner remarked: “Here, then, we find when the judgment is to take place: in connection with the coming of Christ.” The dead will not be judged until then; consequently, that is when they will receive their reward.

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1 EJW, Prophetic Lights, p. 134.
2 EJW, “The Logical Outcome,” ST 14 (March 23, 1888): 183 (brackets in original). Cf. idem, “Baptism for the Dead,” ST 14 (May 4, 1888): 263. “So far as a man is concerned, the next thing for him after death, is the Judgment. Death ends every man’s probation; it is as though he were brought immediately before the Judgment seat.”
In other statements, however, Waggoner clearly placed an investigative judgment prior to Christ’s return.

In the seventh chapter of Daniel, verses 9, 10, there is a graphic word picture of the judgment in Heaven, which will determine who are worthy to be raised from the dead, or to be translated when the Lord comes. As soon as the judgment is over, Christ will receive his kingdom.¹

Christ does not receive his kingdom until just before he returns to this earth, and he receives it not from men but from the Father. See Dan. 7:13, 14; 12:1. The first of these passages, with the context, unmistakably refers to the last great Judgment, and it is at the close of this that Christ appears before the Father to receive “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.” The latter text . . . says that when Michael shall stand up, that is, take his kingdom, there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time, and at that time every one of God’s people shall be delivered. This time is yet in the future.²

The 2300 days of Dan. 8, at the close of which the Sanctuary was to be cleansed, expired in 1844. Nothing of that chapter remains yet to be fulfilled except the great consummation of all things.³

Waggoner was able seemingly to have it both ways—judgment before the advent and at the advent. It is possible that he had in mind two separate phases of the judgment; but, at least in his published works, he did not so distinguish them.

Sometimes, Waggoner referred to an executive judgment at the advent, thereby perhaps explaining some of his ambiguous statements. An example is found in an article entitled, “Judged By the Law”:

There will be a time when Christ will come as a judge to execute sentence upon the ungodly, but the sentence he will execute will be that which has been pronounced as the result of judging men’s acts by the law [a possible reference to a pre-advent judgment]. Now, however, Christ is our Advocate, and those who would escape his wrath when he comes as Judge, should accept the pardon for past sins, which God so freely offers through him, and then, through continued faith in him,

¹ EJW, Prophetic Lights, p. 167.
live so that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, even as it shone out in his spotless character.¹

Another possible explanation for Waggoner's placement of the judgment both before and at Christ's return is found in his view of the second advent as a process of events, rather than as a point in time. He likened it to the first advent, which covered "the whole time of Christ's earthly ministry." Likewise with the second advent:

There are many events spoken of as taking place when the Lord comes, such as the resurrection of "all that are in the graves" (John 5:28), the translation of the righteous, and the punishment of the wicked with everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:7-9). But we know that the resurrection of the wicked, and their final destruction does not take place until a thousand years after the translation of the righteous. We therefore say that the "second coming of Christ," with all its attendant phenomena, is not an instantaneous event taking in simply the moment of his first appearing in the clouds of heaven, but one which, like his first advent, covers a period of time.²

On those occasions where Waggoner spoke of the judgment as occurring at the second advent, it appears then that he had in mind either the execution of the decisions already rendered, or the idea of a "period of time" which included the investigative judgment. The only other alternative would be to suggest that his theology was hopelessly confused—an insufficient explanation in view of Waggoner's thoroughly logical and reasoned expositions on other subjects.

The basis of judgment

Waggoner occasionally referred to records kept in heaven that would ultimately be used in the heavenly assize. Citing Mal 3:16, he said that the Lord records the testimonies

¹ EJW, "Judged by the Law," ST 14 (June 8, 1888): 342.
² EJW, "Shaking of the Powers of Heaven," ST 10 (September 18, 1884): 569. Cf. idem, GG, p. 43: "The wicked are not punished until after the close of the 1000 years; yet they are said to be punished at the coming of the Lord. And so they are; for the second advent, like the first, covers a period of time. The first advent covered all the time of his earthly ministry; the second advent covers all the time from the appearance of 'the sign of the Son of man in heaven,' until the wicked are destroyed out of the earth."
of only those who truly reverence Him. A “record” is kept of vows made to God, even those that are “not uttered,” which “God will surely require . . . of us.” God keeps an account of our stewardship; “and although it may be after a long time, he will surely reckon with his servants.” No one should offer excuses now “that he would be ashamed to offer at the Judgment.” Those who make them “will have to meet them at the last day.”

The standard against which these records will be measured is God’s law, which is the same as “his own perfect righteousness.” People are not judged by the gospel. “The gospel cannot at the same time save and condemn. . . . The gospel brings pardon, on condition of belief in Christ. But a pardon cannot condemn. . . . Condemnation comes from evil deeds—sin.” The person is judged, not by the gospel, but by the law he transgresses. However, not all are judged by the full extent of the law. Since the heathen “did not have the written law,” that law, “in its wondrous breadth, is not brought against them in the Judgment; they are judged simply by as much of the law as they had, and this alone is sufficient to condemn them.” For example, in the case of a murderer, “the law will take cognizance . . . only of the actual murder which he committed when he knew that he ought not to kill, and will not bring before him the envy and jealousy, which, in the absence of the written word, he perhaps did not recognize as being wrong.” On the other hand, “the professed Christian

1 EJW, The Honor Due to God, pp. 49-50.
2 Ibid., p. 54.
3 Ibid., p. 30.
5 EJW, “Is It A Sin?” ST 8 (October 5, 1882): 452.
who indulges in anger or harbors evil thoughts, is as guilty before God as the benighted heathen who kills and eats his enemy.\footnote{Ibid.}

As a result of the foregoing, Waggoner concluded that in order to successfully stand in the judgment, a person must be pure, even in his thoughts.

Who is the one, then, who can ask the Lord to consider his meditation, and who will not be put to shame in the Judgment? It is he whose delight is in the law of the Lord, in which he meditates day and night. It is he whose works are committed to the Lord, and whose thoughts are consequently established. It is he who is pure in heart. What a blessed condition does that man occupy, who can rejoice in the thought that the pure and holy God knows all his thoughts and approves them.\footnote{EJW, "Words and Thoughts," ST 13 (May 19, 1887): 295.}

Even now he is at the door; his foot is upon the threshold, and his hand is upon the latch. Who, realizing this, can harbor resentment in his heart? Suppose the Judge should open the door, and find us in the act of smiting our fellow-servants! Surely this thought is enough to cause us to "live soberly, righteously, and godly."\footnote{EJW, Prophetic Lights, p. 134.}

The white robes, which alone can enable a person to stand in the judgment, represent a life free from sin:

(1) No one can keep the commandments without the help of Christ, whose blood cleanses from sin; and (2) no one can stand, having his robes white, without being a doer of the commandments; for it is sin that defiles, and if one should break the commandments his robes would not be white.\footnote{EJW, "The Old Is Better," ST 13 (April 14, 1887): 230.}

\textit{Blotting out of sins}

Waggoner, in addition to understanding the forgiveness of sins as conditional, held that sins would be blotted out only after the judgment had concluded. "Many commentators . . . think that the blotting out of sins immediately follows repentance and conversion; but the teaching of the Bible is plainly to the effect that the blotting out of sins is the last work before the coming of the Lord." He went on to say: "Our sins are now forgiven, but only on
condition that we continue to walk in newness of life. If we fall away, then our former sins will come up against us in the Judgment.”¹

Waggoner did stress, however, that this forgiveness is real, not just a form, and was so even during Old Testament times. He added:

But while their sins were forgiven in fact, they were blotted out only in figure. Even . . . the sins of men now living, although forgiven, have not yet been blotted out. The exhortation to us is, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” Acts 3:19.²

The parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt 18:23-35) was also seen by Waggoner to be evidence that sins are not blotted out at the time a person is forgiven. In 1888, he wrote:

The parable shows that God forgives upon conditions. His pardon is on condition that we really and humbly desire it, and that we continue in the same humility. The sin is not blotted out as soon as it is pardoned. If it were, God could not deal with us as the king did with his servant. The merit of Christ's blood is set down opposite the sins of the one who is forgiven, and if it remains there until “the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19), they will be blotted out. But if the forgiven one shows by his actions that he is unworthy of the grace of Christ, and attempts by his evil course to make Christ the minister of sin, then the favor is withdrawn, and he stands face to face with his sin, the same as though he had never been forgiven. He will then be required to pay all that he owes to the Lord, which will be impossible; for he is not able to even live uprightly and do his duty for the future, and he has behind him a debt, to meet which he has nothing. He must then be eternally a debtor, and must receive eternal punishment.³

Yet, in the midst of this discussion, Waggoner could stress the reality and joy of forgiveness:

“How wonderful is the love of God, which provides free pardon for all! Who can fail to allow the goodness of God to lead him to a thorough repentance?”⁴

² EJW, “Forgiveness; Real, not Figurative,” ST 12 (March 18, 1886): 168.
⁴ Ibid.
Closing of the judgment

Waggoner emphasized that forgiveness is available now, even during the time of judgment, but added that once the judgment concludes it will be too late to find pardon.

The benefits of this sacrifice are now free to all who will accept it, while Jesus is pleading its merits before the Father. But when he comes “the second time,” it will be “without sin;” he will then no longer act as substitute for sinners; no longer will he assume any responsibility in their behalf. The sins of the righteous will have been blotted out, and those of the impenitent rolled back upon their own heads.¹

There will be no future probation for anyone: “since men have but one life,—one probation,—which ends in their death, so Christ was only once offered. His offering had reference only to men in this present life.” The only way anyone could have a second chance is if “Christ should again take upon himself their sins and make another sacrifice.”²

According to Waggoner, the close of the judgment and of human probation is not set arbitrarily by God. The time comes when the “counsel of peace between the Father and the Son” ceases and the “word of reconciliation” is no longer preached “because all will have become reconciled to God, who could by any possibility be reconciled.” It follows from such a statement that God has not fixed a time when the judgment will end; there is no cosmic clock counting down the hours before Christ will come. Any delay of the second advent is the result of human indecision. Even if God were to grant a second probation, no decisions would be changed: “Hearts could not fail to be melted into tenderness by the tender, unfathomable love of God, if they did not steel themselves against it. And so, when even infinite love fails to reconcile the rebellious subjects, there is nothing left but to cut them off as useless


² Ibid.
cumberers of the ground." 1 Waggoner posed this question: "Now what would be the result if . . . God should grant the wicked another probation?" His reply was that both revelation and experience show that they would be worse than they ever were before . . . The reason for this is that God never cuts off any sinner while his heart is tender; and when his heart has ceased to be tender, nothing but terrible judgments can make any impression upon him, and the only impression they can make is that of cowardly fear. 2

Preparation for Christ's Return

The second coming of Christ is a dominant theme in Waggoner's writings. 3 Waggoner often stressed its nearness. Referring to Christ's statement in Matt 24:14 that the gospel of the kingdom would be proclaimed as a witness to all nations and then the end would come, Waggoner asserted:

The Reformation begun by Luther and others was to go on until the work of reformation should culminate in the Third Angel's Message, which should bring the gospel of the kingdom to all nations; and when all the world had received the warning message, and the whole earth had been lightened with its glory, then should the end come.

This prophecy has nearly reached its complect fulfillment. 4

On the basis of fulfilled prophecies such as the "the 1260 years of papal supremacy" and "the falling of the stars" in 1833, Waggoner concluded that the advent was very near. 5 In fact, he believed Christ's promise that "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled," referred to those who saw the stars fall: "Before this generation passes away the Lord will come, and the work of warning the world will have been completed." 6

3 A series of seven articles, among others on this topic, appeared in ST from July 3 to September 4, 1884.
6 EJW, "Items from the General Conference," ST 12 (December 2, 1886): 726-27.
It is a mistaken notion, according to Waggoner, that the whole world will be converted; “God does not ask the church to do impossibilities.” The problem is that people expect “more of the gospel than the Lord ever said it would do. He said (Matt. 24:14) that it should be preached in all the world for a witness.” God was “perfectly willing and anxious that all should be converted,” but “knew that many would remain stubborn and rebellious.” All that is necessary for the gospel to accomplish its work is for all men to hear it “in its purity.” Thus it will be “a witness to all men.” Such preaching will cause a clear division:

The world has not yet arrived at that sate of wickedness described by our Saviour. It is the faithful preaching of the word that will call out the few that will turn to God, and harden the others in rebellion. The preaching of the truth always causes a division. Luke 12:52, 53. And when the word shall have been preached in all the world, separating men into the two classes, “then shall the end come.” It is for this alone that the coming of the Lord now waits.

The purity of those who present the gospel is also involved in this “witness.”

The work of the church is to hold forth the word of life; and it can do that only by being blameless and harmless. For while the truth of God is a light, the members of the church are not merely to hold that word forth in their hands, but are to let it shine forth from themselves, so that they themselves shall be light.

A “complete preparation” for Christ’s coming requires “a strict observance of the ten commandments (with divine assistance)” and acceptance of “the message of the third angel.” The kingdom of grace “saves men from the guilt and the love of sin, clothing them

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2 EJW, “Lesson for the Pacific Coast (Mt. 24; Lk. 21)” ST 10 (July 24, 1884): 438.
3 Ibid.
7 EJW, The Honor Due to God, p. 60.
with the divine nature, so that when the Lord shall come in his glory, they may be clothed upon with immortality, *which will then be the only thing lacking.* ¹ The only change God performs in his people at the second advent is the vanquishing of mortality.

He does not change men's characters from sinfulness to righteousness, for just before he comes the decree goes forth: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Rev. 22:11. Men will be ushered into eternity with just the same characters that they have when probation closes. Those who inhabit the new earth will all be righteous, simply because the transgressors will have been rooted out of it (Prov. 2:22), and the perfect will be permitted to remain in it. They will be permitted to remain in it, just because they are perfect in the midst of unrighteousness, even as Noah was.²

Waggoner explained the apparent delay in Christ's return by saying that God is "waiting for us to get ready" by casting off "the works of darkness," and by putting on "the armor of light, knowing that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand."³ Christ returns only for those who believe His coming is near, because no others will "be getting ready for it."⁴

Waggoner had no delusions that it would be easy to obey God in earth's final hour. In fact, "in the last days, more than any other, it will be the most natural thing in the world to do wrong, and extremely difficult, and out of the ordinary course of things, for one to do right."⁵ But a "remnant" will remain faithful to God, having kept "the commandments of

¹ EJW, "Salvation—Present and Future," ST 14 (May 25, 1888): 310 (italics supplied). EJW believed that the character of those who are wicked would be developed to a similar degree in the opposite direction, by the time probation closes. Idem, "Conciliation and Controversy," ST 14 (June 29, 1888): 391. "When by continued sin, and repeated resistance of the Spirit of God, they have finally driven it [God's Spirit] from them, have blotted out every thought of good, upon which the Holy Spirit could work, then they are wholly Satan's, actuated solely by his wicked spirit."


God and the faith of Jesus,—the sum of all the instruction necessary to make 'the remnant of Israel' a pure people, prepared for the coming of the Lord."¹

The 1888 Minneapolis General Conference Session

Issues Leading up to the Debate

Historical Context

As mentioned above, the issues of this historic conference began at least two and a half years earlier. Articles penned by Waggoner in The Youth's Instructor and The Signs of the Times aroused George I. Butler's opposition. A. T. Jones, a close colleague of Waggoner's, also aroused antagonism—in his case from Uriah Smith—regarding the identity of the ten horns of Dan 7.² As we have seen, Waggoner held that the term "under the law" always refers to the state of being condemned by the moral law. In Galatians this view led to some conclusions that were unpalatable to Butler, who preferred to think that, in Galatians at least—though not in other passages such as Rom 6:14—"under the law" denotes being under the authority of the ceremonial law.³

¹ EJW, "The End Approaching," ST 12 (December 23, 1886): 774. Cf. idem, "Light and Darkness," ST 9 (January 4, 1883), pp. 7-8: "In the beginning man obeyed the will of his Maker perfectly. If he is ever to be restored to his original position, he must be as fully conformed to the divine will, must walk in the light as at first. And thus we read: 'The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.' Zeph. 3:13."

² ATJ held that the Alamanni were among the ten, whereas US preferred the Huns. See Knight, p. 35.

³ GIB sincerely thought his interpretation predominated. In LG (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Publishing House, 1886), he estimated that "at least two thirds of our ministers hold the latter opinion," while recognizing that EJW's view predominated "in the early history of the [Adventist] work" (p. 3). On the other hand, besides the fact that J. N. Andrews (The Two Covenants [Battle Creek, Michigan: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1875]) held EJW's view, in the 1880s some published the view that "the curse of the law" in Gal 3:13 refers to the moral law. See W. H. Glenn, "The Doctrine of Christ," ST 10 (August 28, 1884): 515, and R. F. Cottrell, "The Curse of the Law," ST 12 (June 10, 1886): 339. In LG, pp. 40-41, GIB himself felt compelled to concede this, but he did not think this damaged his theory very much.
E. J. Waggoner was one of the delegates from the California conference to the 1886 General Conference session held in Oakland. Apparently, Butler had decided that this was the time to rein in Waggoner. Butler prepared a pamphlet entitled, *The Law in the Book of Galatians: Is It the Moral Law or Does It Refer to That System of Laws Peculiarly Jewish?* and distributed it among the delegates. In addition, a “theological committee” was set up to investigate certain doctrinal issues, primary among them being Waggoner’s view of Galatians.1 Besides Waggoner and Butler, the other members of this committee were S. N. Haskell, D. M. Canright, J. H. Morrison, U. Smith, M. C. Wilcox, B. L. Whitney, and Wm. Covert, a total of nine.2 A resolution formulated by the committee and approved by the full session condemned the promulgation of variant doctrinal views.

1. Where as, Both the Holy Scriptures and the testimonies of the Spirit represent that unity in the work of God is of paramount importance, setting forth at the same time the grand truth that this message is designed to lead to the unity of the faith; and—

2. Where as, If this object is to be attained, it is necessary that it be kept constantly in view in our educational institutions and in our periodicals, and that we avoid as far as possible the agitation, in a public manner, of those questions concerning which there may be from any cause a difference of opinion among ourselves, and also avoid the introduction of points of doctrine contrary to the established faith of the body, before they are carefully considered by our leading brethren; therefore—

2. Resolved, That this Conference earnestly recommend that the official boards of our schools, our Sabbath-school authorities, and the editors of our papers exercise great care not to permit doctrinal views not held by a fair majority of our people to be made a part of the public instruction of said schools, or to be published in our denominational papers, as if they were the established doctrines of this people, before they are examined and approved by the leading brethren of experience.3

Butler doubtless considered this a major victory. The reference to “our educational institutions and ... our periodicals,” was clearly directed at Waggoner and A. T. Jones, who

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3 US, “General Conference Proceedings: Twenty-Fifth Annual Session (Concluded),” *RH* 63 (December 14, 1886): 779. The other resolution submitted by the committee, which was also approved, dealt with rebaptism.
had not only published their views but had also taught them in their classes at Healdsburg College.

Butler apparently felt that the caution to avoid "those questions concerning which there may be from any cause a difference of opinion among ourselves" did not apply to himself, for he published a very lengthy article against Waggoner's position just a few months later.\(^1\) Perhaps he interpreted Ellen White's statement that J. H. Waggoner's "position in regard to the law was incorrect" as a blanket endorsement of his own position and a justification for publishing the article.\(^2\) But Ellen White immediately shot a letter to Butler in which she said, "I was pained when I saw your article in the Review."\(^3\) She had also read the first part of the pamphlet distributed at the 1886 General Conference session. Her reaction was strong:

Now, my brother, things that you have said, many of them are all right. The principles that you refer to are right; but how this can harmonize with your pointed remarks to Dr. Waggoner, I cannot see. I think you are too sharp.

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 me. I have had some impressive dreams that have led me to feel that you are not altogether in the light.\(^4\)

One casualty of this controversy, it appears, was Dudley M. Canright, who soon became a foremost critic of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Canright shared Butler's view of the law in Galatians and helped him defend it. In 1882, Canright had revised his book on the moral and ceremonial laws, expanding the section on Galatians from six pages to twenty-

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1 GIB, "Laws Which Are 'Contrary to Us,' A 'Yoke of Bondage,' and 'Not Good,'" RH 64 (March 22, 1887): 182-84.


3 EGW to GIB and US, April 5, 1887, Ltr 13, 1887, 1888M, 1: 32.

4 Ibid., p. 33.
four in order to strengthen the view that the epistle dealt with the ceremonial law.¹ It was reprinted in 1886 and served as a welcome addition to Butler’s arsenal.² Canright and Butler were allies on the “theological committee,” against Waggoner. Later, Canright claimed to have had persistent doubts about his and Butler’s position concerning the law in Galatians well before the 1886 General Conference session and said the meetings of the “theological committee” cemented his conviction that Galatians was indeed speaking of the moral law.

Each time I was led to believe that I must be in the dark, and that it would be the safest way to follow the judgment of my brethren. This I tried to do, and for a time succeeded in persuading myself that I was satisfied. But it was always only a compromise. My judgment was not satisfied. This winter a question came up which affected our position upon the law, and of course that ended the matter.³


² Dudley M. Canright, The Two Laws as Set Forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, 2d ed. (Battle Creek, Michigan: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1886). The 1882 edition was probably discontinued soon after it came off the press, for in the fall of that year Canright succumbed to doubts regarding the prophetic ministry of Ellen White, gave up preaching, and retired to a farm in Otsego, Michigan. GIB was among those who labored for him at this time until, in 1884, Canright again confessed the Adventist faith. The two men worked closely thereafter until Canright’s final apostasy in 1887. See Carrie Johnson, I Was Canright’s Secretary (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), pp. 65-84.

³ Taken from a statement of Canright, quoted in GIB, “Eld. Canright’s Change of Faith,” RH 64 (March 1, 1887): 138. Canright mainly used Col 2 to defend his position that the ten commandments were no longer binding. The controversy over Galatians appears to have been the final blow. In Dudley M. Canright, Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced, 14th ed. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889), pp. 50-51, he describes the controversy thus: “After a long and warm discussion the [1886] conference closed, each party more confident than before. There was also much disagreement over other points of doctrine, and a good deal of warm party feeling. This, with other things, brought up my old feelings of doubt, and decided me that it was time for me now to examine and think for myself, and not be led nor intimidated by men who could not agree among themselves” (cf. ibid., pp. 382-90).
Because Canright retained Butler's understanding that "under the law" meant subject to the law, he abandoned the Adventist view that the moral law of ten commandments were perpetually binding.

Ellen White, in her letter to Butler, blamed him and Uriah Smith for not recognizing where Canright's arguments supporting Butler's view of the law would lead. Perhaps she felt their encouragement of Canright's "mixed up" ideas on the law emboldened him in his opinions. She pictured the three of them in a boat in the shadows with Canright "turning the light down lower and lower." She also had advised that Canright's books be suppressed, "especially the one on the law, the very subject he was conversing with you [Butler] in regard to. If that work is what I believe it to be, I would burn every copy." It seemed apparent to Ellen White that it was Butler's agitation of issues which she considered "not vital points" that brought such unfortunate results. "Had you avoided the question... it would have been more in accordance with the light God has seen fit to give to me." "I think the whole thing is not in God's order." However, once Butler had circulated his pamphlet, she felt there must be "open discussion" of the question. "Now it is only fair that Dr. Waggoner should have just as fair a chance [to circulate his views] as you have had..."  

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1 EGW to GIB and US, April 5, 1887, Ltr 13, 1887, *1888M*, 1:33-34. EJW mentioned the close relationship between Canright and GIB during the meetings of the Theological Committee in *GG*, p. 55. "Some say that we have a better knowledge of the plan of salvation than the ancients [of the OT period] had. Indeed, in one meeting of the Theological Committee, both you and Elder Canright claimed that the patriarchs had very limited, if any, knowledge of Christ's real work; and you sustained Elder Canright in his assertion that Christ introduced the gospel at this first advent. I do not think that you would have taken such a stand, only that your theory drove you to it."

2 EGW to EJW and ATJ, February 18, 1887, Ltr 37, 1887, *1888M*, 1:22-23.

3 EGW to GIB and US, April 5, 1887, Ltr 13, 1887, *1888M*, 1:33, 35.

4 Ibid., p. 35. EJW also felt that the 1886 session of the General Conference essentially allowed GIB to have things his way. Note EJW, *GG*, p. 3: "I very much regretted that every moment of time was so occupied that we could have no conversation upon the subject. It is true the matter was discussed to a very limited extent in the meetings..."
Waggoner did not, in fact, circulate his views further until the Minneapolis General Conference session in 1888; but he did send a very long epistle to Butler in February 1887, which he probably began writing immediately after the 1886 General Conference session. In this letter, Waggoner detailed the reasons for his views concerning the law in Galatians. He said his articles were for “the sole design of doing good,” and that his aim on this and other subjects was “to write in such a way as not to arouse combative ness in any, but to present simple Bible truth, so that the objections would be taken out of the way before the person could make them.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 3.} Far from undermining the law, Waggoner sought to show that the arguments advanced for its abolition “are really the strongest arguments for the perpetuity of the law.” Nevertheless, his tone was conciliatory, saying, “Whatever censure is due . . . , I willingly take.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 4. However, his conciliatory attitude here did not prevent him from presenting the reasons for his position on Galatians in as forceful and convincing a manner as possible.}

Dominant Issues

Waggoner would probably have held his views in abeyance and the issue of the law in Galatians might have been forgotten were it not for several factors. More important issues were involved than merely resolving a theological question regarding a few obscure passages. There were, for example, crucial questions regarding how people are saved, what the basis is for doctrine, and how the church should resolve theological controversy.

Questions regarding salvation

In 1888, Adventists held two widely divergent viewpoints as to what was at stake. Butler, and those who sided with him, believed a doctrinal landmark to be in jeopardy depending of the Theological Committee, but of course the little that could be said under the circumstances was not sufficient to give any satisfaction to any party concerned.”
upon whether Paul, in Galatians (especially vv. 3:15-25), was speaking of the moral or the ceremonial law. For Butler, this matter had already been decided more than a decade earlier. Since then, many had accepted "with strong confidence" the view that Paul had the ceremonial law in mind when speaking of the law as "our schoolmaster." According to Butler, some in Paul's day supposed that there were two laws in force; but more "looked to obedience to the ceremonial law, with its circumcision, types, shadows, and multitude of observances, for justification, than to the moral law." Butler could not believe Paul would be so harsh as to say the gospel was being "perverted" and "undermined" if the Galatians had been trying to keep the ten commandments very strictly, "neither killing, lying, committing adultery, nor stealing, thinking thus to be justified by their good works." "To our mind such a conclusion would be absurd." Butler made this same point repeatedly. He believed Paul "would have spoken in milder language if their practice had been right, and simply their views of doctrine wrong." In addition to this, Butler stressed that the sanctuary services were not understood or even ordained before Sinai, while the ten commandments were. Cain "knew very well he had broken God's law and was guilty. The antediluvians and Sodomites were destroyed as 'sinners.'" Abraham, Joseph, Enoch, and Noah must "have been well acquainted with the principles of the moral law" and their obligation to keep them. But nowhere did Butler mention their acquaintance with the remedy for sin and salvation by faith. His words can yield the distinct impression that these men were saved because of their works.

1 GIB, LG, pp. 3-4.
2 Ibid., p. 34.
3 Ibid., p. 17.
4 Ibid., p. 36.
5 Ibid., p. 45.
There is no question, however, but that Butler believed the doctrine of justification by faith, in theory at least. "Justification by faith," he said, "is one of the grandest and most glorious doctrines of the gospel of Christ. We love, delight, and rejoice in that precious truth second to none." Nevertheless, he implied that good works contribute to salvation in some way when he said that "no man can be saved by good works alone." Furthermore, Butler spoke of the "much-vaunted doctrine of justification by faith."

Waggoner earnestly objected to Butler's emphasis, charging: "Your words seem to intimate that you think that doctrine has been overestimated. . . . [Your] theory leads inevitably to the conclusion that men are justified by the law." Waggoner insisted that "to depend on anything except Christ for justification is a rejection of Christ." Furthermore, "the man who rejects Christ, by accepting some other mode of justification, cannot possibly keep the commandments." The reason for this he spelled out: "Sin is a bondage, and to teach men to put their trust in a false hope, which will cause them to rest satisfied in their . . .

1 Ibid., p. 74 (italics supplied). He goes on to say: "We are weak and utterly helpless of ourselves, covered with pollution, and never can remove our guilt and uncleanness by present or future efforts of obedience. Indeed, we are utterly weak and helpless; and if our sins have been forgiven, we must have constant faith in and help from a crucified Saviour, constant access to his unfailing fountain of strength, in order to obtain any real help or accomplish anything whatever that will meet God's favor in the line of good works. All this and vastly more we cheerfully acknowledge and most fully believe" (pp. 74-75).

2 Ibid., p. 78.

3 EJW, GG, pp. 70-71. This is at least the case for the Old Testament period, although GIB did not draw these conclusions.

4 EJW, GG, p. 9. Cf. idem, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 9," ST 12 (September 2, 1886): 534. "We would by no means be understood as holding that the ceremonial law does not figure in the epistle to the Galatians. The controversy over the ceremonial law drew out the epistle. But there was in that controversy, which this epistle must have effectually settled for all candid minds, something deeper than the mere question whether or not men should be circumcised. Paul repeatedly asserts that it makes no difference whether or not a man is circumcised. 'Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing.' But when men submitted to it as a means of justification, that moment it became a serious matter, for such an act is a rejection of Christ."

5 Ibid., p. 11.
sins, thinking that they are free from them, is simply to fasten them in bondage.\footnote{Ibid., p. 15.} He concluded that "it is impossible to overestimate the doctrine of justification by faith."\footnote{Ibid., p. 71. Some might take issue with this assertion, but since EJW believed, as noticed above, that justification also comprehended a transformed life, there was less danger in stressing it, even should sanctification thereby be de-emphasized. In the context of the times, EJW was probably correct.}

In addition, Waggoner objected to the idea that condemnation results from disobedience to the ceremonial law just as much as from the moral law, making it "also a standard of righteousness." The ceremonial law revealed the remedy for transgression of the moral law, but if "condemned sinners were still further condemned by the very remedy provided for their salvation," they are in a truly pitiable condition.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 18-19.} But "refusing to receive pardon is not a sin. God invites men to receive pardon, but he has no law to compel them to be pardoned."\footnote{Ibid., p. 20.} Waggoner believed it was Butler, not himself, who was undermining the authority of the moral law. "The great fault which I find with the position you hold is that it depreciates the moral law, and correspondingly depreciates the gospel."\footnote{Ibid., p. 19. In "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 9," ST 11 (September 2, 1886): 535, EJW said the object of his series of articles was not "to discuss the whole book of Galatians, but simply to show that it gives no comfort to the enemies of the law of God."}

\textit{The basis of doctrine}

Another important issue surrounding the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session, in addition to questions regarding how people are saved, involved the question of what authority should be the basis for establishing church doctrine. The evidence, which Butler's pamphlet used to support his contention that the schoolmaster law in Galatians was ceremonial, was three-pronged: (1) He believed the Bible supported it, (2) other
scholars seemed to interpret the passage the same way, and (3) Seventh-day Adventist leaders had agreed upon this position when the matter was first studied. Waggoner questioned the second and third of these arguments.

In his pamphlet, Butler's argument often rested heavily on the fact that he was not alone in his interpretation of a particular passage. Waggoner vigorously challenged such a methodology.

One would think that . . . you would pile up Scripture argument; . . . but instead we have the opinion of Dr. Schaff, Dr. Clarke, and Dr. Scott—three very good men, no doubt, but three men who are responsible for a vast amount of doctrinal error and false theology. . . . Has it come to this among Seventh-day Adventists, that the mere opinion of a doctor of divinity must be accepted as final in any discussion? . . .

You add, "There can be no question but that our position on this point is correct." If there can be no question on this point, it must be because it is so well fortified by the clearest proof as to admit of no argument. And what is the proof which you quote? The mere words of Dr. Schaff, Dr. Barnes, and Dr. Scott. Then the inevitable conclusion is that you regard the statement of those men as sufficient to establish any point of doctrine. But I do not. . . . Further, I do not consider the statement of any man on earth as of sufficient weight to help establish any point of doctrine. The word of God alone can decide what is right; it alone can establish a point of doctrine; and when it has spoken, nothing that any man can say can make the case any stronger. And when a thing cannot be proved by the Bible, it cannot be proved by what any man says, no matter how good he is.1

Waggoner out-quoted Butler in the use of commentators to show that he also was not alone in his interpretation. Yet, he insisted: "I care nothing for what a man says. I want to

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1 EJW, GG, pp. 65-66. EJW frequently quoted from these same commentators, yet the basis of his arguments in his books and articles always rested in Scripture. McMahon's contention (e.g., pp. 28-29) that EJW was influenced by certain scholars is thus very tenuous. EJW's use of them is for particularly apt statements of what he has just demonstrated from Scripture or for extra-biblical data—especially history. That this was a conscious intention is clear from GG, p. 27: "I do not care for the opinions of commentators, except as they state in a clearer form that which has already been proved from the Bible." In addition, attempts to trace EJW's theology to Reformation figures like Luther is also without tangible support. During this period, in only four instances did I find EJW quoting any of the Reformers: Wesley in ST 12 (September 2, 1886): 534; and Luther in ST 14 (February 24, 1888): 119; ST 14 (September 7, 1888), pp. 547-48; ST 14 (September 14, 1888), pp. 563-64. The latter two articles merely show that Luther took the same position on the law in Galatians as he did. Webster's additional reference (p. 180, n. 72) to Luther quoted in EJW, "Lawful Use of the Law," ST 14 (July 13, 1888), p. 422 is erroneous.
know what God says. We do not teach for doctrine the word of men, but the word of God."¹

Not content to let this matter rest, Waggoner identified Butler's attitude with that of papal authority.

If we are to quote the opinions of men as authority, on points of doctrine, we might as well turn Papists at once; for to pin one's faith to the opinions of man is of the very essence of the Papacy. It matters not whether we adhere to the opinions of one man, or to the opinions of forty; whether we have one Pope or forty. Because a man has written a commentary on the Bible, or on any part of it, that is no reason why his opinion should pass unchallenged. He is only a man still. Seventh-day Adventists, of all people in the world, ought to be free from dependence upon the mere opinion of men. They should be Protestants indeed, testing everything by the Bible alone.²

Incidently, Ellen White also warned repeatedly against relying on human authority, saying: "We want Bible evidence for every point."³ "We must take the Bible as our standard and we must diligently search its pages for light and evidences and truth."⁴

By all measurements, Butler chose the popular side of the argument. Of course, his being the president of the General Conference helped to make his view popular. In addition, Butler's view (by his own estimate at least) was already held by the vast majority of Adventist ministers.⁵ Such a consensus could be claimed because the law in Galatians was debated a decade before and the view Butler now advocated had then come out the winner. In addition, he believed Ellen White supported his position. With all this in mind, Butler strongly censured Waggoner for reopening the question.

¹ EJW, GG, p. 56.
² Ibid., pp. 59-60.
³ EGW to GIB and US, April 5, 1887, Ltr 13, 1887, 1888M, 1:36.
⁴ EGW to Mary White, October 9, 1888, Ltr 81, 1888, 1888M, 1:67.
⁵ GIB, LG, p. 3: "It would be quite difficult to ascertain the comparative strength in numbers on either side; but to the best of the writer's judgment (and his opportunities of forming a fair opinion have not been meager), he would say that at the present time at least two thirds of our ministers hold the latter [his] opinion."
From Waggoner's viewpoint, Butler's arguments did not provide sufficient reasons to remain silent. If there were problems with Adventist doctrine, it would be better for discussions among brethren to solve them than for an opening to be left for critics to assail.

Every point in our argument will have to be subjected to the test of the most rigid criticism, and we shall have to fortify every point. If there is any inconsistency in any of our arguments, we may be sure that the enemies of truth will not always remain blind to it.

If our people should to-day, as a body (as they will sometime), change their view on this point, it would simply be an acknowledgment that they are better informed to-day than they were yesterday. It would simply be taking an advance step, which is never humiliating except to those whose pride of opinion will not allow them to admit that they can be wrong. It would simply be a step nearer the faith of the great Reformers from the days of Paul to the days of Luther and Wesley. It would be a step closer to the heart of the Third Angel's Message.¹

In almost identical words, Ellen White wrote Butler that "if we have any point that is not fully, clearly defined, and [that] can bear the test of criticism, don't be afraid or too proud to yield it." She cautioned: "Let none feel that we know all the truth the Bible proclaims." "We want Bible evidence for every point we advance." Otherwise, the sword of the Spirit will be turned against us.² "Truth can lose nothing by close investigation."³

Resolving theological controversy

At least one more issue was responsible for the historical importance of the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session, besides what was actually presented there. That issue was a tragic desire among certain church leaders to squelch all who disagreed with them—if not by force of argument, then by decree and influence. Such was obviously Butler's intention in confronting Waggoner at a General Conference session (as he had in 1886), which Butler held to be "the only tribunal in our body where such controverted questions can be

¹ EJW, GG, p. 70.
² EGW to GIB and US, April 5, 1887, Ltr 13, 1887, 1888M, 1:36.
³ Ibid., p. 38.
properly considered and passed upon."¹ Interestingly enough, the willingness to discuss the issue in 1886 changed to great reluctance to do so in 1888.² Others joined Butler’s opposition. “The efforts made here to close every avenue to light and truth which is supposed to disagree with the opinions of some leading men,” wrote Ellen White, “are very unreasonable.”³ This time there was a strong desire, encouraged by telegrams from Butler,⁴ to pass judgment without any discussion. Some wanted “a decision made at once.” Speaking to the 1888 conference delegates, Ellen White characterized the messages Butler sent to them as “calculated to stir you up to make hasty decisions and to take decided positions.” She felt that doctrinal decisions without careful, prayerful, and sincere investigation would dishonor the truth. “Even if the position which we have held upon the two laws is truth, the Spirit of truth will not countenance any such measures to defend it as many of you would take.”⁵

Even before the delegates gathered at Minneapolis, unchristlike attitudes and behavior abounded. In a letter to those who would be delegates at Minneapolis, Ellen White urged that there be “no strife,” and warned against having “a party spirit” and “party feelings.” She even spoke of some as “traitors in the cause.”⁶ There was a great need, she said, for “Christian kindness,” “love and respect evidenced for one another,” and

¹ GIB, LG, p. 6.
² US and GIB were “very loathe to have anything said upon the law in Galatians.” See EGW to Mary White, October 9, 1888, Ltr 81, 1888, 1888M, 1:67.
⁴ EGW (“Standing by the Landmarks,” MS 13, 1889, 1888M, 2:516) said that there were, “coming over the wires from B. C. [Battle Creek], decided messages from Brother Butler to bring the people to a decision then at the meeting, on the controverted point of the law in Galatians.”
“heaven’s enlightenment.”¹ In fact, she frequently suggested that Christian love was necessary before truth could be understood: “There is no assurance that our doctrine is right and free from all chaff and error unless we are daily doing the will of God. If we do His will, we shall know of the doctrine. We shall see the truth in its sacred beauty.” Ellen White also said an angel had told her it would not be wise to make doctrinal decisions at the Conference as long as a wrong spirit prevailed:

I was . . . informed that at this time it would be useless to make any decision as to positions on doctrinal points, as to what is truth, or to expect any spirit of fair investigation, because there was a confederacy formed to allow of no change of ideas on any point or position they had received any more than did the Jews. Much was said to me by my Guide that I have no liberty to write.³

In summary, more than just theological truth was at issue. Just as important was the way of arriving at truth. Some expressed concerns for Christian love, for the free and open investigation of the Scriptures (which constitute the only authority for church doctrine), and for ensuring that nothing be dictated by a few leading men. It was probably a result of these factors—as well as the interest in what Waggoner would present—that ultimately resulted in his having the opportunity to communicate a clearer understanding and appreciation of Christ’s righteousness at Minneapolis.

1 Ibid., pp. 39-41.

2 Ibid., p. 46; cf. EGW to H. Miller, June 2, 1889, Ltr 5, 1889, 1888M, 1:333. Note also her statement in “Counsel to Ministers,” MS 8a, 1888, 1888M, 1:143: “If we neglect to walk in the light given, it becomes darkness to us; and the darkness is proportionate to the light and privileges which we have not improved.” The wrong spirit manifested by many of the leaders led her to question what had become the established position: “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” (“Looking Back at Minneapolis,” MS 24, 1888, 1888M, 1:221).

Waggoner's Presentations at Minneapolis

Records of the Conference

Few records of what E. J. Waggoner said at Minneapolis are known to exist, thereby hindering any reliable attempt to reconstruct and understand what was so memorable. A report of the Conference by Waggoner, in which he summarized his role in the meetings, tersely describes his studies as dealing with "the law and the gospel in their various relations, coming under the general head of justification by faith."\(^1\) Besides a brief description of four of the meetings by Uriah Smith,\(^2\) very little else is known about Waggoner's lectures. Researchers have arrived at widely different conclusions concerning what Waggoner may have said at the session. They have speculated that he presented the essence of Christ and His Righteousness,\(^3\) The Glad Tidings,\(^4\) and/or Luther's Reformation gospel.\(^5\)

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1 EJW, "Editorial Correspondence," ST 14 (November 2, 1888): 662, MMM, p. 413.


3 Froom, pp. 189, 200-201, admitted that the content of two other books may have been presented; but then, which book is really the "heart of his presentation" at Minneapolis? It appears that Froom, though giving the appearance of certainty, was only guessing. A more serious flaw in his research is the unsubstantiated claim that EJW's first wife, Jessie, stenographically recorded his Minneapolis lectures, which EJW himself supposedly edited and later published.

4 Wieland edited the revised edition, saying in the forward that "the message of this book was in reality a transcript of studies that Dr. Waggoner gave . . . in Minneapolis." While Wieland's research also has its weaknesses, he has done more than most researchers in the field have done, in looking at a vast selection of EJW's writings and representing them in print.

5 McMahon, pp. 71-91. McMahon recognizes the obvious problem plaguing research into EJW's 1888 presentations: "The lack of a complete record . . . has made it easy for some to read their own particular views on righteousness by faith into the 1888 conference" (p. 74). However, McMahon seems himself to have fallen into this trap in attempting to identify EJW's teaching on justification with a forensic position based on an interpretation of Luther's teaching that is itself disputed. McMahon's bias is clear when EJW himself is allowed to speak. Interestingly enough, in McMahon's entire chapter on "Waggoner's 1888 Message," not one quotation of EJW's theology appears, direct or indirect. We are apparently expected to take McMahon's word for it. While EJW accepted the fundamental principles of the Reformation, including justification by faith and the Bible as the final authority for Christians, he viewed "the Third Angel's Message" (which, of course,
Since the early 1980s, two independent records have come to light, considerably enhancing our awareness of what transpired as well as what was presented. These records are the diary of R. Dewitt Hottel, which gives a daily account of the topics discussed, and notes taken by W. C. White during the proceedings. White’s notes summarize many of Waggoner’s lectures on justification by faith (as well as Morrison’s lectures in rebuttal). Although these records are brief—primarily limited to Bible references and occasional summaries of Waggoner’s argument—they provide a good indication of his major points.

Methodological Considerations

Before attempting to establish the general content of Waggoner’s lectures, a chronology of events will be presented based on Hottel’s diary and other contemporary sources. Although W. C. White’s notebooks do not always give the date and time of the lectures he made note of, it is possible to deduce this information by comparing the notebooks with the sequence of events at the Conference and the reports of Waggoner’s lectures found in the 1888 General Conference Daily Bulletin (see Appendix 1). For convenient reference, Waggoner’s lectures on justification by faith have been underlined and numbered from one to nine in the chronology given below.

It is possible to better understand the content of Waggoner’s lectures in view of these further considerations:

1. Close inspection of W. C. White’s record of Waggoner’s principal points reveals a strong resemblance to certain material that Waggoner had already published.

2. Specifically, this record resembles the two series of articles on Galatians written in the 1884 and 1886 issues of The Signs of the Times, as well as certain articles written in 1888.

3. It seems clear that the notes taken by W. C. White accurately reflect the content of the various presentations. Specific comparison has been made with his notes of one of included his own teachings) as an advance beyond the days of the Reformation (see p. 51 above).
Ellen G. White's sermons that was published shortly after the Conference concluded (see Appendix 2).

4. Waggoner's letter to G. I. Butler of February 10, 1887, seems to provide a very representative view of what Waggoner said in 1888 about the law in Galatians, in spite of the form in which it appears. (It is not a full explanation of the epistle, but a refutation of Butler's arguments in The Law in the Book of Galatians.) This letter was published as The Gospel in Galatians¹ and was apparently distributed to the delegates of the 1888 Conference, as Butler had distributed his pamphlet two years before.² For more than ten years after the Minneapolis Conference, it remained Waggoner's most comprehensive statement on the subject.

5. Examination of Waggoner's soteriology and eschatology shows that his fundamental concepts underwent little change during the period from 1882 to 1888.

6. Waggoner's two series of articles on Galatians are themselves illustrative of Waggoner's consistency. Although written two years apart, and although the later series appears to have been written without reference to the earlier one, yet they exhibit essentially the same content.

With these considerations in mind, in the following discussion of Waggoner's lectures, W. C. White's notes have been supplemented with material from some of Waggoner's published works mentioned in items 2 and 4 above, to the extent that they bear on the same subjects as White's notes and elaborate the same points.³

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¹ In the course of his argument in this pamphlet, EJW presented much of his positive teaching on the subject as it had appeared in his earlier articles of 1884 and 1886.

² R. Dewitt Hottel, in his diary entry for Saturday, November 10, mentioned that when he returned home from the Minneapolis conference, he began "reading in Brother Butler's Book on Galatians and also Bro. Waggoner's reply."

³ Limiting oneself to EJW's theology prior to and shortly after the Minneapolis conference to ascertain the content of his lectures in 1888, as suggested by McMahon (pp. 75, 77) would have been justifiable before WCW's notes were discovered. Unfortunately,
Having said this, it must be admitted that the exact words used by Waggoner are not known to have been recorded and will probably remain "permanently lost." Even if more detailed records of Waggoner's lectures are ever found, certain aspects of his oral presentations will never be ascertained; this is especially unfortunate since, judging from Waggoner's impact on those who attended the Conference, what he said and how he said it must have been uniquely powerful.

Chronology of Events

Ministerial Institute

Wednesday October 10, 1888
7:30 P.M.—S. N. Haskell, "The Message in Foreign Lands"

Thursday October 11, 1888
Ellen G. White, Morning Talk, "A Living Connection With God" (MS 6, 1888)
9:00 A.M.—A. T. Jones, "Advancement of the Work of the Third Angel's Message"
10:30 A.M. and 2:30 P.M.—A. T. Jones, "Ten Kingdoms"
4:00 P.M.—E. J. Waggoner, "Duties of Church Officers"

Friday October 12, 1888
7:30 P.M.—E. W. Farnsworth, "Wickedness of the World Just before Christ Returns"
Ellen G. White, Plain Testimony (MS 26, 1888?)

McMahon had such a restricted view of justification that much of what EJW may have said appears to have been excluded a priori.

1 Knight, p. 37.


3 Unless otherwise indicated, this chronology comes from the Hottel diary and from what is elsewhere known of the dates for EGW's Minneapolis sermons.

4 "The General Conference Institute," RH 65 (October 16, 1888):648, MMM, p. 399 (also the basis for dating the lectures of ATJ and EJW to October 11).

5 Cf. EGW to Mary White, October 9, 1888, Ltr 81, 1888, 1888M, 1:66.
Saturday October 13, 1888
11:00 A.M.—Uriah Smith, Sermon, “Signs of the Times”
Testimony meeting
2:30 P.M.—Ellen G. White, Afternoon Sermon, “Tell of God’s Love and Power” (MS 7, 1888)
Prayer for Elder Butler
A. T. Jones, “Image of the Beast”

Sunday October 14, 1888
9:00 A.M.—E. I. Waggoner, “Authority of Church Officers”¹
10:30 A.M.—A. T. Jones, “Flucking up of the Three Horns”
1:30 P.M.—L. R. Conradi’s said, in his glowing report of progress in Russia: “They believe they are saved by their works, and not by faith”²
2:30 P.M.—Uriah Smith, “Predestination”³
4:00 P.M.—R. A. Underwood, “How to Deal with the Erring,” Matt. 18:15-17⁴
7:30 P.M.—Elder Conradi, “Prison Experiences in Russia”⁵
Ellen G. White wrote a letter to Butler⁶

Monday October 15, 1888
Ellen G. White spoke
10:00 A.M.—Uriah Smith, “Ten Horns”
2:30 and 4:00 P.M.—E. I. Waggoner, Lectures 1 and 2
7:30 P.M.—L. R. Conradi, “Wants in Germany”
Ellen G. White wrote a second letter to Butler⁷

Tuesday October 16, 1888
9:00 A.M.—A. T. Jones, “Church and State”
10:30 A.M.—E. I. Waggoner, Lecture 3
2:30 P.M.—A. T. Jones, “Ten Horns”
7:30 P.M.—S. N. Haskell, “England and the Foreign Fields”

¹ NWCW, Book Two, pp. 4-5, in MMM, pp. 472-73.
³ According to Hottel’s diary; EGW, Ltr 81, 1888, 1888M, 1:68; and “Here’s a Strange People,” Minneapolis Journal, 13 October 1888, p. 8, MMM, p. 522, US was scheduled to talk about predestination. The content of this talk appears to be recorded in NWCW, Book One, p. 23, MMM, p. 420.
⁴ NWCW, Book Two, p. 5, MMM, p. 473.
⁶ EGW to GIB, October 14, 1888, Ltr 21, 1888, 1888M, pp. 85-106.
⁷ EGW to GIB, October 15, 1888, Ltr 21a, 1888, 1888M, pp. 107-16.
General Conference

Wednesday, October 17
7:45 A.M.—R. M. Kilgore, Devotional
Ellen G. White, spoke and “talked plain to us”
9:00 A.M.—General Conference session convened
10:20 A.M.—Uriah Smith, “Ten horns”
2:30 and 4:00 P.M.—E. I. Waggoner, Lectures 4 and 5
A. T. Jones, “National Reform Movement”

Thursday, October 18
Ellen G. White, Morning Talk, “The Need of Advancement”
9:00 A.M.—E. I. Waggoner, Lecture 6
10:00 A.M.—Conference meetings
2:30 P.M.—International Sabbath School Association meeting
4:15 P.M.—I. D. Van Horn, “Church Organization”
7:30 P.M.—A. T. Jones, “National Reform Through the Roman Empire”

Friday, October 19
Ellen G. White, Morning Talk, “Have Light in Yourselves”
9:00 A.M.—E. I. Waggoner, Lecture 7
10:00 A.M.—Conference meeting
2:30 P.M.—International Tract Society meeting
7:00 P.M.—I. D. Van Horn spoke

Sabbath, October 20
Ministers Meeting, Ellen G. White spoke
9:00 A.M.—Sabbath School
11:00 P.M.—S. N. Haskell, Sermon
2:30 P.M.—Ellen G. White, “Advancing in Christian Experience” (MS 8, 1888)
5:00 P.M.—Financial meeting
A. T. Jones, “Civil Liberty”

Sunday, October 21
Ellen G. White, “Counsel to Ministers” (MS 8a, 1888)
9:00 A.M.—E. I. Waggoner, Lecture 8
10:30 A.M.—Conference meeting
2:30 P.M.—S. N. Haskell, “Missions in England”
4:30 P.M.—I. D. Van Horn, “Church Discipline”

4 “Sabbath Disclosures,” St. Paul Pioneer Press, 22 October 1888, p. 6, MMM, pp. 582-83, is the basis for Sunday’s schedule.
Ellen G. White, Sermon, "A Chosen People" (MS 17, 1888)

Monday, October 22
Ellen G. White, informal talk with the ministers
9:00 A.M.—E. J. Waggoner, Lecture 9
10:30 A.M.—Conference meeting
2:30 P.M.—Conference meeting
4:00 P.M.—International Tract Society
A. T. Jones, "The Union of Church and State"

Tuesday, October 23
Morning Meeting (Ellen G. White absent)—misstatements made
Ellen G. White, "Remarks on Missionary Work" (MS 10, 1888)
Speeches by Uriah Smith, R. M. Kilgore
J. H. Morrison, Lecture on the Law in Galatians
International Sabbath School Association meeting
S. N. Haskell spoke

Wednesday, October 24
Ellen G. White, Morning Talk to Ministers (MS 9, 1888)
9:00 A.M.—J. H. Morrison, Lecture on the Law in Galatians
10:00 A.M.—Conference meeting
2:30 P.M.—International Tract Society work
5:30 P.M.—Foreign Missions meeting


3 EGW, "Looking Back at Minneapolis," MS 24, 1888, 1888M, 1:221.

4 See EGW, Morning Talk, MS 9, 1888, 1888M, 1:151; NWCW, Book One, pp. 55, 57, MMM, p. 424.


6 According to "Holding Meetings Still," Minneapolis Tribune, 24 October 1888, p. 5, MMM, p. 558, this meeting took place sometime in the afternoon and Haskell spoke in the evening.


9:00 P.M.—C. Eldridge, "Canvassing"

Thursday, October 25
Ellen G. White, Morning Talk (MS 21, 1888?)
9:00 A.M.—J. H. Morrison, Lecture on the Law in Galatians
10:30 A.M.—Conference meeting
2:30 and 4:00 P.M.—Organization of educational and publishing societies
W. W. Prescott, "Education"

Friday, October 26
Ellen G. White, Morning talk
9:00 A.M.—J. H. Morrison, Lecture on the Law in Galatians
10:30 A.M.—International Tract Society meeting
2:30 P.M.—American Health and Temperance Association meeting
7:00 P.M.—I. D. Van Horn, Talk on Matt. 19:27-28

Sabbath, October 27
9:00 A.M.—Sabbath School
11:00 A.M.—Ellen G. White, Sermon on 2 Pet. 1:1-14
2:30 P.M.—R. A. Underwood Talk on Acts 4:32-33 and James 5:7-8
7:00 P.M.—J. H. Kellogg, "Health Reform"

Sunday, October 28
J. H. Morrison, Lecture on the Law in Galatians
10:30 A.M.—Conference meeting
S. H. Lane spoke
2:30 P.M.—International Tract Society meeting
A. T. Jones, "National Reform Movement"

Monday, October 29
Ellen G. White read a testimony given in 1878

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1 It appears from “Eighth Day’s Proceedings,” GCDB 2 (October 26, 1888): 3, MMM, p. 382, that EJW gave his closing lecture the morning of Thursday, October 25 (the date of the report is incorrectly listed as Wednesday), but neither the NWCW nor Hottel’s diary makes mention of it. It is also possible that this portion of the record actually refers to Wednesday morning (since a report of the Wednesday evening meeting follows it) or perhaps to a morning even earlier in the session.

2 EGW, “Looking Back at Minneapolis,” MS 24, 1888, 1888M, 1:227, possibly records some of the content of this talk.


4 According to “Tenth Day’s Proceedings,” GCDB 2 (October 29, 1888):4, MMM, p. 386, EJW taught the senior division Sabbath School lesson. It does not record his talk, but it does give the substance of his wife’s lesson to the “intermediate” (ages 10-adult) division.

5 Cf. EGW, Morning Talk, MS 9, 1888, 1888M, 1:152-53, where EGW indicated that she had wanted to leave the conference because of the attitude of unbelief toward her
9:00 A.M.—J. H. Morrison, Lecture on the Law in Galatians
10:30 A.M.—Educational Society meeting
11:30 A.M.—Publishing Association meeting
4:00 P.M.—J. H. Kellogg spoke
E. W. Farnsworth spoke

**Tuesday, October 30**
Ellen G. White read a letter, “said she never expected to attend another General Conference”
9:00 A.M.—J. H. Morrison, Lecture on the Law
10:30 A.M.—Distribution of Labor
2:30 P.M.—International Tract Society meeting
4:30 P.M.—American Health and Temperance Association, J. H. Kellogg
7:30 P.M.—Tract Expense meeting

**Wednesday, October 31**
Ellen G. White spoke
8:00 A.M.—Canvassing meeting
9:00 A.M.—Conference meeting
2:30 P.M.—International Tract Society meeting
5:30 P.M.—Conference meeting
7:30 P.M.—Conference meeting

**Thursday, November 1**
Ellen G. White spoke
“Crank on religion” spoke and “said Christ had come”
8:00 A.M.—Canvassing meeting
9:00 A.M.—Sabbath School Association meeting
10:30 A.M.—Conference meeting
D. T. Bourdeau spoke

**Friday, November 2**
“(The) same man claiming that Christ had come began to speak and Sr. White rebuked him and gave some of her early experience and warnings”
9:00 A.M.—International Sabbath School Association meeting
10:30 A.M.—Conference meeting
2:00 P.M.—Conference meeting
J. G. Matteson spoke

**Sabbath, November 3**
9:00 A.M.—Sabbath School
10:30 A.M.—E. J. Waggoner, Sermon
2:30 P.M.—Ellen G. White spoke (“A Call to a Deeper Study of the Word,” MS 15, 1888?), call for backsliders to come forward
6:15 P.M.—Finance Committee meeting
7:00 P.M.—International Tract Society meeting

words, but decided to read a testimony which the delegates had before acknowledged was light and truth.
Sunday, November 4  
"Crank was present again and also a lady who tried to speak, but they were stopped"

9:00 A.M.—Conference meeting and International Tract Society meeting  
Prayer by S. N. Haskell, General Conference session concluded at 10:30  
10:30 A.M.—E. J. Waggoner answered questions until lunch

Ellen White’s Concept of Waggoner’s Message

Ellen White discussed Waggoner’s lectures in the manuscript of what is probably her final sermon at Minneapolis, delivered on November 3. E. J. Waggoner, she said, had spoken “in a plain, straightforward manner, as a Christian should.”¹ “There is precious light in what he has said.” “I see the beauty of truth in the presentation of the righteousness of Christ as the doctor has placed it before us.”² However, she was not ready to endorse everything Waggoner said—especially with regard to the law in Galatians. “Some things,” she said, “if I fully understand his position, do not harmonize with the understanding I have had of this subject; but truth will lose nothing by investigation.”³ The week before she had refused to favor either position.⁴

¹ EGW, “A Call to a Deeper Study of the Word,” MS 15, 1888, 1888M, 1:163. Cf. idem, “Looking Back at Minneapolis,” MS 24, 1888, 1888M, 1:222: “Elder Waggoner had taken a straightforward course, not involving personalities, to thrust anyone or to ridicule anyone. He conducted the subject as a Christian gentlemen should, in a kind and courteous manner.” Such was not the case with those who opposed him: “I insisted that there should be a right spirit, a Christlike spirit manifested, such as Elder Waggoner had shown all through the presentation of his views; and that this matter should not be handled in a debating style” (ibid., p. 219).

² EGW, To Brethren Assembled at General Conference, MS 15, 1888, 1888M, 1:163-64. Cf. idem, “Looking Back at Minneapolis,” MS 24, 1888, 1888M, 1:217: “I had heard precious truths uttered that I could respond to with all my heart.”

³ EGW, To Brethren Assembled at General Conference, MS 15, 1888, 1888M, 1:163.

⁴ EGW, Morning Talk, MS 9, 1888, 1888M, 1:152-53: “I cannot take my position on either side until I have studied the question.” A vision she received, perhaps at the conference itself, indicated that “There was not perfection in all points on either side of the question under discussion” (idem, MS 15, 1888, 1888M, 1:165; cf. EGW to GIB, October 14, 1888, Ltr 21, 1888, 1888M, 1:92-93). Even so, in her sermon at Minneapolis, entitled “A Chosen People,” EGW did affirm two of EJW’s key points, although she did not base them on Galatians: (1) the ten commandments are a yoke of bondage to those who break them; and (2) there is no power in the moral law to save or pardon. Its purpose is to bring the repentant sinner to Christ (idem, Sermon, MS 17, 1888, 1888M, 1:130).
In spite of the fact that the prophet needed time to study the issue, many at the conference wanted to decide it right away. “There are some,” she told the delegates, “who desire a decision made at once as to what is the correct view on the point under discussion.” Elder Butler apparently was desirous of having a resolution passed in 1888, at least as strong as the one approved two years before, and had written letters to delegates urging such action. But, as she wrote later, Ellen White “did not agree with all their ideas,” nor did she “harmonize with the propositions and resolutions to be voted upon” at Minneapolis. She urged the delegates to study the Scriptures, which she believed was the only correct way to decide the issue being debated. It would be dangerous to “denounce Dr. Waggoner’s position as wholly erroneous,” she declared, as this “would please the enemy.” At the conclusion of her talk, she made an appeal for those who had backslidden to come forward. J. S. Washburn, who was present at the conference, recalled that “Ellen G. White tried desperately to bring in a revival before the close.” He said that S. N. Haskell, who gave the Sabbath sermon near the close of Waggoner’s lectures and the concluding prayer of the

1 EGW, To Brethren Assembled at General Conference, MS 15, 1888, 1888M, 1:164.


3 Ibid., p. 207.

4 EGW, To Brethren Assembled at General Conference, MS 15, 1888, 1888M, 1:170-71. She even believed that the testimony to J. H. Waggoner had been providentially lost: “Why was it that I lost the manuscript and for two years could not find it? God has a purpose in this. He wants us to go to the Bible and get the Scripture evidence” (idem, Morning Talk, MS 9, 1888, 1888M, 1:153). But in spite of this, Morrison sought to prove EJW wrong by using EGW, Sketches from the Life of Paul (Oakland, California: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1883) as his crowning argument. See NWCW, Book One, pp. 63, 67, 69, MMM, pp. 425-26.

5 EGW, To Brethren Assembled at General Conference, MS 15, 1888, 1888M, 1:164.
Conference, "stood loyally with Jones and Waggoner, but three-fourths of the workers stood against the new light."¹

Researchers have extensively documented the fact that a large number of delegates to this conference vigorously attacked Waggoner's presentations.² Ellen White spoke of a "strong, firm, resistance [sic]" even before the conference,³ an attitude that intensified during the conference, involving most of the delegates. "The spirit and influence of the ministers generally who have come to this meeting is to discard light." Many were looking to Elder Butler to lead the way, "a large number" giving evidence of being led by "another spirit," which she said "prevailed" at the conference.⁴ By the end of the session, "many" still sought to take measures against what was presented, although they acknowledged that much of it was right. "Opposition, rather than investigation," lamented Ellen White, was "the order of the day."⁵ Her opinion remained unchanged during the months that followed. "Nearly all of our ministering brethren" had an "unchristlike spirit"—"a delusion" was upon them. "The spirit that controlled at that meeting was not the spirit of Jesus."⁶

¹ Robert J. Wieland, "Report of Interview with J. S. Washburn Concerning 1888 Conference," The 1888 Message Itself, p. 138. This interview appears to correspond very well in other details about the 1888 conference with what is known from other sources.

² Olson, Through Crisis to Victory, pp. 50-55; Wieland and Short, 1888 Re-Examined, rev. ed., pp. 26-51, 64-78; and especially Knight, pp. 44-45. Froom, pp. 244-45, 260, says that both EJW and ATJ were "heckled," and that some delegates turned their heads away when they saw EJW approaching.

³ EGW, "Engaging in Worldly Speculation," MS 2, 1888, 1888M, 1:49. Idem, MS 24, 1888, 1888M, 1:206: "I discerned at the very commencement of the meeting a spirit which burdened me."

⁴ EGW to GIB, October 14, 1888, Ltr 21, 1888, 1888M, 1:86-88, 94.

⁵ EGW, To Brethren Assembled at General Conference, MS 15, 1888, 1888M, 1:165, 164, 170.

Ellen White, on the other hand, recognized something special in what Waggoner had presented, but felt that she “stood nearly alone at Minneapolis.”¹ In a sermon given June 19, 1889, she said:

"It was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband. I have said to myself, it is because God has presented it to me in vision that I see it so clearly, and they cannot see it because they have never had it presented to them as I have. And when another presented it, every fiber of my heart said, Amen.²"

Perhaps one reason why Ellen White was so enthusiastic about what she heard at Minneapolis was the fact that many Seventh-day Adventist ministers of the time had become specialists in teaching the law, but inept at presenting Christ and His righteousness in connection with the law. The message Waggoner gave, as Ellen White described it in 1896, 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.³

From their earliest beginnings in the 1840s, Adventists have identified the message they were to give to the world with Rev 14:12 (the climax of “The Third Angel’s Message”): “Here are those who keep the commandments of God, and [have] the faith of Jesus.”⁴ Ellen White perceived that Waggoner was clarifying this concept, showing that obedience to God’s law is only possible through “the faith of Jesus.” In an extended discussion of what she saw to be the essential features of Waggoner’s message, she states:

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¹ EGW, “Experience Following the Minneapolis Conference,” MS 30, 1889, 1888M, 1:354

² EGW, Sermon, MS 5, 1889, 1888M, 1:349.


⁴ All direct quotations from Scripture are taken from The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments. The New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983).
Elder E. J. Waggoner had the privilege granted him of speaking plainly and presenting his views upon justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ in relation to the law. This was no new light, but it was old light placed where it should be in the third angel's message...

The faith of Jesus has been overlooked and treated in an indifferent, careless manner. It has not occupied the prominent position in which it was revealed to John. Faith in Christ as the sinner's only hope has been largely left out, not only of the discourses given but of the religious experience of very many who claim to believe the third angel's message...

The standard by which to measure character is the royal law. The law is the sin detector. By the law is the knowledge of sin. But the sinner is constantly being drawn to Jesus by the wonderful manifestation of His love in that He humiliated Himself to die a shameful death upon the cross. What a study is this! Angels have striven, earnestly longed, to look into this wonderful mystery. It is a study that can tax the highest human intelligence, that man, fallen, deceived by Satan, taking Satan's side of the question, can be conformed to the image of the Son of the Infinite God—that man shall be like Him, that, because of the righteousness of Christ given to man, God will love man, fallen but redeemed, even as He loved His Son.

The divine picture of Christ must be kept before the people... Clothed in the attributes of Deity, shrouded in the glories of Deity, and in the likeness of the infinite God, He is to be lifted up before men. When this is kept before the people, creature merit sinks into insignificance. The more the eye looks upon Him, the more His life, His lessons, His perfection of character are studied, the more sinful and abhorrent will sin appear. By beholding, man can but admire and become more attracted to Him, more charmed, and more desirous to be like Jesus until he assimilates to His image and has the mind of Christ. Like Enoch he walks with God. His mind is full of thoughts of Jesus. He is his best Friend.\(^1\)

By studying Christ, who is "our Pattern," "feature by feature," we will not "present to the world a spurious copy" of Jesus, but will accurately represent Him "in our lives and characters."\(^2\)

Ellen White, on one occasion, seemed to suggest that Waggoner's message might be the beginning of the light mentioned in Rev 18 that is to complete the gospel commission.


\(^2\) Ibid, p. 214. Cf. idem, "Experience Following the Minneapolis Conference," MS 30, 1889, 1888M, 1:373-75 where she presented what she thought to be the essence of message given at Minneapolis, albeit she felt "in a very imperfect manner," and p. 367: "The message that was given to the people in these meetings [during the week of prayer in Battle Creek following the 1888 General Conference] presented in clear lines not alone the commandments of God—a part of the third angel's message—but the faith of Jesus, which comprehends more than is generally supposed. . . . the third angel's message [is] to be proclaimed in all its parts. . . . If we proclaim the commandments of God and leave the other half scarcely touched, the message is marred in our hands."
Recalling a statement she made in Minneapolis, in opposition to a resolution that aimed at preventing any new ideas from being taught at Battle Creek College, she said:

I stated . . . that there was to be special light for God's people as they neared the closing scenes of this earth's history. Another angel was to come from heaven with a message and the whole earth was to be lightened with his glory. It would be impossible for us to state just how this additional light would come. It might come in a very unexpected manner, in a way that would not agree with the ideas that many have conceived.

"It takes every ray of light that God sends to us," she noted, "to make us the light of the world."¹

Ellen White also frequently compared what was happening in 1888 with the proclamation in 1844 that gave rise to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She likened the opposition to Waggoner's message to that of the denominations who turned away from the message of the Millerite Adventists.² Describing meetings held in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, at which she and A. T. Jones spoke, she stated that there was "the same spirit and power that attended the first and second angels' messages."³ She feared that the Adventist leaders would hold back the work:

Stand out of the way, Brethren. Do not interpose between God and His work. If you have no burden of the message yourselves, then prepare the way for those who have the burden of the message, for there are many souls to come out of the ranks of the world, out of the churches—even the Catholic church—whose zeal will far


² See EGW to J. E. White, April 7, 1889, Ltr 14a, 1889, 1888M, 1:296; idem, "Experience Following the Minneapolis Conference," MS 30, 1889, 1888M, 1:356-57, 380-81.

³ Ibid., p. 371.
exceed that of those who have stood in rank and file to proclaim the truth heretofore.¹

Those who were hindering the proclamation of this message, she said, were “like guide posts pointing in the wrong direction.”² Ellen White’s statements of this kind encouraged the conviction among Adventists that Waggoner’s message was part of a greater proclamation that would finally complete the work committed to the church of taking the gospel to the whole world. As a result, many Adventists came to view what Waggoner said as having very great importance, in terms of last-day developments. This eschatological expectancy became increasingly prominent for Adventists during the 1890s and, in some respects, continues to the present time.

Waggoner’s Lectures

Waggoner spoke at least twelve times at Minneapolis (besides the final question and answer period after the Conference had officially ended).³ His first two talks dealt with the duties and authority of church officers. On Monday, October 15, he began a series of at least nine lectures on the law and its relationship to the righteousness of Christ. J. H. Morrison, who was selected to present the opposing view, gave at least seven lectures, beginning Tuesday, October 23. Following his final rebuttal, Morrison reportedly left the

¹ Ibid., p. 378.


³ According to McReynolds, “Experiences at the General Conference in 1888,” MMM, p. 340, EJW gave “eleven studies.” While this number may include the two lectures on church administration, from the context it appears that McReynolds was referring only to EJW’s studies on law and gospel. Froom, p. 246, claims that “the first six were on the relation of grace to law, and faith to works, based chiefly on Galatians. The last five were on Righteousness by Faith in Christ as ‘all the fulness of the Godhead.’” This classification, however, does not at all correspond with WCW’s notes of EJW’s lectures and is therefore suspect.
conference, fearing that people would try to force him to abandon his position. On the last full day of the conference, Sabbath, November 3, Waggoner gave the morning sermon.

In his articles on the law and in *The Gospel in Galatians*, the published form of his letter to Butler, Waggoner had tended to be argumentative. Ellen White, however, had sent a letter dated February 18, 1887—just eight days after Waggoner wrote to Butler, in which she warned Waggoner and Jones that they were “more self-confident and less cautious than they should be.” Waggoner, she said, needed humility and meekness. In his reply, Waggoner expressed gratitude that God’s Spirit was still striving with him, revealing things of which he had been unconscious, and he admitted to cherishing “a spirit of criticism, which springs from the meanest kind of pride, I hate it, and want no more of it. I am determined that henceforth no word of mine, either in public or in private, shall tend to the detraction of any worker in the cause of God.” It appears that the spirit of his lectures at Minneapolis must have reflected this resolution. In the midst of obviously difficult circumstances, Waggoner began his series on the righteousness of Christ and the law by quoting Luke 2:10, 11: “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

In this first lecture, Waggoner stressed that Christ was our hope (1 Tim 1:1) and used Rom 2:13 to indicate that our problem is not with the law. The law justifies anyone

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2 EGW to EJW and ATJ, 18 February 1887, Ltr 37, 1887, *1888M*, 1:22, 25.

3 EJW to EGW, 1 April, 1887, *MMM*, pp. 71-72.

who obeys it. "The angels are doers of the law," he said.\(^1\) If Satan accuses the angels, "they can appeal to the law." The Roman Catholic Church shows itself to be Antichrist in pointing people to something other than Christ (pilgrimages, penance, etc.) for justification. But who was it that gave the law? "Did Christ speak the Law?" Waggoner asked. Apparently, he then answered the question with 1 Cor 10:9 and a reference to a book by Ellen White. It is possible he read the paragraph that contains this statement: "The same voice that declared the moral and ceremonial law . . . also uttered the words of instruction on the mount."\(^2\) Waggoner continued by saying, that "we believe in the Divinity of Christ. He is God. He created all things in Heaven and in the Earth." He deserves the same honor as the Father. More than this, "God," he said, "has revealed himself through Christ," by offering Himself "to suffer the penalty of disobedience" and redeeming "the condemned."\(^3\)

In the months prior to the Minneapolis Conference, Waggoner had penned a number of articles stressing man's inability to be justified apart from Christ. In one article, he called man's own attempts "outward righteousness." It "is as much righteousness as any man can attain by himself; but this is so far below the righteousness that God requires that it is in fact sin. It isn't real righteousness at all." Compared with the "spotlessness" of God's character, man's "own natural" righteousness "must be acknowledged to be but filthy rags." Because "no man is able of himself to keep the law, no matter how hard he may try," "all who trust in their own works, are necessarily under the curse of the law."\(^4\) On the other

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\(^1\) Ibid. Even though these are WCW's notes of what EJW said, the words are quoted as coming from EJW himself because in many places it is evident that they are essentially verbatim. Questions posed by EJW appear, as well as an apology in mid-sentence.


hand, Waggoner wrote three weeks later, by “trusting wholly” in “the Lamb of God who
taketh away the sin of the world . . . the sinner can find both pardon and holiness,—
cleansing from the guilt of sin, and from the love of it.”\(^1\) By linking pardon with a change of
heart, Waggoner displayed the same emphasis noticed in the above discussion on
justification.

Waggoner’s second lecture, which immediately followed the first, stressed that the
law is not contrary to God’s plan of salvation. He asked a question that appears to be
unparalleled in his writings up to this time: “If God’s acts are always in harmony with His
Law (am sorry for the If) is it not necessary for him to keep the Sabbath[?] How can he keep
the fifth Com[mandment?]” Waggoner answered his own question by saying that “God is not
a subject of law. But as it proceeded from Him, all his acts will be in harmony with it.”
Waggoner disagreed with those (like Butler) who “implied that God enacted part of His
Law, and then added to it.” “That is as men do,” he said, who need to “meet new
contingencies.” But God’s law is a perfect law from the beginning, providing “for all
creatures and all time. The 10 Com[mandments] are the Rule of Heaven and Earth.”\(^2\) As he
put it in The Gospel in Galatians: the law, as “the foundation of the throne of God, will
exist unchanged \(\text{to}\) all eternity as it has \(\text{from}\) all eternity.”\(^3\)

But, as Waggoner had said in an article two years before, the law justifies only
those who are “doers of it.” “It is not the fault of the law that it will not justify anybody; it
would do so if it were possible; it is the fault of man that it cannot.”\(^4\) Christ, therefore,

\(^2\) NWGW, Book One, p. 37, MMM, p. 421.
\(^3\) EJW, GC, p. 47.
rather than the law, is the only way sinful humanity can be justified (Rom 10:4).\(^1\) In June 1888, Waggoner said that obedience is only possible “by the faith of Jesus Christ.” “Those only will be saved whose faith reaches up to the throne where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and brings his own perfect righteousness down to round out and make perfect their own feeble efforts.” That he was thinking of more than forensic righteousness is apparent from what follows: “We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ; but Christ saves us from our sins, and not in them. He is not the minister of sin.”\(^2\) At Minneapolis, Waggoner began connecting the reception of Christ’s righteousness with receiving His life—a theme that was to become very important in the next period in this study. At Minneapolis, he told the delegates: “Christ justifies us, by giving us his Life,” and he quoted Rom 1:16, the gospel of Christ “is the power of God to salvation.”\(^3\)

Waggoner went on to say that the perfect law is the “highest plane” the Christian can reach.\(^4\) In the pamphlet he distributed at Minneapolis, he wrote that the law embodies all righteousness, even the righteousness of God, and nothing more can be required of any man than perfect obedience to it. That law is so broad that it covers every act and every thought, so that it is utterly impossible for a person to conceive of a sin which is not forbidden by the moral law.\(^5\)

Perfect compliance with the moral law alone is all that God can possibly require of any creature.\(^6\)

But, reaching this high plane is only possible through a knowledge of the law to its fullest extent. God’s promises are

\(^1\) NW CW, Book One, p. 37, MMM, p. 421.


\(^3\) NW CW, Book One, p. 37, MMM, p. 421.

\(^4\) NW CW, Book One, p. 38, MMM, p. 422.

\(^5\) EJW, GG, p. 18.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 21.
only on condition of perfect righteousness through Christ; and if men ever attain to this perfect righteousness, they must have the law in its fullest extent, and must know that many things were sinful, which they might previously have thought to be harmless. So the law entered that the offense might abound; and because the offense abounded, and men saw their depravity, they found that grace superabounded to cover their sins.¹

According to W. C. White, Waggoner told the delegates to the Minneapolis meeting that when men deviate from the law, they fall beneath it and are said to be “under it.”² Thus Waggoner introduced the subject that was next to be discussed.

Lectures three, four, and five (October 16 and 17) seem to have been pivotal in Waggoner’s gospel presentation. It appears that he began his third lecture with a conclusion reached on the basis of the two previous studies: “Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom 3:28). Perhaps for those in the audience who were afraid of disparaging the law, Waggoner was quick to add that works are necessary for making faith perfect (Jas 2:17, 22). He stressed, however, that this was not “to gain the favor of God or for justification,” but “to show our love to God.” This results in freedom from condemnation (Rom 8:1), we being “made free from sin” to become “the servants of righteousness” (Rom 6:18).³

In these three lectures, Waggoner discussed the various kinds of relations men have to the law. Some passages (Rom 2:12; Acts 14:15; 17) make reference to those who are said to be “without law.”⁴ In an article written just after the conference concluded, Waggoner wrote that while some have no awareness of a written law, everyone has a certain knowledge of right and wrong on the basis of which they are judged.

¹ Ibid., p. 29.
² NWCW, Book One, p. 38, MMM, p. 422.
³ NWCW, Book One, p. 39, MMM, p. 422.
⁴ Ibid.
When Adam sinned, he suffered a complete moral fall. He placed himself in direct antagonism to God, and in perfect accord with Satan. If he had been left to himself, his desires would have been as fully toward the ways of the devil as are those of the fallen angels. But God in his mercy interposed. The plan of salvation provided not only a way of escape from sin, but the desire to escape. . . . Whatever desire for a higher and holier life any man has is due to the mercy of God. God has implanted in the soul of every man some knowledge of right and wrong, and some natural desire for the right; and whenever a man gives himself wholly to sin, he does so only by resisting the strivings of the Spirit.1

During the 1888 meetings, in referring to Gal 5:18, Waggoner also discussed the meaning of the phrase “under the law.”2 In his pamphlet on Galatians, Waggoner wrote that this phrase, “wherever it occurs in the New Testament, means ‘condemned by the law.’ It never has any other signification.”3 He explained to the delegates that Rom 3:19 and 1 Cor 9:21, which seem to employ the phrase “under the law” with a different meaning, are not exceptions. Since the word hupo does not appear in those verses, the proper translation is “in the law,” meaning “subject to the law.”4 Waggoner understood these phrases, “under the law” and “in the law” in terms of being either outside of or in Christ.5 In The Gospel in Galatians, he described the change that takes place.

The law does not leave the man when he comes to Christ, but the man’s relation to it has changed. Before he was ‘under the law,’ now he is ‘in the law’ (Psalm 119:1) and the law is in him (Psalm 37:31). He is in Christ, who is the personification of the law, and in him he is made the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21.6

In 1884, in an article discussing this subject, Waggoner had written that “all men are under the law until they have faith in Christ; from that moment they are out from under the law,”

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2 NW CW, Book One, p. 39, MMM, p. 422.


5 NW CW, Book One, p. 47, MMM, p. 423.

6 EJW, GG, p. 53.

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unless they again bring themselves into condemnation by again yielding themselves to sin.”

At Minneapolis, Waggoner stated the matter a little differently: “He who is in the Law acts according to Law. He who is under the Law is acted upon according to Law.” Those who are under the law are actually slaves to sin (John 8:33-35). Rom 7:19-21 depicts “the experience of those who struggle with condemnation.” But this “is not [the] Christian’s experience.”

Waggoner quoted several Bible passages to show that all are in bondage and in need of deliverance (Prov 5:22; 2 Pet 2:19). Christ has brought this deliverance: “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb 2:14-15).

In the The Gospel in Galatians, Waggoner stressed the importance of Christ taking human nature, quoting Rom 1:3 which says that Christ “was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.’ What was the nature of David, ‘according to the flesh’?” Waggoner asked. “Sinful, was it not? . . . [Ps 51:5 quoted]. Don’t start in horrified astonishment; I am not implying that Christ was a sinner.”

He proceeded to explain:

His being made in all things like unto his brethren, is the same as his being made in the likeness of sinful flesh, ‘made in the likeness of men.’ One of the most encouraging things in the Bible is the knowledge that Christ took on him the nature of man; to know that his ancestors according to the flesh were sinners. When we read the record of the lives of the ancestors of Christ, and see that they had all the weaknesses and passions that we have, we find that no man has any right to excuse

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2 NW, Book One, p. 47, MMM, p. 423.
3 Ibid. Cf. EJW, “Christ the Only Source of Strength,” ST 14 (November 30, 1888): 726: “[Paul’s] recital, in the seventh of Romans, of his own experience, shows the utter powerlessness of any man to free himself from sin.”
4 NW, Book One, p. 47, MMM, p. 423.
5 EJW, GG, pp. 60-61.
his sinful acts on the ground of heredity. If Christ had not been made in all things like unto his brethren, then his sinless life would be no encouragement to us. We might look at it with admiration, but it would be the admiration that would cause hopeless despair.

From birth, Christ “began to suffer the temptations and infirmities that are incident to sinful flesh.” More than taking man’s nature, Christ also took man’s sin and condemnation from birth, “not his own sin, but ours; for as in his death, so in his life, our sins were counted as his. . . . It was not on his own account, but ours.” “From the earliest childhood the cross was ever before him.” Christ “went to the very lowest depths to which man had fallen, in order that he might lift man to his own exalted throne; yet he never ceased to be God, or lost a particle of his holiness.” Only thus could He deliver human beings from the bondage of sin and penalty of death.

I cannot understand how God could be manifest in the flesh, and in the likeness of sinful flesh. I do not know how the pure and holy Saviour could endure all the infirmities of humanity, which are the result of sin, and be reckoned as a sinner, and suffer the death of a sinner. I simply accept the Scripture statement, that only so could he be the Saviour of men; and I rejoice in that knowledge, because since he was made sin, I may be made the righteousness of God in him.

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1 Ibid., p. 61.

2 Ibid., pp. 63, 62. Replying to GIB’s opposition to Christ being bom under condemnation, EJW said: “You are shocked at the idea that Jesus was bom under the condemnation of the law, because he never committed a sin in his life. But you admit that on the cross he was under the condemnation of the law. What! had he then committed sin? Not by any means. Well, then, if Jesus could be under the condemnation of the law at one time in his life, and be sinless, I see no reason why he could not be under the condemnation of the law at another time, and still be sinless” (ibid., p. 62).

3 Ibid., p. 63. Cf. EGW, The Desire of Ages, pp. 311-12: “Christ is the ladder that Jacob saw, the base resting on the earth, and the topmost round reaching to the gate of heaven, to the very threshold of glory. If that ladder had failed by a single step of reaching the earth, we should have been lost. But Christ reaches us where we are. He took our nature and overcame, that we through taking His nature might overcome. Made “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3), He lived a sinless life.”

4 EJW, GG, p. 62.
Returning to the imagery of Rom 7, Waggoner said in his fourth lecture that “Paul was in prison. Manacles [were] on his hands.” In *The Gospel in Galatians*, this issue was presented in more general terms:

It is the law which arrests the criminal; the sheriff is simply the visible agent of the law. It is the law which locks the prisoner in his cell; the jailer, the iron walls, and heavy bars which surround the prisoner, are simply the emblems of the iron hand of the law which is upon him. . . . So it is with the sinner against God's government. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, so that there is no possibility that he can escape arrest. As soon as he has sinned, he is seized by the law, and is at once under condemnation of death. . . . Now he is shut in on every side by the law. There is not one of the commandments which is not against him, because there is not a man on earth who has not broken every one of them. . . . The Spirit of God causes the prison walls to close in upon him, his cell becomes narrower and narrower, and he feels oppressed; and then he makes desperate struggles to escape. He starts out in one way, but there the first commandment rises up against him and will not let him go free. He turns in another direction, but he has taken the name of God in vain, and the third commandment refuses to let him get his liberty in that direction. . . . So with all the commandments. They utterly refuse to grant him liberty, because he has violated every one of them, and only those who keep the commandments can walk at liberty.

The only way of escape is through Christ, as Waggoner had observed in 1886: “The law literally drives the sinner to Christ, by shutting up every other way of freedom from guilt.”

“All his attempts to serve God are useless and vain,” Waggoner told the Minneapolis gathering, “until he receives deliverance through Christ,” who came “to preach deliverance to the captives” (Luke 4:18–20). In *The Gospel in Galatians*, he wrote: “All are in the same bondage—all are under the law—and none can be delivered from their prison until they come to Christ. He is the only door to freedom.”

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1 NWCW, Book One, p. 49, MMM, p. 423.


3 Ibid.

4 NWCW, Book One, p. 49, MMM, p. 423.

5 EJW, GG, p. 51.
In his fifth lecture, Waggoner identified these two opposite conditions of bondage to sin and freedom through Christ with the two “marriages” depicted in Rom 7:1-6. The “fruit” of the first husband shows that this husband symbolizes our “own sinful nature” and “carnal desires.” We are married to them. “We are in love with our carnal natures,” while God wants us to “hate” them. “The law shows the degradation of the union”—it is “unlawful and the end is death.” On the other hand, “Christ wants us to be united to Him. He proposes a union with Himself.”¹ These are the only two choices available. Our whole head is sick and our whole heart faint (Isa 1:4-6). From the natural heart proceed all kinds of evil (Mark 7:21-22). We do not want to accept the offer of the second husband (Christ), “because when the old man dies, we die too.” Yet, the old man is going to die—if not now, then at the second death. “The wages of sin is death, without exception.” The choice is ours: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” (Rom 6:1).²

In lectures six and seven (October 18 and 19), Waggoner applied to the book of Galatians the principles he had derived previously. All that we know about his sixth lecture is from Uriah Smith’s summary:

The first and second chapters of Galatians, in connection with Acts 15, were partially presented by him to show that the same harmony existed there as elsewhere; that the key to the book was “justification by faith in Christ,” with the emphasis on the latter word; that liberty in Christ was always freedom from sin, and that separation from Christ to some other means of justification always brought bondage. He stated incidentally that “the law of Moses” and “the law of God” were not distinctive terms as applied to the ceremonial and moral laws, and cited Num. xv., 22-24, and Luke ii., 23-24, as proof. He closed at 10:15 by asking those present to compare Acts xv., 7-11, with Rom. ii., 20-25. Appeals were made by Brother Waggoner and Sister White to the brethren, old and young, to seek God, put away

¹ NW CW , Book One, p. 49, MMM, p. 423.
² NW CW , Book One, pp. 49, 51, MMM, p. 423.
all spirit and prejudice and opposition, and strive to come into the unity of faith in the bonds of brotherly love.\textsuperscript{1}

W. C. White's notes of the seventh lecture reveal that Waggoner continued his comparison of Acts 15 with Galatians. The command of the Jerusalem council for the Gentiles to abstain from pollution with idols "in a way covers all the 10 Commandments." Although Adventists "have taught that the typical law was done away," it appears if that is true that the Apostles fastened on the Gentiles "things done away years before."

Referring to Gal 2:19, Waggoner asked whether it was the ceremonial law that "killed" Paul.\textsuperscript{2} Waggoner believed, as he had in 1886, that there "was nothing in the ordinances of the ceremonial law to condemn anyone. Condemnation could come only through violation of the ten commandments."\textsuperscript{3} Those neglecting the ceremonial law show their unbelief, but are "condemned by the moral law alone, because of their sins; as Christ said, 'he that believeth not is condemned already.'"\textsuperscript{4} Waggoner made the further point to the Minneapolis delegates that "if favor could be obtained by good works, penance, etc." then "Christ need not have died."\textsuperscript{5} "Justification," Waggoner had written in 1886, "has reference only to the moral law. From the transgression of that, man needs justification; but the law cannot justify any sinner, it can only condemn. And so it drives him to Christ, that he may be justified by faith."\textsuperscript{6}

In \textit{The Gospel in Galatians}, Waggoner insisted that Gal 3 "is speaking of individual experience, and not of dispensational changes. There can be no Christian


\textsuperscript{2} NWCW, Book One, p. 51, \textit{MMM}, p. 424.

\textsuperscript{3} EJW, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 9," \textit{ST} 12 (September 2, 1886): 534.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{5} NWCW, Book One, p. 51, \textit{MMM}, p. 424.

\textsuperscript{6} EJW, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 9," September 2, 1886, p. 534.
experience, no faith, no justification, no righteousness, that is not an individual matter. People are saved as individuals, and not as nations. Forgiveness in the Old Testament was no sham forgiveness. There was no virtue in the sacrifice, which was typical, yet the pardon was as real as any that has ever been given since the crucifixion. The covenant made with Abraham (Gal 3:17) and the second (or new) covenant are "the same," Waggoner noted to the Minneapolis delegates. The ceremonial law "made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did" (Heb 7:19). This discussion with regard to the covenants intensified in the coming years.

W. C. White did not record anything regarding Waggoner's eighth and ninth lectures (October 21 and 22). In fact, it is only from newspaper reports that we know of them at all. Our information about them is limited to their titles. Lecture eight was entitled, "Two Covenants, and Their Relation to the Law," while lecture nine was described as "a discussion of law and Galatians, or Justification by Faith." Waggoner probably continued his exposition of Galatians, covering chapter four in lecture eight and the rest of the book in what was apparently his final lecture. Perhaps it was at some point in these two lectures that Waggoner discussed Christian perfection. It was apparently presented by Waggoner at some point in his lectures, because Morrison, in one of his rebuttals, took issue with what he considered an extreme view. Morrison inveighed against the "Popular Doctrine [that] says Two leaps carry a man from sin to perfection" (an evident reference to the idea of

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1 EJW, GG, p. 45.
3 NW CW, Book One, p. 53, MMM, p. 424.
6 NW CW, Book One, p. 73, MMM, p. 427.
“instantaneous sanctification” prevalent among the holiness groups). It may be that Waggoner was misunderstood as teaching this, even though, as we have seen, he strongly denounced this view. Morrison identified perfection with heaven (Col 3:1),
which, he said, is “a place not so easily reached.” Phil 3:12 was quoted, apparently to show that perfection is something we do not attain in this life. Morrison concluded this particular lecture by saying: “I believe in a certain kind of perfection. Perfect submission to the will of God.”

Ellen White, apparently responding to sentiments like these, said in her Sabbath afternoon sermon on October 20:

We hear many excuses: I cannot live up to this or that. What do you mean by this or that? Do you mean that it was an imperfect sacrifice that was made for the fallen race upon Calvary, that there is not sufficient grace and power granted us that we may work away from our own natural defects and tendencies, that it was not a whole Saviour that was given us? or do you mean to cast reproach upon God? Well, you say, it was Adam’s sin. You say, I am not guilty of that, and I am not responsible for his guilt and fall. Here all these natural tendencies are in me, and I am not to blame if I act out these natural tendencies. Who is to blame? Is God? Why did God let Satan have this power over human nature? These are accusations against the God of heaven, and He will give you an opportunity, if you want it, of finally bringing your accusations against Him. Then He will bring His accusations against you when you are brought into His court of judgment.

Soon after the close of the Minneapolis conference, Waggoner penned two articles on the importance of having more than “a form of the truth.” What is needed is not “love for the truth” so much as “the love of the truth,” which is “the love of God . . . a portion of the same love which God has in his heart for man.” This same idea is also linked to perfection of the remnant people of God in a companion article in the same issue:

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1 Incorrectly transcribed by the EGW Estate as Gal 3:1. Note the original in MMM, p. 467.

2 NWCW, Book One, p. 75, MMM, p. 427. However, Knight, p. 37, does not seem to think this is an important factor, as it is mentioned only once in NWCW.


No one can keep the commandments without faith in Jesus, and no one ever has real faith in Jesus except as he is driven to it by the terms of the violated law, and by a sincere desire to have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him.

The truth which makes free is not an outward compliance with the ten commandments.

Keeping the commandments is something more than a form. It consists of having every act, every word, and every thought just such as they would be if Jesus were dwelling within the man, acting and speaking and thinking through him. It consists in acting and speaking in every instance just as Jesus would act or speak under the same circumstances. Surely this cannot be done unless Christ dwells in the heart.

But will there ever be any people on the earth who will have attained to that perfection of character? Indeed there will be. Says the prophet: "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth." Zeph. 3:13. When the Lord comes there will be a company who will be found "complete in him," having not their own righteousness, but that perfect righteousness of God, which comes by faith of Jesus Christ. To perfect this work in the hearts of individuals, and to prepare such a company, is the work of the Third Angel's Message. That message, therefore, is not a mass of dry theories, but is a living, practical reality.

Happy will those persons be who form the remnant of Israel, in whose hearts the righteousness of God's law of truth is perfected. For them mansions will be prepared in that glorious day wherein there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, "neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie" Rev. 21:27.

In this article, as in earlier ones examined above in connection with sanctification, Waggoner's understanding of justification and God's righteousness was distinct yet inseparable from the concept that God's law will be perfectly fulfilled in the lives of God's people. Waggoner saw this as inherent in the Third Angel's Message, which prepares a remnant for Christ's return and a home in heaven.

Ultimately, the reason for linking perfection and salvation was eschatological:

We wish the reader to keep in view the main thought in our study,—that God desires that all men should be saved. His love is as boundless as the universe, and reaches to the least of his creatures. But he cannot save a wicked person. Sin is entirely out of harmony with his character, and he cannot endure it in his presence. Neither could he be happy in the presence of a pure and holy God. Nay, more, it would be impossible for the sinner even to look upon God. Everything that dwells with God must be in perfect accord with him.


At the same time, Waggoner stressed that this is all of grace, the law being the agent of conviction:

No one can make himself righteous. The sinner studies the law, and learns what sort of character he ought to have, but that only condemns him the more. It provides no way of escape, but drives him toward the door of mercy, which is ever open. Then, instead of profitless struggles, being justified by faith he has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the law proves to be the strongest ally of the promise by faith.

The law exercises this role only "until the Seed comes to whom and through whom the promise was made" at the second advent, because "then God's people being all righteous, it ceases to drive them. They are 'in Christ,' and the law is in their hearts. In Christ they find everything." *

Summary and Conclusions

Through articles written for The Signs of the Times and other periodicals, as well as through the controversy surrounding the Minneapolis experience, Waggoner developed an intricate soteriology and eschatology during this early period, 1882-1888. His overall framework of eschatology was characteristically Seventh-day Adventist, stressing events of the present and future.

Waggoner's proclamation of the gospel was based on God's initiative grace, of which man is totally undeserving. However, man must also respond to God's gift of salvation through faith in Christ and obedience through Christ's strength. Everyone inherits an inclination to sin from Adam, but that is no excuse for sinning. Justification is first and foremost, God's pardon and acquittal of sinful man and the work of transformation that makes him a new creature in Christ. Yet, this moment of justification is perpetuated as works of righteousness are manifested that evidence man's continued faith.

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* Ibid; cf. EJW, "Comments on Galatians 3. No. 6," ST 12 (August 12, 1886): 486: "Then there will be no need for copies of the ten commandments written in books, or even engraved on rock of man's hewing... The law will have done its work in bringing men to Christ, and thus to perfect obedience to it, and then 'They shall all know the Lord,' for his law shall be in their hearts, and his name shall be in their foreheads."
Waggoner regarded both justification and sanctification as necessary to salvation; however, he made a clear distinction between the two. Waggoner did not subscribe to, and in fact strongly denounced, the concept of “instantaneous sanctification” that was advocated by the holiness groups during this period. Sanctification was a process lasting a lifetime. Christ’s life enables the believer to overcome and at last stand complete in Him. The certain result of a life yielded to God and obedient to His law is perfect obedience.

Waggoner understood perfection in terms of Christ’s character—the law was fully formed in Christ’s heart and it may also be fully formed in the hearts of His followers. But the believer who is perfect in Christ does not boast of his holiness; on the contrary, he feels even more unworthy. In addition, although there is no room for sinning, there is always room for advancement in the Christian life.

Christ assumed human nature in order to lift man up from the degradation into which he had fallen. Christ bore from birth man’s sins, as well as his nature, that He might redeem the world and restore in man His own image of righteousness.

The aspects of Waggoner’s eschatology under particular scrutiny in this study center on Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary. The animal sacrifices during Old Testament times prefigured Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice. The work of atonement was begun, not completed, on the cross. Pardon has always been available, but sins are not “blotted out” until Christ’s final work of atonement in heaven is finished. The day of atonement ritual of the earthly sanctuary was a prefiguration of a work of “investigative judgment” in heaven.

The investigative judgment began in 1844, as part of the process of events surrounding the second coming of Christ. Sometimes, in following the language of Scripture, Waggoner identified the judgment with Christ’s return. The judgment in heaven determines who are “worthy” to be resurrected or translated into Christ’s eternal kingdom, at the second advent when judgment is executed for the righteous and against the wicked. The decisions regarding who is saved or lost are made on the basis of the records of each person’s life as
compared with the standard of God's ten commandment law, which is His own perfect righteousness. Sins will be blotted out from the records of the righteous but will remain to condemn those whose hearts have not been reconciled by infinite love and who, therefore, would not be happy in heaven.

The work of those who bear the "Third Angel's Message" is to proclaim the gospel in its purity, witnessing, through their blameless lives, to Christ's righteousness. A polarization will occur that will separate out a "remnant" prepared for the coming of the Lord.

The Minneapolis Conference of 1888 gave more prominence to Waggoner's proclamation, partly as a result of determined opposition from the "leading brethren" that began in 1886. Although very few of the actual words spoken by Waggoner in Minneapolis are known, the principal features of his message can be reconstructed from notes made at the conference and Waggoner's writings before and after the session.

What was perceived to be at stake in Minneapolis varied depending on which side a person stood. Butler thought the landmark doctrines of the church were threatened at a time when national sentiment was strong for legislation making sacred the false Sabbath. Waggoner, on the other hand, believed that the main issue concerned how people are saved. He saw the rejection of Christ by the Galatians in Paul's day being repeated through a legalistic mentality in his day. The difference between Butler and Waggoner may be seen in terms of law and gospel: Butler believed that an overemphasis on the gospel threatened the law, while Waggoner believed both the law and the gospel were threatened by a legalistic approach.

Other fundamental issues were also at stake, including the proper way of establishing church doctrine and resolving theological controversy. The place of the Bible in understanding truth versus tradition and mere consensus were at odds. Many were unwilling to re-examine their views in light of convincing Bible evidence to the contrary. In
place of a commitment to investigation, a spirit prevailed at Minneapolis calling for church legislation against what was thought to be heresy. Coupled with this attitude of closed-mindedness, an un-Christlike spirit of intolerance prevailed against those who differed with the views of church leaders. Together, these attitudes combined to prevent the majority from appreciating what Waggoner presented at the General Conference session.

Waggoner's lectures at Minneapolis were not primarily centered around Galatians, but stressed rather that salvation comes only through faith in Christ who frees from sin's bondage all who put their trust in Him. Of Waggoner's nine lectures on the law in connection with Christ's righteousness, only two of them are known to have concerned Galatians (his final two lectures also may have dealt with Galatians, but no records of their content have yet come to light). Criticism of Waggoner's views prevailed before, during, and especially after his presentations. Ellen White staunchly defended his right to speak, appealing for an open discussion on both sides. Ellen White's characterization of Waggoner's message as placing the "faith of Jesus" where it belongs in the Third Angel's Message—alongside obedience to the commandments—constitutes, perhaps, the best summary of what he said at Minneapolis.

Waggoner stressed that no one has and no one can obey the commandments in his own strength. Only those who receive the righteousness of Christ find salvation; such persons are saved from their sins, not in them. The perfect righteousness of Christ, as embodied in the law, is the ideal that may be attained by the Christian. Under the condemnation of the law, a person's struggle can only end in certain defeat; in Christ, there is the assurance of complete deliverance.

Sinners cannot be justified by the law. The law serves the purpose of driving them to Christ so that they may be justified by faith and attain to a state of perfect righteousness through Christ, who lived. This was unsettling to some at Minneapolis, who possibly confused Waggoner's teaching about perfection with the instantaneous sanctification of the
popular holiness groups. Instead, Waggoner stressed that obedience is only possible through “faith in Jesus,” which consists of more than an outward form; it amounts to living just as Jesus would and ultimately results in the perfection of character that will be manifested in the remnant who are prepared for Christ’s appearing. Waggoner believed this to be a fundamental part of the Third Angel’s Message, making it a living and practical reality, rather than the dry theoretical doctrine he perceived in its portrayal by others.

Placing Christ and His righteousness in the heart of the message given by the church made it a perfect whole and revived those to whom Waggoner preached. It is impossible to understand the significance justification had for Waggoner apart from this “larger view” of what it would ultimately accomplish in God’s last-day church. Waggoner’s eschatology, as it was formulated during this period, was informed and transformed by what he saw to be the beauty of Christ’s righteousness freely offered to mankind. His doctrine of salvation was derived from Bible study, not an a priori view of eschatology, as is witnessed by the direction his reasoning took—constantly seeking to exalt the glory of Christ’s work for us and in us. Possibly also for this reason, a tension remained between Waggoner’s view of a justification that takes place at the moment of conversion and what he called an “ongoing” justification. Whether this would lead to a confusion of justification and sanctification was not immediately obvious. Waggoner clearly differentiated between them during this period.

Making minute distinctions between justification and sanctification, defining where one ends and the other begins, can result in an unraveling and incapacitation of the message of salvation. The controversy in 1888 clearly reveals the danger of this overly theoretical approach. When theology becomes primarily a cognitive, rather than an experiential, endeavor, the result can be destructive. The “spirit of Minneapolis” certainly illustrates this. A similar danger exists if experience becomes the focus to the exclusion of Bible doctrine. The importance of Minneapolis has to do with what was said as well as the way
it was said. This tension and the direction that Waggoner's thinking moved subsequently, in terms of soteriology and eschatology, is the subject of chapter two.
CHAPTER II

1889-1895: YEARS OF CLARITY OR OF TRANSITION?

Significant changes took place in Waggoner's life and theology during the years from 1889 through 1895. The latter part of the period (1892-1895) has generally been neglected because Waggoner moved to London, England, to take up responsibilities as editor of *The Present Truth*, thus making the bulk of his theological works less accessible to later researchers. Some evidence suggests that this period of Waggoner's life marked the beginning of apostasy. In his so-called *Confession of Faith*, penned apparently just before his death in 1916, Waggoner assailed the Adventist doctrine of the sanctuary and investigative judgment as incompatible with the gospel, and claimed he had given it up "twenty-five years" earlier (that is, in 1891). McMahon has divided Waggoner's theological development into three stages, the last beginning in 1892 and described as a time of theological decline and the espousal of pantheistic sentiments. After 1892, according to McMahon, "no evidence [exists] that he ever regained his former soundness."

This chapter explores and attempts to understand just how far Waggoner's later theology deviated from his earlier views of soteriology and eschatology. As in the previous

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3 McMahon, pp. 16-17.
chapter, a brief outline of important events in Waggoner's life and a sketch of trends in his eschatology precede the treatment of his theology. The topics investigated during this period fall into the following categories: forgiveness and justification, the relation of faith and works in sanctification, the two covenants, God's power as manifested in creation and redemption, atonement and reconciliation, Christ's divine-human nature, the heavenly sanctuary and investigative judgment, and preparation for Christ's return.

Survey of Waggoner and His Eschatology

Biographical Sketch

Although Waggoner left Minneapolis when the General Conference session came to an end on November 4, 1888, he did not leave his difficulties behind. Several more battles loomed ahead. At the final scheduled minister's meeting in Minneapolis, Ellen White lamented: "If the ministers will not receive the light, I want to give the people a chance; perhaps they may receive it."¹ That is exactly what she did. During the next couple of years, she, Waggoner, and Jones crisscrossed the country, conducting ministerial institutes and speaking at camp meetings. The Review and Herald glowed with reports from places such as South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and Ottawa, Kansas.² Ellen White, Waggoner, and Jones spoke at a camp meeting in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, shortly after a flood devastated the city. Ellen White wrote:

As the precious message of present truth was spoken to the people by Brn. Jones and Waggoner, the people saw new beauty in the third angel's message, and they were greatly encouraged. They testified to the fact that they had never before attended meetings where they had received so much instruction and such precious light.³

¹ EGW, Morning Talk, MS 9, 1888, 1888M, 1:152.


Many ministers apparently accepted the message along with the members. Ellen White over the next several years would emphasize "that God had chosen Jones and Waggoner to bear a special message to the Adventist Church." This, said Knight, "was a heady endorsement in a denomination that believed Ellen White was God's prophet." It would indeed be unusual if Waggoner never felt the temptation to think highly of himself. It is interesting to notice that within a period of five months during 1889, he published two separate articles on the subject of humility. He probably pondered the subject frequently.

A man can live a just life only by retaining that humble simplicity that will lead him to distrust himself and to trust God. If when he has run well for a season, by the grace of God, he begins to think that the strength which has enabled him to gain victories resides within himself, then he will fall... But there is no such danger to the humble minded man, for, as Bunyan aptly puts it—"He that is down needs fear no fall." In the second of the two articles, he wrote: "The greater a man's faith is, the less will he think of himself." One can easily imagine the battle Waggoner may have been fighting against pride.

Another struggle Waggoner faced shortly after Minneapolis was deaths in the family. His father died on April 17, 1889, while serving as a missionary in Europe. As if this were not enough grief, less than two months later his only son died at the age of nine months, eight days. Waggoner keenly felt the pain of these two losses. His conflicting feelings are obvious from a sentence in an article on the return of Jesus: "A Christian's grief

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1 Knight, pp. 46-47.


may be even more acute than that of the heathen, for Christianity tends to elevate, and to quicken the sensibilities, but it will always be tempered by hope."¹

Compounding Waggoner's personal struggles were the negative feelings still cherished toward him by many church leaders. Delegates to the 1889 General Conference session did not manifest the spirit that had prevailed a year earlier at Minneapolis. "There seems to be no dissension," wrote Ellen White; "thus far, not one voice of opposition is heard. Unity seems to prevail."² Yet things were not as they seemed. Later Ellen White felt compelled to say that "there was no reception" of the message presented at the 1889 General Conference session.³ According to Knight, "a hard-core resistance [to Waggoner and Jones] continued in Iowa and Battle Creek in particular."⁴ Uriah Smith actively sought to discredit the message with an article in the Review entitled, "Our Righteousness."⁵

Ministerial Institute of 1889-90

The resistance came out into the open shortly after the 1889 General Conference session during a ministerial institute held for about fifty students at Battle Creek from November 5, 1889 to March 25, 1890.⁶ "What a battle I am obliged to fight!" lamented Ellen White.

My brethren seem to judge me as taking positions that are not necessary. ... All the opposition or gainsaying to make my testimony of none effect only compels me, by

² EGW to Mary White, October 29, 1889, Ltr 76, 1889, 1888M, 2:450.
³ EGW, Sermon (incomplete), MS 2, 1890, 1888M, 2:615.
⁴ Knight, p. 49.
⁶ These dates are given by Knight, p. 50.
the urgency of the Spirit of God, [to make] a more decided repetition, and to stand on
the light revealed with all the force of the strength God has given me.¹

Some were working against Waggoner "in an underhanded way,"² but Ellen White vigorously
supported him. She described how she had stood "side by side with the messengers of God
[Waggoner and Jones] that I knew where His messengers, that I knew had a message for His
people. I gave my message with them right in harmony with the very message they were
bearing."³ Ellen White did not hold up either man as infallible; but clearly she held what
they said in very high esteem.

I believe without a doubt that God has given precious truth at the right time to
Brother Jones and Brother Waggoner. Do I place them as infallible? Do I say that
they will not make a statement or have an idea that cannot be questioned or that
cannot be error? Do I say so? No, I do not say any such thing. Nor do I say that of
any man in the world. But I do say God has sent light, and do be careful how you
treat it.⁴

The most significant aspect of Waggoner's lectures at the institute was his
presentation of the two covenants. Although apparently no record of precisely what
Waggoner said is available, material from the General Conference Archives makes it clear
that his understanding of the covenants stirred considerable controversy. Wieland and
Short, who have studied the correspondence from Dan T. Jones, then General Conference
Secretary, have described the reaction of one of Waggoner's critics.

¹ EGW, Diary Entry, January 7, 1890, MS 25, 1890, 1888M, 2:521.
³ EGW, Remarks at Bible School, Battle Creek, Michigan, February 3, 1890, MS 9,
1890, 1888M, 2:542.
⁴ EGW, Remarks at Bible School, Battle Creek, Michigan, February 7, 1890, MS 56,
every objection, however small, and make it as large as possible, and preserve it for future
use. No one has said that we shall find perfection in any man's investigations, but this I do
know, that our churches are dying for the want of teaching on the subject of righteousness by
faith in Christ, and for kindred truths. No matter by whom light is sent, we should open our
hearts to receive it in the meekness of Christ."
Waggoner one day announced in his Bible class that on the next Monday morning he would discuss the two covenants. . . .

But when Dan Jones heard the news about the two covenants, he could not contain himself. He immediately took steps to stop Waggoner, appealing to Uriah Smith and even to Ellen White for support.¹

Ellen White described how some tried to “produce a position on the covenants to vary from the position that Brother Waggoner has presented.” She accused them of turning away “from plain light because you were afraid that the law question in Galatians would have to be accepted.” While she had “no burden” regarding the correct view of the law in Galatians, this does not appear to be the case with the issue over the covenants. She said she was shown “that evidences in regard to the covenants were clear and convincing.”²

Near the end of the session, many church leaders were angered when they read E. J. Waggoner’s “revision” of the Sabbath School lessons dealing with the Epistle to the Hebrews, written by his father, in which much of the younger Waggoner’s teaching on the two covenants appeared.³ Waggoner’s critics felt confirmed in the suspicion that a deliberate attempt was being made to alter the fundamental theology of the Adventist

¹ Wieland and Short, 1888 Re-Examined, rev. ed., p. 46.
² EGW to US, March 8, 1890, Ltr 59, 1890, 1888M, 2:604. Contrary to Knight, pp. 51-53, 69, EGW was concerned over the issue of the covenants. See EGW, Sermon, Battle Creek, Michigan, March 8, 1890, MS 4, 1890, 1888M, 2:596-97; EGW to WCW and Mary White, March 9, 1890, Ltr 82, 1890, 1888M, 2:617; EGW to WCW and Mary White, March 10, 1890, Ltr 30, 1890, 1888M, 2:623. Knight, p. 52, fails to give due weight to EGW’s interpretation of the importance of the covenants, choosing to accept D. T. Jones’s view that “it is not what we believe that she feels exercised about” (italics supplied by Knight), quoting D. T. Jones to J. D. Pegg, March 17, 1890; cf. Wieland and Short, 1888 Re-Examined, rev. ed., pp. 38-40, 45-51. It appears that the similarity between EGW’s understanding of the covenants as it is found in Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 363-73, and EJW’s view (see above, pp. 38-40) continued to raise vigorous questions regarding her inspiration and may have delayed distribution of Patriarchs and Prophets (EGW, Diary Entries, December 23, 1890, MS 53, 1890, 1888M, 2:771; idem, Diary Entries, January 6, 1891, MS 40, 1891, 1888M, 2:872).
³ [EJW], “Sabbath-School Lessons on the Letter to the Hebrews,” First Quarter 1890, The Bible Students Library 28 (Oakland, California: 1889). This was actually the concluding half of a two-part series, the first part of which carried his father’s initials, “JHW.”
church.¹ Their animosity was so apparent during the institute that Waggoner and Jones spent an hour explaining that there was no malicious intent. Following the explanation, some were still skeptical and probed Waggoner and Jones with questions, but finally they admitted that all "seemed to be satisfactory."²

A second ministerial institute was held in the fall of 1890, with more than 130 students in attendance.³ Waggoner, on a visit with Ellen White, "rejoiced that there was an entirely different atmosphere pervading the meetings than was in the [previous] ministerial institute."⁴ These ministerial institutes, according to M. C. Wilcox, "contributed greatly" to the success of the 1891 General Conference session held from March 5 to 25 in the Tabernacle at Battle Creek, Michigan.⁵ Wilcox was glad that, as a result of Waggoner’s presentations at the General Conference, thoughtful attention was being given to

the foundation doctrine of all others, justification by faith in Christ. And what is better than all, this subject has been considered not as a theory, but as a fact, not in its possible narrow limitation in which the term justification is sometimes used, that is, mere forgiveness of past sins, but the subject has been considered in all its fulness, comprehending all the fulness of Christ in him who recognizes Christ by faith.... The same power which is an answer to faith in justification is an answer to faith in keeping the soul from evil and sin.⁶

It appears, however, that even though Waggoner was given many opportunities to promulgate his ideas, a significant number of leaders and workers still harbored resentment and antagonism toward him and his message. Speaking to the 1891 General Conference delegates, Ellen White said: "The Lord has been calling his people. In a most marked

¹ See Knight, p. 51.

² See EGW to WCW and Mary White, March 13, 1890, Ltr 83, 1890,1888M, 2:627.

³ Knight, p. 50.

⁴ EGW, Diary Entries, January 13, 1891, MS 40, 1891, 1888M, 2:876.

⁵ Olson, p. 131.

manner he has revealed his divine presence. But the message and the messengers have not been received but despised." 1 During the 1891 General Conference session the decisions were made to send E. J. Waggoner to England and Ellen White to Australia. 2 Ellen White had expressed uncertainty about the wisdom of her move to the land "down under." Later she said that God's will for her in the matter had been contingent on the attitude of leaders in Battle Creek toward her prophetic gift. She observed that there had been "so great a willingness" to have her leave. Had church leaders "stood in the right position," she said, "the move would not have been made at that time. The Lord would have worked for Australia by other means." 3 Wieland and Short have considered these actions to be indicative of the negative sentiment of church leadership who "wanted both Ellen White and Waggoner out of the way." 4

Waggoner's Move to England

Waggoner served as editor of The Signs of the Times until May 11, 1891, when his name began to appear on the masthead only as a "special contributor." On that very date the following year he boarded the steamship "Teutonic" and sailed for England with his

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1 EGW, Article Read at Gen. Conf. of 1891, Battle Creek, Michigan, March 1891, MS 30, 1890, 1888M, 2:913. Olson, pp. 132-33, is more optimistic than the evidence appears to justify in limiting this opposition to "a few men."

2 The request of the Foreign Mission Board that EGW go to Australia was made subject to "her own judgment, and the light she may have in the matter." See Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White, vol. 4 The Australian Years, 1891-1900 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983) p. 14.


4 Wieland and Short, 1888 Re-Examined, rev. ed., p. 75. Cf. Wallenkampf, What Every Adventist Should Know, p. 62: "Apparently some on the committee wanted to free America from her influence. Along with her, her son Will's influence would also be removed. Apparently the people who suggested and eagerly supported this plan thought that by removing the Whites from Battle Creek and America, they could stop the swelling tide of the 1888 message."
family to work as editor of The Present Truth. He arrived in Liverpool on May 18, 1892. Before settling down to the work in England, however, Waggoner conducted ministerial institutes on the Continent with O. A. Olsen, President of the General Conference. Adventists in London eagerly awaited his arrival. Said the outgoing editor of The Present Truth:

After attending conferences in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Switzerland he will take up the work in this city, devoting his energies chiefly to the editorial management of "The Present Truth" and to such other literary work as his time will permit of. It is almost a year since we were encouraged to hope that the Doctor would come to this field, and we are sure our friends in this country will rejoice that he has decided to do so, and that the time is so near when he will arrive.

Although a few articles by him appeared early in the year, it was not until after his arrival in London on July 17, 1892, that his articles appeared regularly. Once in London, Waggoner traveled very little, apparently preferring to spend the majority of his energies writing.

The Adventist work progressed unhindered until late 1894 and early 1895, when the International Tract Society (publishers of The Present Truth) began experiencing legal difficulties. British authorities demanded that they stop employing women and children on Sunday in violation of the Factory Act. Although the publishing house had been ignoring this legislation for a number of years, it was not until now that their Sunday operation was

1 [M. C. Wilcox], "Field Notes," ST 18 (May 30, 1892): 461.
2 [M. C. Wilcox], "Field Notes," ST 18 (June 13, 1892): 493.
3 "General Conference Proceedings, Twenty-fourth Meeting," GCB 4 (March 26, 1891): 249.
4 PT 8 (April 21, 1892): 128.
5 This date for EJW's arrival is found in PT 8 (July 28, 1892): 240.
challenged. Waggoner described the uncertainty that ensued as to what should be the Adventist response:

For several weeks it was complied with, along with the other requirements. The women were told not to come to work on Sundays. But the inconsistency of such a course in those who are teaching the third angel's message became more and more apparent, until finally, after careful deliberation, it was decided that no difference could be made between Sunday and the other working days of the week. Accordingly, work was resumed on Sundays as usual, and the prosecutions and fines... have resulted.¹

Since the publishing house also decided not to pay what they considered unjust fines, the State began seizing their property for public auction in order to satisfy the judgment.

Three rooms—the counting office, the manager's room, and the editorial room, are almost entirely stripped of their contents, even to the carpets and linoleum on the floors. All the tables and chairs have been taken from the folding room. Other rooms have been stripped of what was movable. By an act of grace on the part of the bailiff, one chair was left in the entire building.

But the last act in the affair is the seizing and removing of the engine. The other machinery is left, but the power being taken away, the business of manufacturing necessarily stops...

Waggoner hastened to add, however, that even loss of the main engine would not stop the work of the publishing house. On the contrary, business would "go on as usual, and with increased vigour and volume."² This confrontation captured the attention of both the secular and religious press.³ The fines amounted to fifteen pounds with costs of one pound and six shillings—a total of about eighty dollars.⁴ In Waggoner's estimation, this amount was well worth the resultant attention given to the truth.

² EJW, PT 11 (December 5, 1895): 784.
As a direct result, more people in the United Kingdom have learned of the truth in the past year than in all the previous years that work has been carried on.\(^1\)

We could not, if the whole General Conference had spent a day in planning, have devised means by which a thousand pounds could have done so much for the work. Every paper of any importance in London has a notice of the case. Even the [London] Times had it. Some papers had an editorial notice as well. Of course they do not see what is in it, but in every case it is very clearly put that we rest on the Sabbath and work on Sunday, and that our work is to show people from the Bible that Saturday is the Sabbath instead of Sunday. It is also made clear that we are Christians and not Jews.

Waggoner added: “I am of the best of courage. The Lord is very good, and I feel happy to be permitted to live and work at this time. I pray and trust that the Lord will guide in every thing, and that infinite wisdom, not ours, may be manifested.”\(^2\)

**Eschatological Framework**

While his theological emphases changed somewhat from what they had been during the years 1882 to 1888, Waggoner seems not to have changed his basic eschatological framework during the early 1890s. He still defined the “last days” in terms of Christ’s first advent. “When Jesus was on earth, eighteen hundred years ago, it was the ‘last days.’ The world was even then past its meridian.” In Waggoner’s mind, this view only made the present time more urgent: “How much more emphatic, therefore, must be the expression in this time.”\(^3\) That we are now living in the last days “is more than a mere belief; it has the force of a demonstration.”\(^4\)

He applied the prophecies of Dan 2 along traditional Adventist lines, the four metals representing the empires of Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome, with the feet

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\(^2\) EJW to [D. A. Robinson], February 16, 1895, quoted in D. A. Robinson, “Persecution in Great Britain,” *RH* 72 (March 5, 1895): 157.

\(^3\) EJW, *PT* (November 11, 1894): 689.

of the image representing the disunity of Europe since the fall of the Roman empire.\(^1\) The
apacny, personified by the Roman pope, was considered to be the fulfillment of the
prophecies regarding the "little horn" of Dan 7, "the man of sin" (2 Thess 2:4), and
Antichrist.\(^2\)

The Gospel Proclamation

Justification by Faith

Waggoner's Concept of Sin

Waggoner dealt with the book of Romans extensively during the years from 1889 to
1895, in the course of which he made some of his most revealing statements with regard to
sin. "The very day that Adam ate of the fruit," Waggoner said, "he fell, and the death
sentence was passed upon him, and he was a dead man. . . . It was only a matter of time till
he should be blotted out of existence. But Christ comes in to give man a probation, and to lift
him up."\(^3\) Related to this "probation" is the idea that God has implanted in human beings
an "enmity against Satan," in order that they may recognize their sinful condition and find
salvation." This enmity is "the seed which the Spirit waters into fruitfulness, in those who
will yield to its influence."\(^4\) The power of choice is crucial:

Men are not born into this world totally depraved. They have some knowledge
of right and wrong, and some promptings to do right. They may obliterate this
knowledge and these promptings by their own evil course, if they will; or, yielding
to the good impulse, they may grow in knowledge. It is this knowledge that men
have, by which the Holy Spirit produces conviction of sin. . . . The light which is
sufficient to condemn a man, is sufficient, also, to save him, if it is followed. If the

\(^1\) EJW, "The Coming Kingdom," \textit{PT} 10 (October 18, 1894): 660-62.


\(^3\) EJW, "Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 9," \textit{GCB} 4 (March 17, 1891): 137.

\(^4\) EJW, "Goodness Leading to Repentance," \textit{ST} 16 (June 23, 1890): 374.
man who has but a little knowledge of right and wrong, will but walk in the light that he has, he will be justified. To him more light will be given.¹

On the other hand, as a result of Adam’s sin, said Waggoner, we find ourselves “in this world with impulses to sin, which we are not able to resist.”² Consequently, “every man born into the world is a sinner, and the sentence of death is passed upon him. Judgment has passed upon all men to condemnation.”³ However, it seems unjust to many “that God should hold men accountable for their deeds, and should threaten punishment to the ungodly, since we were not responsible for being brought into this world, nor for the sin and weakness which we inherited from our ancestors.” Waggoner met this objection in two ways.

(1) He denied that people are condemned for their sinful inheritance: “Death cannot come upon a man because of the sin of another. It must come because of his own sin; for if a man has not sinned, there is nothing to bring death upon him. But since all have sinned, therefore of necessity death passed upon all.” In the same article, Waggoner wrote that “Adam’s sin made it inevitable that all his descendants should be born with sinful natures. Sentence of death, however, does not pass on them for that, but because they have sinned.”⁴ This is an important point, showing that Waggoner continued to stress, as we saw also during the years 1882 to 1888, that sin which is inherited is not the basis for condemnation; condemnation comes only by individual choice. Further, Waggoner understood temptation to precede sin, it is not in itself sin. “Lust, or unlawful desire, precedes every open sin. . . . The lust of the

³ EJW, “Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 9,” GCB 4 (March 17, 1891): 137.
flesh, when denied, is not sin; but as soon as it is cherished it becomes sin.”¹ Therefore,

Waggoner could say, “God doesn’t punish men for ignorance, but for sin.”²

(2) Waggoner said that denial of responsibility for sinning on the basis of a sinful heredity does “not take into account the better inheritance which we have through the grace of God.”

Just as by our natural birth we inherit the weakness and sin of human nature, so by our spiritual birth through the promises of God we inherit the righteousness and strength of the Divine nature. . . . As by nature we inherit the tendencies and characteristics of our earthly parents, even so by grace we inherit the ways and nature of our heavenly father. . . . When we yield to God, His power works in us in just the same way that the power of sin worked in us by nature, only to a greater degree [Rom 5:17 quoted].³

The work of Adam plunged man into sin; the work of Christ brings men out of sin. One man’s single offense plunged many into many offenses; but the one man’s obedience gathers the many offenses of many men, and brings them out from beneath the condemnation of those offenses.⁴

¹ EJW, “The Sin of Covetousness,” PT 10 (January 4, 1894): 6. A corollary of his concept of sin is EJW’s description of what will become of children who have died before having an opportunity to decide their own destiny in idem, “Entering the Kingdom,” ST 16 (August 25, 1890): 460: “Infants that have not come to an age where they can understand right from wrong for themselves, are the special subjects of God’s favor. By virtue of Christ’s sacrifice they share in the universal redemption from the death which results from their being descendants of Adam” “They cannot suffer the death which is the penalty of sin,” he said, “for they have never had personal guilt.”


³ EJW, “Our Inheritance,” PT 11 (May 9, 1895): 290. Cf. idem, “Studies in Romans: The Free Gift,” PT 10 (October 18, 1894): 659: “We cannot complain that we are unjustly dealt with. It is true that we are not to blame for having a sinful nature, and the Lord recognizes the fact. So He provides that just as in Adam we were made partakers of a sinful nature, even so in Christ we shall be made partakers of the Divine nature. But ‘much more.’ . . . The life of which we are made partakers in Christ is much stronger for righteousness than the life which we received from Adam is for unrighteousness.”

⁴ EJW, “Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 9,” GCB 4 (March 17, 1891): 138. Cf. idem, “Studies in Romans: The Free Gift,” PT 10 (October 18, 1894): 660: “As the condemnation came upon all, so the justification comes upon all. Christ has tasted death for every man. He has given Himself for all. . . . The fact that it is a free gift, is evidence that there is no exception.”

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Not all are saved because "many spurn the gift offered so freely."\(^1\)

According to Waggoner, Christ must do more than just reverse the legal ramifications for humanity of Adam's sin. Adam has bequeathed "a fallen and carnal nature" to his descendants, "it being transmitted by each parent in turn. . . . But with those who have received the grace of God, there has been a change in nature; and to this . . . has the success of their lives been due." God's "creative power," Waggoner said, "makes us righteous, and we stand justified in His sight."\(^2\) Christ's obedience, he said, was not simply "counted" to people on the basis that "one was righteous eighteen hundred years ago." Otherwise, he said, "all would have to be righteous by the same obedience," because "there would be no justice in counting righteousness to one and not to all." Therefore, he concluded, "Men are not simply counted righteous, but actually made righteous, by the obedience of Christ."\(^3\)

**Human Powerlessness and Divine Acceptance**

Waggoner specifically condemned the idea that man can add anything to his salvation. He denounced "works of supererogation" and the notion that in a man's life "if the good overbalance the evil, then God owes him a reward."\(^4\) Every moment of a man's life only adds to a person's debt of sin. Even if he were to obey perfectly after he realizes his sin, he would still be "largely in debt."\(^5\) But it is impossible for man to obey in his own power: "A man can as easily raise himself from the ground to the sun, by placing his hands under the

\(^1\) Ibid.

\(^2\) EJW, "Discerning the Righteous and the Wicked," PT 10 (August 30, 1894): 547.

\(^3\) EJW, "Studies in Romans: The Free Gift," PT 10 (October 18, 1894): 660. Combining a declaration of righteousness with actual righteousness in justification remained a consistent theme during the years 1889 to 1895 (see below under the heading "Justification").


\(^5\) Ibid.
soles of his feet and lifting, as he can raise himself by his own actions to the height of the requirement of God's commandments."1 Waggoner went so far as to say that "for a man to assume that he himself is able to do God's righteous works . . . is the very 'mystery of iniquity' itself."2

Man is totally unworthy. There is no way a person can deserve salvation. But Christ died "to make us worthy; to make us complete in him. The trouble with those who say they are not worthy, is that they do not feel half unworthy enough. If they felt 'without strength,' then the power of Christ could avail them."3 Realizing one's unworthiness, however, will certainly not drive Christ away.

He [Christ] had come all the way from heaven to earth, at the sacrifice of all that He had, to be with sinners and to take them by the hand and lift them out of their fallen state. And therefore He could not then, and cannot now, leave a man because he realizes that he is a sinner. When we feel and acknowledge our unworthiness in His sight, so far from doing anything to drive Him from us, we are presenting to Him His own all-powerful reason for not leaving us to ourselves.4 Although man is unworthy, God sees beyond what we are to what we may become. "His practiced eye saw in you great possibilities; and he bought you, not for what you were then or are now worth, but for what he could make of you."5 The misconception that most people have—that makes obedience seem impossible—is that it is their obedience. Waggoner


2 Ibid., p. 25.


4 EJW, "Depart from Me," PT 10 (June 21, 1894): 385-86.

stressed: “The battle is not ours, it is God’s.”\(^1\) Thus, “when he takes us, worth nothing, and at the last presents us faultless before the throne, it will be to his everlasting glory.”\(^2\)

These words were like cool, clear water to dry, thirsty Adventists who had been agonizing over whether or not they would be able to survive the time of trouble. There had been so much stress on the condition that must be reached in order to stand, that Christ’s power had all but disappeared from their minds.

We think that because there will be no mediator then, that we stand in our own strength. There will come a time when there will be no mediator; but those who stand at that time will not stand in their own strength, but in the power of Christ that will keep us at that time; because we will be without sin, we shall need no mediator, but we shall need a Saviour every moment.\(^3\)

It is significant that even in this context of human helplessness, Waggoner spoke of persons living in the time of trouble as being “without sin,” not in terms of legal standing alone, but because of “the power of Christ” keeping them from sin. He was careful to add, however, that our acceptance is full and complete now; it does not have to wait for some future time—for our obedience to make us acceptable.

There is no ground for the idea that a person must go through a sort of probation, and attain to a certain degree of holiness before God will accept him as His child. He receives us just as we are. It is not for our goodness that He loves us, but because of our need. He receives us, not for the sake of anything that He sees in us, but for His own sake, and for what He knows that His Divine power can make of us.\(^4\)

For Waggoner, our helplessness and human limitations do not limit what God can make of us. This was the basis of his proclamation of justification by faith.

Justification—Forgiveness and Transformation

Waggoner understood justification to be contingent on confession. Yet he denied that

\(^1\) EJW, “Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 10,” GCB 4 (March 18, 1891): 160.

\(^2\) EJW, “Acceptance with God,” PT 8 (December 26, 1892): 119.


\(^4\) EJW, CHR (Oakland, California: Pacific Press, 1890), p. 68.
confession was a meritorious work or that it was required merely to keep persons humble.

"Confession means agreement," said Waggoner. Therefore, "when we truly confess sin we agree with all that God says about its nature. And since he tells us of our sin in order that we may be freed from it, it is also plain that confession of sin means that we desire to be freed from it."¹ This does not mean, however, that we are held responsible for "the recollection and acknowledgement of every act of sin that has ever been committed. That is an impossibility."

In the first place, life would not be long enough for a man to recount all his sins, even if he knew them; and in the second place, no man can know all his sin. The sins that lie hidden in the heart,—the sinful nature,—are as deadly as those that have come to the light. So confession involves the acknowledging to God that there is no good thing in us, and praying, 'Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.' Ps. xix.12.²

Also inherent in this understanding of confession is "restoration wherever anything has been unlawfully taken; for it is evident that no one can be freed from the sin, while resolutely clinging to it."³ Through confession, "God will look upon you with satisfaction, and count you righteous through Him who knew no sin, and by whose blood [even] the chief of sinners may obtain an abundant pardon."

Forgiveness

Waggoner said that "forgiveness immediately follows confession."⁴ This he called a "cleansing" from sin. "As soon as the sin is really confessed it is forgiven, and the soul is

¹ EJW, PT 9 (August 31, 1893): 337.

² Ibid. EJW's use of the term "sinful nature" in this statement appears to be unique in that it apparently refers to sins of ignorance, although it is possible that he was thinking of the inherited tendencies to evil that lead inevitably to sin when one fails to depend on the Holy Spirit for power to resist them.

³ Ibid.

⁴ EJW, PT 9 (August 31, 1893): 337.
cleansed from it." The death of Christ is "the pledge of God's infinite love for us, and of His inconceivable desire to cleanse us from sin by the application of His healing forgiveness." Waggoner described this "healing" as a creative act of God: "To heal the palsy, required the creation of new parts of the body to take the place of those that were diseased. To say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee' required the creation of a righteous man out of a sinner." A priest "has no power to forgive sin," because forgiveness "is nothing less than the power of creation. To take away sin is to create a man new in Christ Jesus."  

Such a change issues in obedience, according to Waggoner. When Christ takes away our sins, He also enables us to keep the law. Faith in Christ is not a "substitute" for keeping the law. "Not by any means; it is the keeping of the commandments." It brings "not only freedom from the consequences of past transgressions, but it also brings the keeping of the commandments in the present time."  

Justification more than forensic  

Waggoner further described justification as "God's remedy for sin." "The opposite of sin is righteousness; and so when God remits—sends away—sin, he does it by putting righteousness in its place." This righteousness is God's righteousness "declared for the
remission of sins of all who believe in Jesus. He cures the disease by putting health in its place.\textsuperscript{1} Only when man is cured of the disease of sin is he able to do right. Justification is this cure. “Man would say, ‘Do right and then you will be right.’... But God says, ‘Let Me make you right, and then you will do right.’”\textsuperscript{2}

Waggoner objected in the strongest possible terms to justification as a substitute for righteousness in the life. “Men are not, as a Roman Catholic work charges justification by faith with teaching, ‘reputed or considered holy on account of the merits of Christ, without really being so.’” Rather, “the Bible teaches that they are actually to be righteous, through the merits of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{3} To save people from their sin “is not merely to forgive the sins of the past, but is to save from sins in the future, by changing the heart and the whole being,—to make a man entirely new.”\textsuperscript{4} Thus, Waggoner described justification as involving two aspects: a legal acquittal from past transgression (which he does not distinguish from forgiveness) and transformation of the believer’s life.

Waggoner clearly described justification as a legal reckoning. “The man is counted as though he had always been obedient, although he has never been obedient.”\textsuperscript{5} A clear statement of what this reckoning involves is the following: “God removes the guilt, so that the one formerly guilty does not need to be cleared—he is justified and counted as though he

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{2} EJW, “Reasoning Together,” PT 9 (January 12, 1893): 2.
\item \textsuperscript{3} EJW, “Jesus Christ the Righteous,” PT 9 (November 2, 1893): 486.
\item \textsuperscript{4} EJW, “The Gospel the Power of God,” ST 15 (March 11, 1889): 150. EJW goes on to note: “Many doubt the efficiency of even this power, for they say it is impossible for them to overcome.” He then quotes 1 Cor 1:18 that the gospel is foolishness to unbelievers (ibid.). Cf. EJW, “Jesus Christ the Righteous,” PT 9 (November 2, 1893): 487: “God does not propose to try to bring goodness out of evil, and He will never call evil good. What He proposes to do is to create a new heart in man, so that good can come from it.”
\item \textsuperscript{5} EJW, “The Obedience of Faith,” ST 15 (February 4, 1889): 71.
\end{itemize}
never sinned.” More than just a clearing of guilt, there is a reckoning of righteousness. Christ takes upon Himself all the sins of a man’s past life and in return counts to the man His righteousness. Waggoner called it “a most wonderful exchange.” To be justified,” he said, “is to be accounted righteous.”

Waggoner could not conceive of God declaring something that was not true in reality. Waggoner understood justification, therefore, to include a transforming experience.

The difference between a righteous man and a sinner is much more than a mere difference of belief. It is more than a mere arbitrary reckoning on the part of God. It is a real difference. . . . When God calls a man a sinner, he is a sinner; and when He calls a man righteous, he is righteous in reality, as much so as if he had never sinned. . . . God never declares a person righteous simply because he makes an acknowledgement of the truth. There is an actual, literal change from a state of sin or righteousness, which justifies God in making the declaration.

Justification, according to Waggoner, involves a union with God so that God’s righteousness and life, which he held to be inseparable, are bestowed to the believer. “The Lord never makes any mistake in His reckoning,” said Waggoner. Abraham “became one with the Lord, and so God’s righteousness was his own.” This union of a repentant sinner with the Lord he expressed as Christ’s indwelling.

Christ’s righteousness is perfect obedience to the law, which was within his heart. John 15:10; Ps. 40:8. Christ dwells in the heart by faith (Eph. 3:17), and it is his presence in the heart that justifies us, as we by faith take his life instead of our

1 EJW, “Justified by Faith,” ST 17 (November 11, 1891): 35. Throughout this period, EJW retained the idea of justification as a legal reckoning. See EJW, “Saved by His Life,” PT 8 (October 6, 1892): 308; idem, “The Lord’s Forgetfulness,” PT 10 (March 22, 1894): 183: “God, who knows all our sins, as even we ourselves cannot know them, receives us gladly and treats us as though we had never sinned, because he forgets our sins, and sees in us only His own righteousness.”


own. So we are justified by faith, because faith brings Christ and his obedience into
the heart and life.  

Through justification, "God's righteousness—which is His life—is declared upon us."  

The notion that we receive the life of God when we are justified became an
increasingly important idea to Waggoner. God's life is the "medium" by which the law is
written in our hearts. "When we take Jesus into our hearts we take the law also, and it
becomes a part of our very being (John vii. 38)." The implanting of the principles of God's
law is the basis of His government. "The peace of God's government is not maintained by
standing armies, nor by compelling people to submit to His laws, but by the infusing of His
own life in the hearts of those who will receive Him." Thus did Waggoner combine in an
inseparable unity the two aspects, acquittal and transformation. "To justify means to make
righteous, or to show someone to be righteous."  

As Waggoner expressed this understanding of justification, he opposed two extremes.
One extreme had developed among those Adventists who understood the experiential
aspects of righteousness by faith to be part of sanctification and, as a result, came to

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2 McMahon (pp. 94, 109) dislikes EJW's identification of justification with the
bestowal of God's life, also claiming that it is post-1888; but, as we have seen, not only did
EJW, in 1888, believe God's righteousness declared upon the person to be a bestowal of God's
life to the believer, but it appears that he specifically mentioned this concept during his
lectures at the Minneapolis General Conference session (see above, p. 87).  
4 EJW, "The Hidden Law," PT 9 (November 9, 1893): 503. This was also, to EJW, a
strong apology for the perpetuity of the law, since in order to do away with it men "would
have to cut it from the heart of Christ, for there is where it is" (ibid.).  
5 EJW, "The Reign of Peace," PT 9 (July 6, 1893): 212. EJW here uses language akin to
the Catholic concept of infused grace; however, the similarity is only apparent. For EJW,
grace was never meritorious and it always resided in Christ. Righteousness never became
inherent in the believer; it was his only so long as he remained united to Christ.  
6 EJW, CHR, p. 51.
depreciate justification; the other extreme from which Waggoner clearly disassociated himself, was an antinomian position that claimed men could be justified and yet continue in sin. His position bisected both extremes.

Some people have the idea that there is a much higher condition for the sinner to occupy than to be justified. That is to say that there is a higher condition for one to occupy than to be clothed within and without with the righteousness of God. That cannot be.¹

Justification, first, last, and all the time, is by faith alone. The Christian cannot be justified by works any more than the sinner can be. No man can ever get so good and strong that his own deeds can justify him.²

On the other hand, Waggoner was quick to add that he did not mean to imply that works have nothing to do with faith. “Faith which justifies . . . is faith which makes a man a doer of the law, or rather, which puts the doing of the law into him,”³ because “the law will not declare sinners to be righteous.”⁴ “Christ grants no indulgences, but his righteousness remits the sins that are past, keeps the heart free from sin in the present, so long as his righteousness fills that heart.”⁵

Waggoner saw justification’s two aspects of acquittal and transformation as brought together by a correct understanding of God’s creative Word. He contrasted man’s word with God’s Word: “If a man should say that a thing is, when it is not, it would be a lie. But God cannot lie. Therefore, when God calls those things that be not, as though they were, it is


² EJW, “Establishing the Law,” PT 10 (September 6, 1894): 563.

³ Ibid.

⁴ EJW, CHR, p. 52.

⁵ EJW, “Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 4,” GCB 4 (March 11, 1891): 75. Another statement, found in idem, “Righteousness and Life,” PT 8 (October 6, 1892): 307, exhibits this same concern: “The plan of salvation is not, as some have supposed, a scheme by which people are free to sin as much as they please, in the confidence that a profession of faith will save them from the just desert of their wrongdoing. On the contrary, it is a plan for the utter freeing of the man from sin, so there will be no cause of death.”

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evident that that makes them be."¹ God cannot declare someone to be righteous without at the same time making him so,² just as God's word created the world in the beginning. "When Christ speaks righteousness to a sinful soul, then there is righteousness there, just the same as there was light when He said, 'Let there be light.'"³

Waggoner distinguished these two aspects of justification, acquittal, and transformation. In one instance he spoke of being "both clothed with righteousness [acquittal], and being filled with it [transformation]."⁴ More commonly he designated the two aspects as "passive righteousness" (acquittal) and "active righteousness" (transformation).⁵ Some have confused what Waggoner called "active righteousness" with sanctification.⁶ This confusion results from failing to recognize that Waggoner spoke of justification and sanctification together in order to stress that justification is more than a legal declaration of righteousness upon the person. God's righteousness includes more than

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¹ EJW, "For Our Sake Also," ST 16 (October 13, 1890): 513.

² EJW, “What Is the Gospel?” PT 8 (January 28, 1892): 25: “The work of redemption is the work of producing a new creation—new men, new heavens, and new earth—by the same word that created all things in the beginning.”

³ EJW, “He Calleth Thee,” PT 9 (November 2, 1893): 487-88. Cf. idem, “Discerning the Righteous and the Wicked,” PT 10 (August 30, 1894): 547: “God by His creative power makes us righteous, and we stand justified in His sight.”


⁶ McMahon understands any work inside believers to be sanctification and therefore calls EJW's inclusion of God's sanctifying power under the heading of justification "a fatal mistake" (p. 95). Webster asserts: "The distinction between justification and sanctification is blurred and justification appears to encompass not only a declarative act covering the past but a transforming and empowering experience of the indwelling Christ" (p. 189). As we have already noticed in the earlier period, however, the inclusion of transformation within justification is not a new emphasis for EJW, but one he consistently espoused. Therefore, McMahon should have considered EJW unsound throughout the period from 1882 to 1895.
"simply a passive righteousness that is thus declared upon that man." It is "a real, active righteousness." The righteousness which comes by the hearing of faith is not a mere passive righteousness. It is the active righteousness of God. And moreover, it is just that righteousness which is demanded in the ten commandments, without any variation." God's declaration of righteousness "is active righteousness, because the word of the Lord works effectually in all that believe." For Waggoner, this declaration testified to the inseparability of life transformation from God's acquittal of sinners. As noted below, Waggoner defined sanctification in similar terms, speaking of the Christian life in terms of both passive submission and active service. The "active righteousness" of justification is never left behind, because it is this that enables "active deeds" to be manifested in the Christian as "fruits of righteousness."

Thus Waggoner also spoke of justification as a state. "There can be no higher state than that of justification." Men are "either at peace with God or else at war." The

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1 EJW, "The Creative Word," PT 8 (October 20, 1892): 325.


3 EJW, "Words and Work," PT 9 (June 1, 1893): 164. Cf. idem, "The Glorious Gospel," PT 11 (January 31, 1895): 67: "God's righteousness is active. It is His own life. Just as the air will rush into any place where there is an opening, so the righteous life of God will fill every heart that is open to receive it."

4 At times, EJW spoke of "imparted" and "imputed" righteousness synonymously. E.g., EJW, "Not a Debt, but a Gift," ST 16 (September 22, 1890): 490: "The forgiveness of sins ... is accomplished, not through any good works of the sinner, but by the imparting of Christ's righteousness to take the place of the sin." One week later, in idem, "The Blessing of Abraham," ST 16 (September 29, 1890): 497, referring to the previous article, EJW called it the "imputation of righteousness." Cf. idem, "A Lesson from Real Life," PT 10 (May 31, 1894): 338-39, where "the imputed righteousness of Christ" is said to include more than the cancelling of a debt—"the sinless, endless, inexhaustible life of Christ flows into those who have faith in Him, to cleanse them from sin, and to make them walk in newness of life."


6 EJW, "Being Justified," PT 8 (October 20, 1892): 324.
condition of peace is the condition of being justified by faith,"¹ which is "to be in a condition of harmony with the law of God."² Justification is retained only as long as Christ is "living in us His life of perfect obedience to the law."³

Sanctification

During the period from 1889 to 1895, Waggoner rarely used the term "sanctification." However, he frequently dwelt upon the subjects of how to overcome sin in the Christian life, the relation between faith and works, and Christian growth, which we have classified under the one general heading of "sanctification."

Overcoming Sin

Waggoner warned of the inclination "to think that at times we cannot help being overcome" by temptation. We can overcome sin. "The only trouble," he said, "is that we fail to see it. We look at the temptation, we look at ourselves, and we seem to be hopelessly trapped. Ah, but we do not see Christ! He is the way of escape."⁴

Men always become like those with whom they constantly associate. Reading bad books, looking at evil sights, tends inevitably to corruption. So he who looks at his own sinful self will become only more sinful. "Looking unto Jesus" takes one away from self.⁵


² EJW, "The Law and Judgment," PT 10 (July 26, 1894): 467.


⁵ EJW, PT 9 (December 21, 1893): 593.
We should not think that we are “too weak to overcome. . . . Were the power offered us any less than this we might have cause for discouragement; but with ‘all might’ working in us against sin and temptation, we can no more be overcome than can God Himself.”

Jesus is actually the One who overcomes sin in us. The law is fulfilled “not by us, but in us,” through Christ. “Thus it is that ‘by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.’” Christ “knows how difficult the task is; but knowing man’s sinfulness and hardness of heart, He is not discouraged. Then what occasion is there for our being discouraged?” Should anyone come to the Lord for pardon and holiness and fail to receive it, “that instant the whole universe would become chaos, and vanish out of existence.” The fact that this has not happened is a pledge that He has never failed anyone.

With regard to the actual energy expended in obedience, Waggoner had what appear to be two irreconcilable concepts held together in tension. On the one hand, “the Christian must be active, engaged in a constant warfare with the forces of evil about and within him.”

We are not anchored upon smooth waters, but tossing upon the surface of a stormy sea, and beset by deadly currents of worldliness and sin, which will speedily take us out of our course if we cease our vigilant watch. The drifting bark will never make the harbour. We cannot drift into the kingdom of heaven. We cannot be towed in by the effort of someone else. . . . Our utmost endeavours must be put forth to remain unswerved by the currents of evil, looking unto Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

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1 EJW, PT 10 (October 16, 1894): 528.
4 EJW, GIC, p. 115-16.
This vigilance “calls into exercise every power of our being.” ¹

In apparent contradiction to this, Waggoner affirmed that “if a person is in Christ, the good works will follow as naturally as flowers follow spring rain and sunshine.” ² It is the devil, he says, who “continually sets men to try to make themselves grow by exertion” to “the full stature of Christian manhood.” ³ The heavens declare the glory of God, and “when we are voluntarily as submissive to His will as they are by nature, then the glory of God will be as fully declared by us as by them.” ⁴ Perhaps when Waggoner reflected on his own experience, he felt the need for strong exertion, whereas observations from Scripture and in nature suggested to him that it need not be that way.

Relation of Faith and Works

Waggoner believed the tendency to regard justification and sanctification as poles apart results in regarding the first as God’s work and the second as man’s work (albeit assisted by God at times). ⁵ In Waggoner’s view, sanctification is just as much God’s work as justification—faith operates from beginning to end. “The works which God requires are all in faith.” ⁶ Waggoner compared faith and works to breathing. No one breathes to prove his is alive. In the same way, no one can do good works to prove his faith; rather, “good works . . . are the necessary result of faith.” ⁷ When do these works begin? “As soon as we become new

¹ EJW, PT 9 (September 28, 1893): 401.
² EJW, “‘Full of Good Works,’” PT 10 (January 18, 1894): 39.
⁴ EJW, GIC, p. 112.
creatures in Christ.\textsuperscript{1} Works of faith and works of the flesh are mutually exclusive in Waggoner's thought. "Where faith is present, God works; where faith is absent, the flesh works."\textsuperscript{2} Faith and works, belief and action, are never separated and in fact can never be separated in reality.

Believing is yielding to God, and resistance to the devil. We cannot believe that what God says is true, without acquiescing with His will, which is yielding to Him. And yielding to Him is itself resistance to Satan,—the only effectual resistance it is in our power to make. But God never lets an individual who yields to Him remain destitute of His own life and power, but immediately fills him with it; so that action becomes the inseparable accompaniment of faith; for no one filled with the spirit and life of God, can possibly remain inactive.\textsuperscript{3}

Waggoner saw faith and works as inseparable also because the same power is involved throughout the Christian life, from its beginning in justification to its conclusion in glorification and at every point in between. Notice these successive statements, taken in order from one article.\textsuperscript{4} that show Waggoner's logical progression of thought:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textbf{JUSTIFICATION} \\
No man can change his own nature so that good thoughts will come naturally from the heart in the place of evil thoughts\ldots. Nothing but the power of God can do that; and that power is manifested in the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation.
\end{tabular}
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\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textbf{SANCTIFICATION} \\
And this power is continued so long as the person has faith. The gospel is the power of God \textit{unto salvation}, to everyone that believeth. The same power that forgives the sin, and that changes the nature, will still remain to keep the soul from sin.
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{1} EJW, "Not Justified by Works," \textit{PT} 10 (June 7, 1894): 356; reprinted in idem, "Not Justified by Works," \textit{ST} 21 (August 15, 1895): 498.
\item \textsuperscript{2} EJW, "The Works of the Flesh," \textit{PT} 10 (February 22, 1894): 118.
\item \textsuperscript{3} EJW, "The Source of Comfort," \textit{PT} 10 (March 15, 1894): 167 (italics supplied).
\end{enumerate}
GLORIFICATION

The same power . . . having kept us through faith unto salvation to be revealed when Christ comes, will quicken our mortal bodies so that as we are now in spirit made to sit in heavenly places in Christ, we shall then be made to sit at his right hand, clothed in glory according to the riches of his grace.

The understanding that the same power is involved in all aspects of God's saving work led Waggoner to draw important implications for sanctification that reveal his concern. He said that too many people try to live the Christian life (sanctification) by relying on their own power. "We know that many have this idea, first, because we have heard some say so, and second, because there are such multitudes of Christians who show the working of no greater power than their own." He goes on to say:

Sometimes these persons will mournfully tell that they have about lost confidence in themselves. Poor souls, if they would only lose confidence in themselves entirely, and would put their whole trust in the one who is mighty to save, they would have a different story to tell.2

If Waggoner did not differentiate justification from sanctification by calling one God's work for us and the other God's work in us, on what basis did he make a distinction? Consistently, he distinguished them with regard to time. Waggoner spoke of "the moment of justification."3 "God speaks to the sinner, who is nothing, and who has nothing, and says, 'You are righteous,' and immediately that believing sinner ceases to be a sinner, and is the righteousness of God. . . . That moment he has the righteousness of God in his heart."4 Now notice what Waggoner said about sanctification: "The character is not changed in a moment

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1 Another statement linking glorification with the power of justification is found in EJW, "Life in Christ," PT 8 (July 28, 1892): 232: Christ, when He comes, "will change our vile bodies by the same power by which He has changed our hearts."


4 EJW, GIC, p. 28.
from imperfection to perfection; but the yielding of one's self to Christ, for him to work in the soul that which is good, may be the work of a moment.\(^1\) Waggoner likened sanctification to the growth of a tree, each year adding a new ring to its trunk.\(^2\) What is perhaps the clearest statement Waggoner made comes from an article entitled "Justification and Sanctification:"

Sanctification, then, is the result of obedience; but as obedience is not simply a momentary act, but the work of a lifetime, it follows that sanctification is not an instantaneous, but a progressive, work. A man is justified as soon as he exercises true faith in Christ; but the work of sanctification goes on as long as there is any truth for him to obey. And since a man . . . can only retain his state of justification by continuing in obedience to the law, it may be said that sanctification is but continued justification. Each new duty only makes the performance of others possible, and so "the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."\(^3\)

This same notion of sanctification being the continual outworking of justifying grace in the believer is reiterated in various ways. When we yield to Christ (justification), "the transformation is effected. We continue to yield, and the renewing continually takes place" (sanctification).\(^4\) Union with Christ in the new birth "is not a thing that is done once for all; it is a continuous process."\(^5\) The cleansing power of Christ's blood is "continually needed."\(^6\)

As we noticed in the early period, this emphasis that sanctification is not instantaneous but

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3 EJW, "Justification and Sanctification," ST 17 (November 30, 1891): 52. This understanding of sanctification as but the continuation of justification may be compared with that expressed by EGW in "Obedience Is Sanctification," ST 16 (May 19, 1890): 289, 290: "Obedience to the law of God is sanctification. . . . Sanctification is not an instantaneous but a progressive work, as obedience is continuous." "True sanctification is nothing more or less than to love God with all the heart, to walk in his commandments and ordinances blameless."


5 EJW, PT 9 (August 10, 1893): 304. Cf. idem, "Present Tense Religion," PT 10 (February 1, 1894): 70: "The new birth is a continuous process. . . . It is a continuous flow of life from God into us."

is rather a continuous process, was in sharp contrast to the teachings of various “holiness”
groups that were rapidly growing in popularity. Waggoner stated what seems to be an
obvious polemic against the “holiness” stress on feeling the Spirit’s witness:

The Spirit’s witness is the word. We know that we are children of God, because
the Spirit assures us of that fact in the Bible. The witness of the Spirit is not a
certain ecstatic feeling, but a tangible statement. . . . He who believes has the word
abiding in him, and that is how ‘He that believeth on the Son of God hath the
witness in himself.’ 1 John v. 10.

The importance of progress for a Christian extends beyond his earthly existence.
Sanctification is necessary for salvation, because only by the continued process of
sanctification does it become evident that sin will not return in the life of the believer who
perseveres.

Eternity in the kingdom of God will be continual progression in the truths which
have been learned on earth. No man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is
worthy of the kingdom of Heaven; because if he cannot continue for a few years in
things that he has been assured of, how can he continue in the same things
throughout eternity?

Christian Perfection

During the years now under consideration (1889-1895), E. J. Waggoner enlarged and
refined his earlier presentations of Christian perfection. He continued to avoid certain
extreme positions, yet from what he did say it is clear that he envisioned lofty prospects for
Christians. To Waggoner, perfection is an integral part of the gospel. God “makes no plan
that is not perfect, and as a perfect plan requires perfect material, He first of all sends the
gospel power to transform and perfect those who are willing to be delivered from their own
evil ways.”

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1 EJW, “Sons of God,” PT 10 (December 6, 1894): 771.


Source and definition of perfection

Waggoner was pessimistic about what human nature alone could achieve, but he was completely optimistic about what God could achieve in human nature. “Human nature will always be imperfect, but the nature of God may take its place, and that is perfection.”

This change in condition “comes only from the presence of Christ, bringing His perfection. Nothing that man can do can bring holiness.”

But, said Waggoner, when people “submit themselves fully to Christ,” “the possibilities of development are so great that only God’s mind can comprehend them.”

Waggoner defined perfection in various ways, but held that God was the only source of it. “Righteousness is not a finite thing, but infinite; it is perfection in the eye of God; it is doing as well as God can do; and no one can do that but God Himself.” In the law of God, we have “the manifestation of infinite perfection of life,” even the life of Christ.

And since “Christ Himself could live a sinless life in any part of the world, and under the greatest temptation, so can He, by the power of His life, keep every soul who puts his trust in Him, and can present him ‘faultless before the presence of His glory.’”

Waggoner also spoke of God as making it possible “to cease to sin.” He was careful, however, to insist that even within a state of sinlessness or perfection there is growth. Jesus,

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as a boy of twelve years, “was perfect.” Yet, “we read that He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God. Luke ii. 52. Complete, yet growing in grace and knowledge; perfect all the time.” Waggoner compared such perfection to plants which are “perfect at every stage” of growth—“when the flowers bloom” as well as “when the fruit comes.” In the same way, “we are to continually grow in grace.” Waggoner did not envision growth only in this present world. “Man is capable of everlasting progression.”

None of the creatures of God, not even the angels of heaven, have ever yet reached a place where there was no more for them to learn about Him. They have never yet come to the line which marks the limit of the knowledge of God, beyond which there is nothing more and from which their lives would be but a monotonous looking back upon things they had known before. There is no such line for them to reach . . . .

Redemption . . . will be the theme of study throughout eternity, and it will never be exhausted, for it is the manifestation of power and love and wisdom which are infinite.

In more tangible terms, Waggoner described perfection as the display of “kindness, patience, unselfishness, thoughtfulness for others, meekness and gentleness, and true courtesy.” In fact, he said, perfection “is to have every good quality, because it is to have the character of God.”

God’s perfection is “love itself, because it does not grow out of what

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1 EJW, “Perfection Yet Growth,” PT 10 (March 1, 1894): 144.
3 EJW, “True Religion,” PT 10 (January 18, 1894): 38. Cf. idem, “Asking and Receiving,” PT 9 (December 21, 1893): 594: “The law of God is unfathomable. The human mind will never be able to explore its utmost depths. Eternity will ever have something new to reveal to us in it, because it is the very life of God, and no man can by searching find out God.”
4 EJW, “The Fulfilling of the Law,” PT 9 (January 26, 1894): 18. More than likeness to God, he said, “it is assimilation to God” (ibid.).
He has received from the object of love.” So Christians are to display such love, which “is not an abstract thing,” but “must always be manifested in action.”

Waggoner distinguished between the kind of perfection to which human beings may attain and “the perfection of God” Himself: “We are to become sinless and pure, and even then God in his goodness will be infinitely above us.” There is a sense in which we will never fully attain.

Did you ever read or hear of any human being who kept the law perfectly? Or did you ever hear of anyone, however high his standard was set, who did not find something beyond, that he had not attained to? Even worldly men often have an ideal of their own; but the nearer they can come to that ideal, the greater the lack they see in themselves. Anyone who is sincere in trying to reach a standard, when he gets there, will see something beyond it.

In light of what else Waggoner said about perfection, it seems that he here meant that in terms of growth there will always be an eternity beyond. “No man, even when glorified and made immortal, can ever exhaust the law of God.” In fact, if at any time growth stopped, that, in Waggoner’s mind, would spell the end of perfection. “The saints of God are the planting of the Lord, ‘that they might be called trees of righteousness,’ but the tree that stops growing is dead.”

Waggoner also distinguished between perfection of character and perfection of the flesh. By beholding Jesus, sin is destroyed, “but not the sinful flesh in which it works.”

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6 EJW, “The Light of Life,” PT 11 (June 27, 1895): 405. Cf. idem, “Life in Christ,” PT 19 (March 13, 1893): 291: “When he comes, he will change our vile bodies by the same power by which he has changed our hearts.” But, EJW added, “the heart must be changed now.”
limitations of humanity, however, are not sin. God's presence in an individual "keeps him from sin, but not from all the mistakes that arise from the limitations of human vision and judgment." In fact, it is the preservation of these "limitations" which makes manifest that "the life is not of man, but of God; and that to Him alone belongs the glory." \(^1\) (cf. 2 Cor 4:7).

Before Christ returns, the characters of God's people will "become completely transformed, and made like Christ's." Soon after that "the light in which they [God's people] have walked blends into 'the perfect day,' as Christ appears in the fulness of His glory." "They are not dazzled by the sight," said Waggoner, "for it is the glory which they have been beholding, and as it bursts upon their vision, the first glance completes the transformation that has been going on, their vile bodies are changed 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,' and thus 'the righteous shine forth' in God's kingdom.\(^2\)

**How to attain perfection**

Waggoner believed that perfection could be reached only as a result of obedience to the perfect law of God, in both letter and spirit—and that such obedience is only possible in Christ. \(^3\) "To consider Christ continually and intelligently, just as He is," said Waggoner, "will transform one into a perfect Christian, for 'by beholding we become changed.'" \(^4\)

Waggoner anticipated that these ideas might not be readily received, suggesting an objection: "You make it out that we ought never to sin anymore—you leave no room for sin." Waggoner replied, "But is that not what the Bible says?" The hard part is giving up those

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\(^1\) EJW, *PT* 10 (February 8, 1894): 96.

\(^2\) EJW, "Walking in the Light," *PT* 10 (February 8, 1894): 88. EJW does, however, indicate that the perfection which we receive through Christ embraces body, soul and spirit [see EJW, "Mistaken Conceptions of Holiness," *PT* 9 (October 12, 1893): 436]. By bodily perfection, EJW may have had reference to glorification or possibly the appropriate care enjoined upon Christians even with regard to their sinful bodies (1 Cor 6:12-20).

\(^3\) EJW, "Not 'Law or Love,' but Law and Love," *ST* 15 (March 18, 1889): 167.


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things that have been dear to us—and giving them up forever. Waggoner posed this follow-up question: "But is it true that man can live without sin?" He answered that it is impossible to serve sin and righteousness at the same time. The problem lies in the fact that "in all our Christian experience we have left little loopholes along here and there for sin. We have never dared to come to that place where we would believe that the Christian life should be a sinless life. We have not dared to believe it or preach it."  

Waggoner did not suggest that anyone would ever reach a place where he saw perfection in himself. Paul did not consider himself perfect, yet "he was full of hope and courage [Phil 3:13-14 quoted]." "He had not come to the place where he could pause and survey his own perfection. He did not stop to measure up his attainments and see how far he had advanced, but simply kept pressing forward" with His eyes fixed on Jesus. Waggoner continued:

Had he taken his eyes away from Jesus and looked at himself—he would that moment have fallen back toward the place from which he started. If he had looked at himself and seen himself to be perfect, he would have seen something which was far from true. . . . Looking at self and beholding perfection in self was what started all the trouble in the universe, for that was what Satan did when, as Lucifer, he was an exalted angel in heaven. . . .

We are not, therefore, to look to ascertain whether we are morally perfect, or ever to see any moral perfection anywhere else but in Christ. When we are perfect is when we are crucified with Christ, and He lives in us. Gal. ii. 20. And then the perfection is not ours, but His; but God, in His love to us, gives us all the credit, and treats us as though it were our own.

1 EJW, "Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 10," GCB 4 (March 18, 1891): 158. Cf. idem, PT 11 (April 18, 1895): 256: "[Mark 8:36-37 quoted.] Every sin that man commits is an exchange of his soul—a bargain with death—for something vastly less than the world. The devil never mentions that part of the bargain, but it is there, a hideous reality. The devil never makes a bargain with a person which does not include an exchange of his soul. . . . When our understanding is properly enlightened, we shall see humiliation in every sin, and will shrink from the thing that would bring us into condemnation."

2 Ibid., p. 159.

3 EJW, "Attaining Moral Perfection," PT 10 (October 18, 1894): 662-63. Cf. idem, GIC, p. 128: "As Moses 'wist not that the skin of his face shone,' so the one who is progressing from glory to glory in the light of the Lord will himself be unconscious of the transformation."
This was a significant insight for Waggoner. He removed moral perfection of character from the realm of man's work for God, placing it instead in the realm of God's work for man. The burden was thus shifted for its accomplishment from man to God, thus removing all opportunity for boasting. By claiming to be sinless, we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8). "But is not the grace and power of God manifested in Christ to cleanse and keep us from sin? Most certainly; but only when in humility we acknowledge that we are sinners." Waggoner drove the point home.

When we say that we have no sin, that very thing is evidence that we have; but when with faith in the word of the Lord we say that we are sinners, then the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. . . .

If the saints, after their translation should begin to boast of their sinlessness, they would be as bad as they ever were. But that will never be. All who are admitted to heaven will have fully learned the lesson that God is all and in all.1

Waggoner even denied that anyone would ever know he was perfect. The reason is that all "have secret faults of which they are utterly unconscious. Not only so, but no man knows the depth of any sin which is brought to his attention, or the fulness of any command which is enjoined upon him."2 Further, the closer one comes to Christ, "the keener becomes our consciousness of imperfection, and therefore the farther we are from criticising our neighbors."3 Waggoner certainly did not mean to suggest by this that the closer one comes to God, the more imperfect he will become, but rather that the imperfections that remain will stand out more clearly. Some people, in Waggoner's view, think that God's standard of righteousness is "impossible of attainment. The frailties of the flesh press upon them so strongly that a perfect life seems altogether beyond their reach." To those who felt thus, Waggoner drew a lesson from Israel's experience.

1 EJW, "Establishing the Law," PT 10 (September 6, 1894): 562-63.


3 EJW, "The Sinner," PT 10 (August 16, 1894): 513. Cf. idem, PT 9 (March 23, 1893): 81: "The closer one comes to God, thus getting a more perfect view of Him, the greater will be his sense of his own imperfections."
We are in the position of the children of Israel upon the borders of the promised land; let us profit by their experience. They received word that the cities were strong and 'walled up to heaven,' and the inhabitants were giants before whom they themselves were as grasshoppers; and then they were seized with unbelief. . . . The high walls that seemed to reach up to heaven represent to us the walls of doubt; the giants of unbelief. And as those walls and those giants fell then before the advance of faith, so they will fall now, however high and strong they may seem to us.¹

Closely related to Waggoner's understanding of perfection was his understanding of the person of Christ. Perhaps no other subject in Waggoner's writings has yielded a greater variety of interpretations than his Christology. The discussion about his view has primarily centered on Waggoner's understanding of the Incarnation. He stated that Christ took human nature in its fallen, sinful condition.² Some writers have concluded that Waggoner thought Christ bore a fallen human nature only in a vicarious sense.³ Wieland believes that Waggoner's teaching is clear on this point and insists that it was an integral part of his presentations at the 1888 Minneapolis Conference.⁴ Others strenuously disagree.⁵ Before Waggoner's view of Christ's humanity is examined, however, his view of Christ's divinity must be surveyed.

² EJW, "God Manifest in the Flesh," ST 15 (January 21, 1880): 38-39. Note that EJW was careful in his use of the terms "fallen human nature," "the flesh . . . of sinful man," and "sinful nature."
³ E.g., Froom, p. 197.
⁵ E.g., McMahon, p. 104. He bluntly calls EJW's teaching "heresy" (p. 108). Webster considers EJW's views on Christ's human nature "not an essential element for his total Christology and soteriology" (p. 242).
The Divinity of Christ

Waggoner believed that Christ was equal with the Father and possessed the same divine attributes that He has. "The exercise of one divine attribute in an infinite degree, demands the exercise of all."¹ Waggoner believed God is "Spirit" but insisted that He is also "substance, for it is declared that Christ is 'the very image of His [Father's] substance."² The unity between the Father and the Son has an ontological and not merely a phenomenological basis.

The union of the Father and the Son is union of Spirit. We cannot comprehend this union, but we may know that it is not a forced union, but that it results from their very nature. They have one life. Their thoughts and purposes are the same, not because they come together and compare notes and agree to be alike, but because one life is in them both.³

So fully are the Father and the Son united, in fact, "that where Christ is there God the Father is."⁴ Waggoner even seemed to uphold the concept of the Trinity, although not employing the term, when he spoke of "the truth about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

We believe in God; we believe in Jesus Christ as the Word who is God, and who was made flesh; and we believe in the Holy Spirit as the Divine revealer of both the Father and the Son,—a Being so wonderfully sacred as not to admit of description even by Inspiration.⁵

Jesus "must receive the same honour that is due to God, because He is God." He is "the 'express image' of the Father's person. Heb. i. 3. As the Son of the self-existent God, He

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¹ EJW, PT 9 (October 5, 1893): 417.
² EJW, G/C, p. 161.
⁴ EJW, "God as a Companion," PT 9 (June 1, 1893): 161.
has by nature all the attributes of Deity." Christ has His abode in the bosom of the Father, "and He is there as a part of the Godhead, as surely when on earth as when in heaven."

Yet Waggoner held to the idea that there was a time in the distant past, so far back that "the mind of man cannot grasp the ages that are spanned," when Christ was "begotten." Waggoner also believed that "in the begetting of Christ by the Father, in the eternal ages past, the creation of all things was accomplished. In Him they were created."²

The union of Christ with the Father, Waggoner said, even suggests that "God Himself has made the sacrifice for us. It is by the death of Christ that we are reconciled, and God was in Christ reconciling the world. The Word that was made flesh, and that was offered upon the cross, was God."³ According to Waggoner, it was because Christ was God that He "could without egotism declare Himself to be sinless."⁴

The Humanity of Christ

While Waggoner held a relatively high view of Christ's divinity, his Christology also included a detailed description of the human nature Christ assumed in the Incarnation. Waggoner appears to have wrestled with the relationship between Christ's divine and human natures, while remaining consistent in his emphasis both on Christ's sinlessness and Christ's identification with sinful humanity.

Took the sinful nature of humanity

Perhaps Waggoner's most comprehensive statement on the characteristics of Christ's human nature is found in an article entitled "God Manifest in the Flesh." Here, he wrote

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¹ EJW, "Consider Jesus Christ," PT 11 (July 18, 1895): 451-52. Cf. "The Word of God," PT 11 (October 24, 1895): 674: This time is so far back that "it cannot be located."


⁴ EJW, "Jesus Christ the Righteous," PT 9 (November 2, 1893): 486.

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that Christ took the nature of sinful man, thereby assuming “all the weaknesses and sinful
tendencies to which fallen human nature is subject.” Christ’s heredity “was such as would
tend to concentrate in him all the weaknesses of humanity.” Waggoner pressed his point: “If
he was made in all things like unto his brethren, then he must have suffered all the
infirmities and passions of his brethren. Only so could he be able to help them.”1 Although
he described Christ as having “passions,” and said that Christ resisted “sinful passions,”
Waggoner later modified his terminology, when most of this article was reprinted later in
the year, by inserting the word “tendencies” in place of “passions.”2

Another area where Waggoner retraced his steps, although not to the same extent,
was his assertion that Christ could not sin—made three times in both of his 1889 articles. In
reply to inquiries about this assertion,3 he dispatched an article entitled “Christ, the Sinless

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readers to read “who became the ancestors of Jesus, and you will see that on the human side
the Lord was handicapped by His ancestry as badly as anybody can be.” In this way, Christ
shows that “the power of the Gospel of the grace of God can triumph over heredity.”

2 EJW, “Nature of Christ,” ST 15 (October 21, 1889): 631-32. Someone may have
brought to his attention EGW’s statement of 1869 that Christ “is a brother in our infirmities,
but not in possessing like passions,” EGW, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain
overlooked this change, although he did suggest that EJW began softening his position in
CHR, p. 27. “It could be argued” said Webster, “that being ‘subject to temptations’ is more
mild than suffering the “passions of His brethren” (p. 183, n. 85). For a later statement of the
same points, see EJW, “Confessing Christ in the Flesh,” PT 10 (March 8, 1894): 150: “Jesus
Christ is come in the flesh [and] . . . bears all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies of the
flesh of man.”

3 EJW received letters from individuals who understandably found this position in
conflict with EGW’s statement that “If it were not possible for him [Christ] to yield to
temptation, He could not be our helper” (see EGW, Selected Messages, Bk. 1 [Washington,
at the ministerial institute on January 29, 1890, apparently was provoked by EJW’s articles of
the previous year. She also seemed to strongly endorse his corrected position: “Letters have
been coming in to me, affirming that Christ could not have had the same nature as man, for if
He had, He would have fallen under similar temptations. If he did not have man’s nature,
He could not be our example” (ibid.).

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One.” Waggoner did admit that “in one sense, it was possible for Christ to sin, provided he had wished to, for the nature which he took was a nature subject to sin.”

Christ voluntarily took upon himself the feeble nature of man, to be subject to all the tendencies of the flesh, and the temptations of the devil. In short, he deliberately put himself into exactly the same position that fallen man occupies, to feel in his own being the full force of the power of Satan working upon fallen humanity. The temptations to which he was subject were real, not fanciful, and the strength of them equaled the strength of all the temptations that all the men in the world have to endure. The human nature that he took was a sinful nature, one subject to sin. If it were not, he would not be a perfect Saviour. We could not then go to him as one who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

Throughout our period (1889-1895), Waggoner consistently held the position that Christ bore the nature of sinful humanity. In 1895, he said that “Christ took upon Himself the nature of the seed of Abraham, and thus identified Himself with sinful flesh. Heb. ii. 16. Though sinless, He felt our weaknesses and temptations, being ’in all points tempted like as we are.’” One year earlier, he had said:

There is a common idea that . . . Christ simulated sinful flesh; that He did not take upon Himself actual sinful flesh, but only what appeared to be such. But the Scriptures do not teach such a thing. [Hebrews 2:17; Galatians 4:4-5, Revised Version quoted]. . . . He took the same flesh that all men have who are born of woman.

The reason why Christ is so perfect a Saviour as He is, is because while perfectly sinless Himself, He comes to us as though He were one of us,—as though He had committed all the sins that we have,—perfectly identified with our nature, so that we are not afraid of Him.

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1 EJW, “Christ, the Sinless One,” ST 16 (June 9, 1890): 342. He quickly adds, however, that “it was impossible for him to sin, because ‘God was in Christ,’ and that in perfect fullness” (ibid.). Even so, the thrust of his argument still emphasizes the liabilities Christ had in his humanity, considering any seeming contradictions to be part of “the mystery of the gospel.” Also significant is the fact that statements that Christ could not sin do not materialize later, whereas EJW does not appear to have changed his view that Christ lived on earth in sinful flesh.


4 EJW, “Beam and Mote,” PT 10 (May 3, 1894): 274. Cf. idem, “Christ’s Identity with the Sinner,” PT 10 (February 1, 1894): 72: “Christ comes to him [the sinner] and says ‘I identify Myself with you, as having committed that sin. We are sinners together. I go with
“He felt the strivings of the lusts of the flesh, because He was tempted in all points as we are, but yet without sin.”¹ Waggoner also retained from the earlier period (1882-1888) the conviction that Christ bore the sins of the world from birth, since He was “born under the law.”²

The sinlessness of Christ

In spite of his strong insistence on the sinfulness of the nature which Christ assumed, Waggoner was equally strong in his insistence on Christ’s sinlessness, which was consistent with his concept that humans are condemned not for a sinful inheritance, but for sinful choices (see above, pp. 115-18). “To be tempted is not a sin,” he said, “for Jesus Christ ‘was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.’ Heb. iv. 15. The sin comes in only when the temptation is consented to.”³ In spite of the nature Christ assumed, He was sinless: “When we read that Jesus Christ came and took all the weaknesses of sinful flesh, we also read that these weaknesses never manifested themselves in His life.”⁴

The flesh, moved upon by the enemy of all righteousness, would tend to sin, yet his divine nature never for a moment harbored an evil desire, nor did his divine power for a moment waver. Having suffered in the flesh all that men can possibly suffer, he returned to the throne of the Father, as spotless as when he left the courts of glory.⁵

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¹ EJW, “Confessing Christ in the Flesh,” PT 10 (March 8, 1894): 152.
² EJW, “Suffering with Christ,” PT 9 (September 14, 1893): 375 (see above, p. 91).
⁴ EJW, “Confessing Christ in the Flesh,” PT 10 (March 8, 1894): 151.
The difference Waggoner saw between Christ's human nature and that of the rest of the human family, is that Christ was born without need of regeneration. 

"Christ took human nature but not human character." 

He was sinless, and if there ever had been another man on earth who lived without sin, he too could never die. But there never was but the one who trod this earth, who was perfectly sinless, and that was Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Christ Manifested in His People

Christ as Exemplar

Waggoner concluded that all may be assured of overcoming sin as Christ did, since he overcame sin in fallen human nature. The power Christ used in overcoming sin, according to Waggoner, came from His own divine nature, but this did not affect the importance Waggoner ascribed to the example of Christ's life; in fact, Waggoner anticipated the objection that Christ's example is meaningless if He relied on His divine powers.

Someone will say, "I don't see any comfort in this for me. To be sure, I have an example, but I can't follow it, for I haven't the power that Christ had. He was God even while here on earth; I am but a man." Yes, but you may have the same power if you want it.

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1 EJW, "Questions Answered," ST 15 (April 1, 1889): 199: "No person can follow Christ in the regeneration of the heart," EJW said, "because Christ was never regenerated. He 'did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.'"

2 EJW, PT 10 (May 10, 1894): 304.


4 EJW, "Christ, the Sinless One," ST 16 (June 9, 1890): 342: "Not simply did he have the power of God with him, but he was God"; idem, "The Divinity of Christ," ST 15 (April 8, 1889): 214: "He did not lay aside his divinity, but he laid aside his glory, and veiled his divinity with humanity"; idem, "Nature of Christ," ST 15 (October 21, 1889): 632: "His humanity only veiled his divine nature, which was more than able to successfully resist the sinful tendencies of the flesh." Webster, p. 185, recognizes this also: "Quite evidently, Waggoner did not subscribe to a 'dormant' divinity in Christ during His earthly life."

5 EJW, CHR, p. 29.
He came here to furnish a complete example to men of the life of God. Whatever He did then He will do now in those who accept Him.¹

The life which is given to us will present the same characteristics that the life of Christ presented when He was on the earth in person; His life in us must be as strong to do and to resist as it was when He lived in Judea.²

Thus, "the weakest point in our nature may, through the divine power of Christ, become our strongest point."³ Waggoner seems to have realized the implications of Christ's using His own divine power while on earth. Specifically, if Christ used His own divine powers, what powers (if any) were unavailable to him? Did He know the past and future as if they were the present and, if so, how could Christ have lived by faith? The greater the influence attributed to Christ's divine nature, the less significant becomes His assumption of human nature. In 1895, Waggoner made a clear distinction between Christ's divine powers and those powers that were available to Him while on earth.

Christ was on this earth in man's place. He was 'made in all things like unto His brethren.' Heb. ii. 17. He had originally every advantage over man. But He 'emptied Himself,' when He came to earth, so that as man He had no advantage that the meanest son of Adam may not have. As He was heard and protected, so may we be.⁴

Waggoner stressed that Christ was a valid example to us, even in childhood. "Each of us had, as a child, the same opportunities" Jesus had. "His wisdom was the wisdom contained in God's word, which is open to us; His strength was the strength of God dwelling in Him, which is also our strength by the power of His word abiding in us."⁵ Speaking to children, he said:

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¹ EJW, "Saved by His Life," PT 8 (October 6, 1892): 308.
⁵ EJW, "Of No Reputation," PT 10 (December 6, 1894): 770. He nevertheless maintained that it was Christ's life that empowers us to overcome.

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He [Jesus] came as a little child that He might know all the trials and temptations of a child, so that He might know how to comfort and help you as well as older people. He made it possible for you to be as kind and lovely and perfect a child as He was, if you yield to God's Spirit as completely as He did. Satan tempted Him to be naughty in the same ways that he tempts you, but Jesus never yielded to him once, because He allowed God, His mighty Helper, to stay with Him every minute.¹

**Importance of Christ's identification with sinful humanity**

The genuineness of Christ's humanity was crucial for Waggoner. First of all, it is through Christ's experience as a man that He is able to know how much of His divine power we need to resist a given temptation. Whatever presses upon us "makes a like impression upon Him, and He knows how much divine power is necessary to resist it." Christ did not just suffer when He was on earth, otherwise "we might fear that He had forgotten some of the infirmity; but no, the very temptation that presses you touches Him. His wounds are ever fresh, and He ever lives to make intercession for you."² Second, only by Christ's victory over sin in sinful human nature can we be assured of victory: "If we can believe that Christ was in the flesh, God incarnate in Christ, we can believe this,—Christ dwelling in us, and working through us,—through our flesh, just the same as when He took flesh upon himself and

¹ EJW, "The Promise Fulfilled," PT 10 (April 19, 1894): 254. Notice that in this statement EJW said Christ overcame by yielding to God's Spirit, not by His own divine power or nature. Compare this, however, with EJW's 1890 understanding in idem, CHR, p. 30: "All the power which Christ had dwelling in Him by nature, we may have dwelling in us by grace, for He freely bestows it upon us."

² Ibid. Idem, "Confessing Christ in the Flesh," PT 10 (March 8, 1894): 150: "Even now He is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities' (Heb. iv. 15), our weaknesses. He has not forgotten the temptation and suffering which He felt here upon the earth; but He knows and feels it still."
controlled it."\(^1\) In fact, so certain is the victory that it "is ours before the temptation comes" because Christ has already won it.\(^2\)

Waggoner stressed that Christ’s life will be reproduced in the lives of his followers. “There can be no question,” he said, “but that the man who resists sin as Christ did, will not sin. But the only way in which this can be done, is to have Christ Himself living in us His own life of resistance to sin.”\(^3\) Christ’s life, said Waggoner, is to be manifested “in its perfection, and not fitfully in the intervals when we do not repress it.”\(^4\) He called the perfection of Christ’s life in believers “the mystery of the incarnation appearing again.”\(^5\) How Christ can cause righteousness to be manifested in a person’s life instead of sin is just as incomprehensible as the question of how the eternal Creator could be born as a man.\(^6\)


\(^2\) EJW, “Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 8,” GCB 4 (March 15, 1891): 130. Also, idem, “Every Temptation,” PT 10 (April 26, 1894): 263 and idem, “Overcoming in Christ,” PT 9 (October 26, 1893): 465: “Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He has met and overcome every obstacle that can possibly be brought against humanity in the struggle for the life to come. … The victory has been already won. And therefore in Christ we have the victory; for when we are in Him, the temptations assail Him, and not ourselves. When we hide our weakness in His strength, there is only His strength to fight the battle. He has gained the victory, and the beaten foe can never recover from his defeat so as to hope for victory over Him.” Webster completely overlooks these points when he rejects the presence of “example theology” in EJW: “Waggoner taught the power of the internal and existential Christ within the heart. We repeat that this concept makes the debate on the actuality or the degree of the ‘sinful nature’ of Christ irrelevant, at least to some extent” (pp. 242-43). While Webster may wish to draw such conclusions, EJW never did. In fact, rather than draw them, as we have seen, EJW clarified his understanding of the power Christ used on earth to conquer sin.

\(^3\) EJW, “Suffering with Christ,” PT 9 (September 14, 1893): 375-76.


\(^6\) EJW, “Jesus Christ The Righteous,” PT 9 (November 2, 1893): 487.
Waggoner stressed repeatedly that it is not we who obey, but Christ who obeys in us; thus, all opportunity for pride or boasting is removed.

It is by the obedience of One that many are made righteous. What a wonder! Only one—Christ—obeys, but many are made really righteous. . . . So then, if any one asks a Christian, “Are you without sin?” he can only reply, “Not I, but Christ.” “Do you keep the commandments?” “Not I, but Christ.” Imperfect and sinful in ourselves, and yet “complete in Him.”

The character of God must be revealed to counteract the lies of Satan, who “had made the world believe that God was like men—cruel, vindictive, and passionate.” “Then Christ came,” Waggoner said. “God refuted the falsehoods of Satan, not by loud arguments, but simply by living His life among men, so that all might see it.” But this is not where the work ends. “This endless, spotless life Christ gives to all who believe on Him. Christ, the light of the world, dwelling in the hearts of His followers, constitutes them the light of the world.” The life and character of God is to be revealed to the world through all who receive the life of Christ.

True Christianity, according to Waggoner, is the life of Christ in human flesh now. “Too many,” he said, “seem to think it is sufficient to acknowledge that Jesus Christ once came in the flesh, was crucified, buried, and raised.” It is not simply that we are accounted righteous by Christ’s obedience—“we are actually made righteous.” His obedience is not a substitute for our disobedience, but it is actually our righteousness.

In saying this, Waggoner did not mean to deny that Christ’s life stands in our place when we are justified. He argued against a perversion of that truth. “It is often said that as He fulfilled the law,

1 Ibid.

2 Webster, p. 246, admits a “demonstration” model in EJW (though he believes it is “not consistent” with his Christology). He appears to be right in suggesting EJW’s basis for this is to be found in “other concepts such as the ‘great controversy’ motif or the teaching of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 with their call to obedience,” rather than the sanctuary doctrine. However, EJW may have developed such a demonstration model based on the sanctuary after 1895. See Wieland, The 1888 Message: An Introduction, pp. 146-49.

3 EJW, “As He Walked,” PT 11 (September 5, 1895): 564.
keeping it for us, we have nothing whatever to do with it. That is the same as saying that because He always told the truth, we may lie with impunity; that as He honored the Father, we are free to dishonor Him.” Waggoner could not imagine a greater error. “It is true that He kept the law for us, but it was that He might keep it in us.”¹ The total significance of Christ’s work for us and in us is best summarized by this statement:

No man could do it [overcome Satan] for Satan was stronger than any man. Not even the angels could do it, for they had no more life or purity than [what] they needed for themselves; all they had was given them by God. God only was stronger than Satan. And with Him alone was the fountain of purity and life. Nothing could drive out the darkness of sin but the light of His life. Nothing could break the cords of sin with which Satan had bound us, but the righteousness of His life. Nothing could take away the keys of the grave but the power of His marvelous life which could go down into the grave, and pass through the grave, and carry the keys away with it.

But this would mean a life of pain and temptation in sinful flesh, and a cruel death upon the cross—for God! Oh, did He love us enough to give up His glorious home and all His riches and joys in Heaven, and come down to earth as the poorest of the poor, and the weakest of the weak, and pass through every pain and temptation of sinful flesh, even to death’s dark door? Yes, He did! God came in His Son to reconcile the world unto Himself. . . .

Look at Him hanging on the cursed cross with His tender hands and feet still quivering form the cruel nails! Look at Him dying of a broken heart because of your sins and mine! Behold your God!

Oh, can you longer doubt His love for you? . . .

But look once more. . . . Our Lord is risen! Death could not hold Him. The glorious work is finished. He has bought us back and has broken the last fetter and unlocked the last door that shut us in with Satan! HE HAS SET US FREE! He has proclaimed liberty, to every captive “and the opening of the prison to them that are bound!” In the name of Jesus we may walk out into all the liberty of sons of God. Satan cannot overcome us or cause us to sin once more if we believe in Jesus and stand fast and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. And as long as we believe that He has made us free and yield to Him in everything, letting His mind be in us, Satan cannot touch us.²

Atonement and Reconciliation

Atonement and reconciliation, effected by Christ through His cross, became an increasingly important theme in Waggoner’s understanding of the gospel. Waggoner

¹ EJW, PT 9 (July 13, 1893): 240.

² EJW, “‘Let This Mind Be in You,’” PT 10 (February 22, 1894): 123-24 (small caps EJW’s).
continued to stress, during the period from 1889 to 1895, both the objective and the subjective aspects of the atonement made upon the cross. “The cross of Christ,” he said, “reveals the deep things of God. Every conclusion arrived at outside the light of the cross, will be but a libel on the character of God.” This light, however, can only be rightly understand as it becomes subjectivized in us. “The life of Christ is the life of God, but that life cannot be studied critically, as an artist would study a picture. We can know the life of God only as it is lived in us.”

Objective Aspect of the Atonement

Waggoner clearly emphasized the historical death of the sinless man Jesus Christ as the atonement for the sins of the world. The fact that Jesus never sinned, yet bore the sins of the world and died the death sinners deserve, enabled Him to be Saviour.

Jesus Christ died as a sinner. ‘He was numbered with the transgressors.’... [2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:5-6 quoted.]
Because our sin was put upon Him, He was cut off from the favour of God; and when upon the cross He cried out, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ it was no fanciful utterance. God had forsaken Him. He had hidden His face from Him. In that last dreadful hour spent in Gethsemane, Christ passed without the pale of the mercy and favour of God; and it was this that caused His sufferings. He felt what the wicked will feel at the last day when they, because of sin, experience the wrath of God.

Christ went where man will never be compelled to go. We shall never have to experience the dreadful certainty that God has forsaken us. Christ stood in that place in order that we might never have to go there. If we are ever there, it will be entirely our own work.

Death could not hold Him, because He was sinless. “Sin had spent all its force on him, and had not marred him in the least. It had not made a single blot upon his character.” And Christ’s death was not the death of just a man. Not even the sacrifice of the lives of all the angels in heaven could have effected salvation for mankind, “because

1 EJW, PT 9 (September 21, 1893): 385.
2 EJW, “Raised from the Dead,” PT 10 (February 1, 1894): 68.
they could not have imparted any life to man."¹ "God gave Himself for man." Only God
knows how such could be possible. “Only Divinity can comprehend Divinity. The death of
Divinity for the life of humanity, is ‘the mystery of God,’” said Waggoner. God “could not
live without man, so great was His love, and so He died for him.” In some mysterious way,
“there is a void in the heart of God that can be filled only with the love of man.”²

Nature of the Atonement

Waggoner understood the death of Christ to be substitutionary. He objected to the
interpretation of 2 Cor 5:21 that made Christ a “sin-offering.” “Our iniquity was laid upon
him; he was bruised for our sakes—in our stead. He bore our sin, and suffered as if he had
actually been the sinner.” Waggoner affirmed the “Scripture doctrine of substitution,” which
“is entirely too strong and clear” from Scripture to be denied.³ Because we have failed to live
in perfect harmony with God’s law, “Christ has substituted His own life for ours.”⁴ Christ
took our place in order to take our sin and give us His righteousness. “He took what He did
not deserve, in order that we might be saved from what we do deserve. He became poor, that
we might be made rich. He who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us, ‘that we might be
made the righteousness of God in Him.’”⁵

The death of Christ “speaks in awful eloquence” of God’s justice and mercy combined:
“His mercy in that He gave His Son to die rather than that man should be lost; and His
justice, in that He would not pass over sin, even though it would cost Him the life of His only

¹ EJW, “Reconciliation,” PT 9 (September 21, 1893): 388.
² EJW, PT 9 (September 7, 1893): 353.
³ [EJW], “Sabbath-School Lessons,” p. 34.
⁴ EJW, “Reconciliation,” PT 9 (September 21, 1893): 388.
⁵ EJW, PT 11 (March 21, 1895): 177.
begotten Son.”\(^1\) The “stupendous sacrifice of Jesus Christ” reveals “sin in its heinous character.”\(^2\) Waggoner objected, however, to what he called a “pagan” idea of the atonement that over-emphasizes the element of justice, namely, that

God was so angry at man for having sinned, that He could not be mollified without seeing blood flow; but it made no difference to Him whose blood it was, if only somebody was killed; and that since Christ’s life was worth more than the lives of all men, He accepted Him as a substitute for them.\(^3\)

For Waggoner, Christ’s death primarily satisfied God’s love. “Justice would have been met by the summary death of the sinful race. But God’s love could not suffer that.” Christ’s sacrifice had another purpose also: revealing “God’s inexpressible love . . . in order to break down man’s enmity, and reconcile us to Himself.”\(^4\)

Terms of reconciliation

According to Waggoner, man, by nature, is “alienated from God; he is a rebel, full of enmity.” This is why man needs to be reconciled. God, however, “has no enmity in His being. ‘God is love.’ Consequently there is no necessity for Him to be reconciled.” Waggoner believed God’s absolute and unchangeable perfection, which cannot and will not accommodate to the desires of sinful man, to be the assurance that mankind can be saved.

If God ever had any enmity in His heart against man, there would always arise the torturing thought, “Perhaps He is not yet sufficiently appeased to accept Me; surely He cannot love so guilty a being as I am.” And the more one realized his guilt, the greater would be his doubt. But when we know that God never had any enmity toward us, but that He has loved us with an everlasting love, and that He has loved us so much that He gave Himself for us, so that we might be reconciled to Him, we can joyfully exclaim, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”\(^5\)

\(^{1}\) EJW, PT 9 (October 5, 1893): 417.

\(^{2}\) EJW, “Danger of Spiritual Blindness,” PT 10 (March 8, 1894): 154.

\(^{3}\) EJW, “Reconciliation,” PT 9 (September 21, 1893): 387.

\(^{4}\) Ibid., pp. 387-88.

\(^{5}\) Ibid., p. 386.
Waggoner made the distinction between God's attitude toward sin and His attitude toward sinners; "God hates sin, but loves sinners." Men may be and often are the enemies of God, Waggoner said, "but God is not the enemy of men." Need for reconciliation, therefore, lies wholly on the side of mankind. God invites everyone to be reconciled, "but if the sinner will not be reconciled to God through Christ, God cannot save him."

You, reader, whoever you may be, do not have to do something to propitiate God and reconcile Him to you, that you may obtain salvation. You are "accepted in the Beloved." Eph. i. 6. Your part is to accept what Christ has done for you, to accept Christ and His righteousness. Then the harmony between yourself and God will be mutual and complete.¹

The terms of reconciliation, Waggoner understood, were directly related to the enmity that must be removed. "Since the enmity consists in the fact that we are not subject to the law of God, the reconciliation consists in the putting of that law in the heart and mind," Christ being the "medium through which the righteousness of God is conveyed to us."²

Subjective Aspects of the Atonement

A dominant theme in Waggoner's understanding of the atonement was its present significance. He strongly asserted that the cross of Christ was not just a historical event of the first century; rather, its significance extends to each person. Only when the cross becomes an experience in the life of the believer does it have saving power. Waggoner made this point by stressing that Christ continues to suffer with His people in His work of intercession and that His people are to become identified with Him just as He has become identified with them.

² EJW, PT 9 (March 23, 1893): 82.
Christ suffers with His people

Waggoner pointed out that God's people are to suffer "with" Christ (Rom 8:17), from which "it follows that Christ still suffers." Waggoner found an additional evidence that Christ continues to suffer as a consequence of sin in the conception of the Church as His body. "He is the head of the body. Now if one member suffers all the members suffer with it (1 Cor. xii. 26), how much more must that be true of the head?" As high priest, even now Christ "is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'" ¹

The cross of Christ, emblematic of His suffering, Waggoner considered to be a reality throughout the whole of world history. He quoted Rev 13:8, which speaks of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," in order to show the close relationship between the Sabbath and the cross. To Waggoner, this verse proves that the Sabbath could not have been affected by the cross, "since the crucifixion of Christ was only the continuation of a thing that had taken place at least four thousand years before." ² More than this, Waggoner said that "to the Christian, the crucifixion of Christ is an ever-present reality; not a symbol worn upon the breast or gazed upon in the church, but a daily experience in his life." And "where the reality is, symbols are altogether unnecessary and out of place." ³ It is important to notice that Waggoner did not say that the cross, ontologically speaking, is an ever-present occurrence. He said it is an ever-present reality—and is such only "to the Christian." Unless this distinction is understood, Waggoner's theology cannot be viewed as coherent. The subjective aspect of the atonement, in Waggoner's writings, is viewed from the human standpoint and only in terms of experiencing the cross. "He has been set forth wherever there


² EJW, "The Sabbath and the Cross," PT 9 (July 20, 1893): 246. This view of God's plan of salvation as timeless probably derived from his meditations on the covenants and logically follows from it (see below, pp. 162-68).

have been believers, through all time."¹ "His cross is set up in every heart" in which He dwells "by faith."² This emphasis is more prominent in the period from 1889 to 1895, but can actually be traced back to Waggoner's conversion in 1882, when "an experience" came to him which revealed "for the first time" that God gave Himself for Waggoner personally. Waggoner says he saw Christ "evidently crucified" before him.³

Waggoner emphasized the need for each person to behold Christ crucified. "Calvary is right here. Here is the cross set up, and we see Christ set forth crucified among us. Gal. iii. 1." It is by believing it that we see Him crucified now.⁴

In the most vivid sense Jesus Christ is crucified now. We do not have to look back eighteen hundred years to see the cross set up, and the blood flowing from the side of Jesus; but He is crucified. His blood, ever fresh and incorruptible, is as really and vividly present before the throne as when He suffered outside the gates of old Jerusalem.⁵

By no means did this concept amount to a perpetual heaven-approved mass. "Christ was once offered," Waggoner insisted (alluding to Heb 9:28). "He 'offered one sacrifice for sins for ever.' Heb. x. 12. He will never offer Himself again. . . . Christ was once offered to

² EJW, "Counting It Joy," PT 10 (February 8, 1894): 81.
³ See above, p. 2. The experience is described more vividly in EJW, CF, pp. 3-4. The difference in the two accounts of his conversion may be significant in that the 1916 version primarily employed language that represented for EJW the subjective aspect of the atonement. Compare also idem, "Notes on the Lesson," ST 9 (June 21, 1883): 281. EJW described Paul's conversion and suggested that radical changes are not seen in us as they were in Paul because "we have not seen Jesus . . .  in the sufferings and shame that he endured for us."
⁴ EJW, "How Do You Know?" PT 10 (March 1, 1894): 134: "The marvel of it is that our belief makes us know it, because we experience the same thing, and so can bear witness that it is a fact. . . . We know it is so, because we not only saw Him crucified, but were crucified with Him, and are raised to life with Him."
⁵ EJW, "Christ Our Passover," PT 10 (October 25, 1894): 675.
bear sins. It is only as men lay their sins on Him, that there is any hope for them.¹ Christ “is crucified but once.”² It is “in the persons of His followers” that Christ’s suffering, humiliation, and death “is not yet finished.”³ All who are His followers have taken up Christ’s cross⁴

Tremendous benefits are available to all who are crucified with Christ. For one thing, being so crucified is the only way to receive the benefits of His atonement. “Crucified together with Him, there is virtue to us, because we get the virtue that is in Christ. Such virtue is freedom, separation from sin, redemption, life, joy, peace”—and it is conveyed to us by means of His blood, which is His life.⁵ Christ gave His life on the cross so that we might receive it and thereby escape eternal death. “The imparting of His life to us frees us from sin and the continuing of it in us, keeps us from sin. . . . We are at peace with Him because one life is in us both.”⁶ Since His life is eternal, Christ can “give the whole of His life to one man, and have just as much to give to you and me and everybody because there is no diminishing of


² EJW, “Confirming the Promises,” PT 11 (August 1, 1895): 484.


⁵ EJW, “Reasoning Together,” PT 9 (January 12, 1893): 1; idem, “The Reign of Peace,” PT 9 (July 6, 1893): 211-12; idem, “Reconciliation,” PT 9 (September 21, 1893): 388. McMahon, pp. 109-11, 132-39, tried to show that this view of EJW’s was a denial of an objective, expiatory sacrifice of atonement, but as has been demonstrated above (pp. 154-57), this was not the case.

⁶ EJW, “Reconciliation,” PT 9 (September 21, 1893): 388; idem, “Raised from the Dead,” PT 10 (February 1, 1894): 68.
it."¹ We do not bear the cross—He does—"and to us there is joy in the Lord in it."² By accepting His death for us, we can claim His victory, for the enemy has already been "everlastingly overthrown" by Him and has no desire to try again.³

Identification with Christ

Waggoner described crucifixion with Christ as becoming "identified with Him." It is the human response to Christ's having identified Himself with us by taking our nature and suffering and dying in our place. If we identify ourselves with His humiliation, "we shall also be identified with Him in His resurrection and eternal life of glory."⁴ When fully identified with Christ, we will be as dead men.

How much suffering and inconvenience do dead men experience from hurt feelings? If we are crucified with Christ, and live by His life in us, we shall have no feelings but His feelings. We shall act toward those who persecute and speak evil of us, as He did toward those who persecuted Him; we shall feel toward them as He felt.⁵

As long as "we continue to be identified" with Christ, the very same message, the same authority, the same protection that the Father accorded Him will be granted to us. "When we pray in the name of Jesus," Waggoner said, "it is the same as if Jesus Himself were praying, and we may be as sure of being heard as He was."⁶

¹ EJW, "Multiplication of Light," PT 10 (February 1, 1894): 69. "This is the quality of eternal life; always giving and never diminishing; always shining and never becoming dim" (ibid., p. 70).


³ EJW, "How Do You Know?" PT 10 (March 1, 1894): 134.


⁵ EJW, "The Life," PT 11 (January 24, 1895): 54.

⁶ EJW, "Some Thoughts from Psalm XX," PT 11 (October 10, 1895): 644.
Identification with Christ is the evidence that “a wonderful change” has been effected in us. “The law does not die, but the flesh dies, the law of sin and death is abolished, the enmity between us and the law dies, the bondage ceases, and we become joined to Christ in faith, and the law becomes to us ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.’”¹ A person who has experienced this “has simply exchanged lives with the Son of God. Being crucified with Christ, he gives his old life to Christ, and thus it, with its sins, is nailed to the cross.” And he who is crucified with Christ is also made alive with Him and becomes a new creature.²

The Two Covenants

As was mentioned in the biographical section for this period, Waggoner’s presentations on the two covenants stirred no small controversy at the ministerial institute of 1889-90. He was strongly supported by Ellen White, who recognized a similarity between Waggoner’s position and her own (as presented in Patriarchs and Prophets). Very little difference is evident between Waggoner’s teaching on the covenants during 1889-1895 and his position in the earlier period (1882-1888) already examined.

Covenants Defined Relationally

According to EJW, a key difference between the covenants is the people’s relation to the law and its relation to them. To the “unconverted,” the law only appears in a negative light, expressed by the words “Thou shalt not.”³ The fact that the law cannot justify is no fault of the law, but our own fault. “The law did not fall in the fall of man; the law does not become sin because we sin,” but “by our fall we are far below the righteousness of the law, and

are now dependent upon another to raise us up to where its righteousness may be fulfilled in us."¹ "The Law on stones, or in a book, simply tells us what to do," he said, "but gives us no power to do it."² Its only purpose is "to produce conviction of sin, and thus to drive the sinner to seek freedom."³ On the other hand, to the one "from whom sin has been separated," the law is a law of life.⁴

Relation to Christ determinative

The relationship a person has with Christ determines his relationship to the law. "The law that shuts up to certain death the man who is out of Christ, becomes life and liberty to the man who is in Christ."⁵ Waggoner explained why this is the case: "Without Christ, the law is a yoke of bondage, speaking only death."⁶ But Christ "stands between the law and the sinner, and in Him, the sinner can meet the law and not die. In Christ, the sinner exchanges his sins for God's righteousness," which satisfies the law's demands.⁷ This brings sinners out from "under the law," so long as "they keep the law, even as Christ did."⁸

² EJW, "The Two Dispensations," PT 9 (September 7, 1893): 357.
³ [EJW], "Sabbath-School Lessons," p. 24. Cf. EGW, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 371, where the primary purpose of the old covenant seems to have been to impress the people of Israel with "the holiness of God, . . . 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."
⁵ EJW, "'As Free as a Bird,'" PT 10 (January 18, 1894): 36.
⁶ EJW, "Defining Religion," PT 10 (February 15, 1894): 104.
⁷ EJW, "Meeting the Law," PT 10 (February 8, 1894): 84.
Therefore, said Waggoner, "Sinai and Calvary are not in opposition, but are united. Both present the same gospel and the same law. The life which flows for us from Calvary, bears to us the righteousness of the law that was proclaimed from Sinai."\(^1\)

On the basis of the foregoing, Waggoner defined the dispensations of the old and new covenants not primarily in terms of time, but of relationship.\(^2\) This is crucial to understanding not only his view of the covenants, but Waggoner's whole soteriology. What Scripture calls "the second covenant existed in every feature . . . , even from the days of Adam."\(^3\) "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," he said. "No matter what period of the world's history, a man can at any time pass from the old dispensation into the new."\(^4\) He also called the old dispensation "self" and the new dispensation "Christ."\(^5\)

**Giving of the law at Sinai**

If the old and new dispensations run concurrently, what was the significance of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai? "At the time of the giving of the law," Waggoner said, Mount Sinai was "designed to represent the throne of God. Indeed it was for the time the

\(^1\) EJW, "Grace and Truth," PT 10 (October 25, 1894): 678.

\(^2\) In (EJW], "Sabbath-School Lessons," p. 17, EJW allowed for a sense in which all Israelites were under the old covenant in the sense of participating in the sanctuary ritual. "But that was not all," he said. "As children of Abraham they were also under the Abrahamic covenant," which was "a covenant of faith." Page 28 states that sins committed under the first covenant "were pardoned by virtue of the second covenant, of which Christ is mediator." EJW, therefore, did not totally eliminate the temporal element; but, for him, the temporal element did not affect the concurrence of the two covenants, in principle in all ages.

\(^3\) [EJW], "Sabbath-School Lessons," p. 20.

\(^4\) EJW, "The Two Dispensations," PT 9 (September 7, 1893): 356.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 358.
throne of God, the place whence the law goes forth, out of which proceed 'lightnings and
thunderings and voices' (Rev. iv.5), and around which stand 'ten thousand times ten
thousand, and thousands of thousands' of angels.\textsuperscript{1} At Sinai, the people promised to keep
His holy law; and God told them the result should they obey Him.\textsuperscript{2} The first covenant was
essentially "a promise on the part of the people that they would make themselves holy. But
this they could not do." The promise itself was a good one; the fault lay with the people.
"The promise was faulty, through the weakness of the people who made it."\textsuperscript{3}

Waggoner did not see it as unjust for God to accept a promise He knew could not be
kept. On the contrary, God made provision so that they could keep the law. But "the minds
of the people were blinded, and so the light [of the Gospel] could not shine in."

The light was there, ready to shine in, for the mind of Moses was not blinded,
and the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shone in his face, transforming him.
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. Those who received it by
faith had righteousness and life; those whose unbelief refused to see it remained in
sin and death.\textsuperscript{4}

The new covenant is called the "second" covenant because "both its ratification by
blood and its more minute statement were after that of the covenant made at Sinai. More
than this, it was the second covenant made with the Jewish people. The one from Sinai was
the first made with that nation."\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1} EJW, "Grace and Truth," \textit{PT} 10 (October 25, 1894): 677. EJW also made an interesting
comparison between God’s throne, Mount Sinai, and Calvary. Water flowed from Sinai, as it
does from God’s throne. In addition, blood and water flowed forth from Christ, in whose
heart the law of God was enshrined (ibid., p. 678).

\textsuperscript{2} [EJW], "Sabbath-School Lessons," p. 9.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 11.

\textsuperscript{4} EJW, "The ‘Two Dispensations,’” \textit{PT} 9 (September 7, 1893): 357.

\textsuperscript{5} [EJW], "Sabbath-School Lessons," p. 20.
Comparison of the two covenants

The two covenants are based on different promises, as Waggoner understood them.

"In the first covenant, the people promised to make themselves holy; in the second, God says that he will do the work for them." Under the new covenant, "the two tables of the law are not duty to God and duty to man, but they are love to God and love to man."

God Himself cannot force men to keep His own law, because it is a law of love as He Himself is love. But He puts the keeping of it into those who are willing, by shedding His love abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We cannot love by promising to love or trying to love. We cannot create love by our exertions. Love can spring up in the heart only through its being opened to God, so that He who is love can come in. And this we do by the exercise of faith.

By contrast, "the sacrifices and offerings of the Mosaic law could not perfect the conscience, could not reform the life, could not write the law of God in the heart." The old covenant did not provide for "pardon, and promise of divine assistance." Therefore, no one could be saved through this covenant; otherwise, there would have been no need for a second one.

1 Ibid., p.13. Cf. idem, "Promises," PT 9 (February 9, 1893): 34-35. Cf. EGW, Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 371-72: "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 the 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." After the people broke this covenant by worshiping a golden calf, she said, "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" (italics supplied).


5 Ibid., p. 12.
The language of the covenants is also spoken of by Waggoner in terms of bondage and freedom. Waggoner understood every human being to be "by nature in bondage to sin." There is no one whom the law does not declare guilty. And "it is obvious," Waggoner said, "that a man cannot be declared righteous by the same law that declares him to be a sinner." Waggoner vividly described this bondage:

The flesh is chained to sin; and whenever it tries to go in a direction contrary to sin the chains hold it back, and the individual realizes a sense of bondage. But if he ceases trying to go contrary to sin, he no longer feels the pulling of the chains. The individual may then, in his blindness, imagine himself at liberty, and rejoice at having as he thinks gotten out of bondage into freedom. But he has no freedom, only the freedom that Satan gives. For Satan holds the chains, and leads his victim captive at his will. So long as he moves where Satan wants him to go, he feels no the restraining force of his bonds. The devil will give his captive rope enough so that he will not be unpleasantly conscious of his captivity. But the moment he tries to leave the path of sin and walk in the paths of God, he finds himself in bondage; and try as hard as he may, he cannot set himself free. He finds himself joined to sin, so that he can only go where sin goes also.

Freedom from such bondage can only be found in Christ. "Outside of Christ there is no righteousness, no keeping of the commandments." But because of Christ's work on our behalf, the prison door is open; the shackles are loosed. This is the glad tidings of the Gospel to the fallen children of men. Jesus Christ has repealed the law of the realm of bondage, which is the 'law of sin and death.' He has substituted in its place the 'law of the Spirit of life.'

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The work of liberation is not a future work, but one already accomplished. It only waits your acceptance. The deliverance is yours, if you will take it. The prison door is open; will you walk out, or remain in your bondage?1

The breadth of the liberty Waggoner had in mind was “just as broad as the life of God” which “comprehends the whole universe.” It is the liberty which God himself enjoys. This liberty does not come by trying to do right, but by actually doing right—and this is only true of “the one whose works are wrought in him by God Himself.”2 This freedom can be experienced anywhere. “The man who has that liberty is free even in a prison cell. The slave who has it is infinitely more at liberty than his cruel master, even though he be a king.”3 The issue of bondage versus freedom was fundamental to Waggoner’s view of the gospel. In Waggoner’s view, being justified, sanctified, and perfected in this life must be the result of choice.

Does some one say, ‘If He is so powerful why does He not have His way in spite of us?’ Simply because His power is the power of love, and love does not use force. . . . He wants subjects whom He can trust in any part of the universe; but if He were to compel any to be saved, He would have to exercise force to retain them in the kingdom. Christ came to preach deliverance to the captives, and He does not propose to deliver them to bondage.4

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1 EJW, “The Open Door,” PT 9 (November 30, 1893): 551. Cf. EJW, “‘As Free as a Bird,’” PT 10 (January 18, 1894): 36: “[Isaiah 61:1-2 quoted.] Liberty has already been proclaimed. Your prison doors are already open, and you have only to believe it. Christ is today proclaiming liberty to you, for He has broken the snare and loosed your bonds. Ps. cxvi. 16 . . . . Believe His word, declare yourself free in His name, and then by humble faith stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” Significant in these statements is the importance of Christ’s objective, finished work, which must be applied to the individual through faith. McMahon, pp. 132-39, in claiming that EJW totally subjectivized the atonement, apparently overlooked or ignored statements like these. EJW believed in both an objective, finished atonement and an ongoing, subjective atonement (see above, pp. 153-62).

2 EJW, “‘As Free as a Bird,’” PT 10 (January 18, 1894): 36.

3 Ibid.

4 EJW, GIC, pp. 101-2.
Selected Aspects of Waggoner’s Eschatology

The Sanctuary in Heaven—Mediation and Judgment

Waggoner rarely commented on what transpires in heaven. His relative silence does not seem to lie in any doubt about the Adventist understanding of Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary, as some have concluded by reading back into his earlier writings his denial of faith in the Adventist sanctuary doctrine written in 1916. Waggoner was not silent on the subject before 1916. He said enough to make his beliefs in this area clear. As we have seen, in the period from 1882 to 1888 there is ample evidence that he believed in the Adventist understanding of the heavenly sanctuary and the judgment that began there in 1844. Our present period is crucial, however, because in 1916 Waggoner claimed to have changed his opinions “twenty-five years” earlier, which directs us to some time around 1891. The method chosen in this study for examining Waggoner’s statements regarding heavenly mediation and judgment is to consider his views up through 1891, compare them with what he said thereafter, and note any developments or omissions in his writings after 1891.

The Heavenly Sanctuary and Priesthood

In 1889, Waggoner explicitly noted that upon His ascension, Christ began His work of “ministration in the heavenly sanctuary.” The earthly sanctuary and its furniture “were copied after the things in the heavens,” he said. “Everything in the earthly sanctuary was

1 This is an unfortunately widespread tendency. See Haddock, pp. 278-83; McMahon, p. 93; Webster, pp. 244-45, n. 257: “Some have felt that this might be an exaggeration on the part of Waggoner (see Letter A O Coetzee, Andrews University, to E C Webster, July 27, 1982. Coetzee is, no doubt, reflecting the opinions of some at Andrews, but no evidence is given for this assertion. It could even be a subjective appraisal).” Evidence against Webster’s contention has been set forth below.

2 See above, p. 104.

a representation of some corresponding thing in the heavenly sanctuary, as nearly exact as human hands could approach to a likeness of things not made with hands." These things included "the original law of ten commandments." Waggoner described the intercession of Christ in terms of how it benefits His people. "The work of Christ as priest," he said, "is for one thing,—to deliver us from sin." Christ's work as Mediator involves "a spiritual rule in the hearts of his people."

In addition to making intercession, Waggoner understood Christ also to be currently engaged in a special work in heaven typified by the Day of Atonement.

Not only were the earthly sacrifices typical of Christ's sacrifice, and the earthly priests typical of his priesthood, but the earthly sanctuary was typical of the heavenly holy places. And of course the cleansing of the sanctuary on earth with the blood of bulls and goats was typical of the purifying of the heavenly things with better sacrifices. In the whole argument of this remarkable letter [to the Hebrews], nothing is made more plain than this.

Waggoner added that the heavenly sanctuary needs cleansing "because of our sins taken by our Priest, and that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it." Waggoner did not calculate the 2300 day prophecy of Dan 8:14 in any of his 1889-1891 works, although he did apply the prophecy of Dan 7 to the Papacy. Nonetheless, referring to the heavenly judgment, Waggoner said: "God does have a tangible structure in heaven for his occupancy, where, to use a common expression, he holds court." In this context, Waggoner could even


2 EJW, "Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 8," GCB 4 (March 16, 1891): 130 (the exact same wording also appears in idem, "Life in Christ," PT 8 (July 28, 1892): 232). Cf. idem, CHR, p. 80. Saying that Christ's heavenly ministry is only for the purpose of delivering from sin is not necessarily inimical to a work of judgment, because EJW tended to focus on the result rather than the process of Christ's work in heaven.


speak of a movable throne in heaven. Elsewhere, he affirmed that the judgment was “even now set.” In this judgment, “only those who cease to sin” will have their sins “put away,” while those “who continue to transgress the law of God never have their sins put away; they retain them. Matt. 7:21.” While it is possible that such statements could be construed to refer to the entire period of Christ’s heavenly ministry, beginning at the ascension, Waggoner’s stress on the temporal element (“even now set”) suggests otherwise.

If anything, Waggoner’s description of the heavenly sanctuary and the work carried on there became more complete and precise after 1891. He calculated the seventy-week prophecy of Dan 9 as “symbolic” days using the equation “that a prophetic day is a literal year” and employing the usual Adventist dates for this prophecy’s fulfillment. In 1893, Waggoner maintained that “the earthly sanctuary, with its two apartments, was a pattern of this true sanctuary above. Heb. ix. 23, 24.” The earthly tabernacle represented “the dwelling place of God, corresponding to the temple of God in heaven (see Ex. xxv. 8; Heb. ix. 23, 24; Ps. xi. 4),” while the ark represented the throne of God. Waggoner argued strongly for the literalness of the heavenly sanctuary and “the most holy apartment” of that sanctuary. “Do you say, This is only imagination,— a mere spiritual picture, without any practical value? Not at all; it is real, for all spiritual things are real.”

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3 [EJW], “Sabbath-School Lessons,” p. 32.
4 EJW, “Prophecies Concerning the Messiah,” PT 6 (May 19, 1892): 152.
7 EJW, “Your Dwelling,” PT 10 (May 17, 1894): 309. Significantly, EJW did not use expressions like “mere” to deny literalness to heavenly realities.
According to Waggoner, the work of Christ is that of High Priest, "performing in the heavenly sanctuary a work of which that performed by Aaron and his sons was typical. He is not yet a king, but will receive a kingdom when His ministry is finished and He lays aside His priestly garments, and the great scene [of Dan 7:13-14] takes place."\(^1\) This ministry is typical of the cleansing work performed on the Day of Atonement.

As the high priest ministered in the earthly sanctuary, but went only once in the year into the inner apartment of it, when the day of atonement—or cleansing—had come; so our High Priest has ministered the sacrifices and offerings of His people in the sanctuary above, and has now entered into its inner apartment, there to perform the great work of cleansing the true sanctuary, into which have been brought the sins of His people. Here will be made a final disposition of their sins, and when the work is finished He will change His priestly garments for the robes of a King, and "appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." Heb. ix. 24-28.\(^2\)

Clearly, Waggoner believed in two phases of Christ's ministry, the final phase of which transpires in the inner apartment of the sanctuary. In 1916, on the other hand, Waggoner wrote that "there could . . . be no such thing, either in 1844, A. D., or at any other time, as the 'cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.'"\(^3\)

While the foregoing is not a fully developed doctrine of the sanctuary, it is enough to substantiate the fact that Waggoner had not by 1893 repudiated the Adventist understanding of it. With regard to the judgment itself, his statements are even less subject to interpretation.

The Work of Judgment

1889-1891

In the years 1889 to 1891, Waggoner spoke of the heavenly judgment without any basic modification of his earlier understanding of 1882-1888. He still emphatically held

\(^{1}\) EJW, "Looking unto Jesus," \textit{PT} 9 (September 28, 1893): 405.
\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 406.
God's law to be the standard in the judgment and "the measure of acceptance with him." As has already been noticed, the law in Waggoner's writings is much more than the letter of the law; it requires people to have the life and character of Jesus, who "did no sin . . . simply because the law was in his heart." This, according to Waggoner, brings assurance in the judgment.

If Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, then we can exhibit in our actions the righteousness of the law, for if we have Christ in the heart we must have the law there also. And having lived thus, when we are brought before the judgment seat, and God fixes upon us his piercing gaze, he will see, not us, but the image of Christ, and because he lives we shall live also.

Waggoner believed that consideration of the judgment should go beyond concern about one's personal salvation to concern for the salvation of others:

And oh, if that first angel declared, "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come," how much more should we declare that message,—the everlasting gospel,—now, when that judgment is not only come, but even now nearly done.

The witness of those who proclaim the "everlasting gospel" is an indispensable part of the judgment because "sentence is never pronounced nor executed until after the witness has finished its testimony." Christ's intercession ceases when all "have become reconciled to God who could by any possibility be reconciled." As in the period from 1882 to 1888, Waggoner also spoke of the judgment as taking place when Christ returns, but this is

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1 EJW, "Things We Should Know. No. 2," ST 16 (June 2, 1890): 326.
3 EJW, "Things We Should Know. No. 2," ST 16 (June 2, 1890): 326.
6 EJW, "The Love of God," ST 16 (December 1, 1890): 570.
explained by his view of the second advent as a process of events, rather than a point in time.

(see above, pp. 43-46).

In addition to the judgment of this world, Waggoner described the judgment in heaven as an occasion when God is judged. God's "decisions have been called into question, and from this it is an easy transition to the idea that he himself has been brought into the judgment; that his doings are on trial."\(^1\) Satan and evil men have charged God with being "unjust and arbitrary; but in the judgment all the universe will say, 'Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.'"\(^2\)

Waggoner had little to say about the "blotting out of sins" from 1889-1891. However, when he did discuss it, he seems to have understood it experientially, in relation to justification by faith. He said that when the judgment closes,

the word of reconciliation will no longer be preached, because all will have become reconciled to God who could by any possibility be reconciled. . . . When by continued sin and repeated resistance of the Spirit of God, they have finally driven it [God's Spirit] from them, have blotted out every thought of good, upon which the Holy Spirit could work, then they are wholly Satan's, actuated solely by his wicked spirit.\(^3\)

In this statement, the condemnation of the unsaved is based on their blotting out the good from their minds, i.e., irrevocable rejection of what is good. These people will be blotted out of existence at the same time that sin is "blotted from the earth,"\(^4\) since they will have made sin so much a part of them that it cannot be separated from them and they "must necessarily go with it."\(^5\)


\(^2\) EJW, "Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 3," GCB 4 (March 10, 1891): 63.

\(^3\) EJW, "The Love of God," ST 16 (December 1, 1890): 570.

\(^4\) EJW, "The Baptism of Fire," ST 16 (June 23, 1890): 375.

Waggoner sought, by this kind of definition, to make the judgment applicable to the Christian life rather than a mere theory of judgment in heaven.¹ No magical work is done in heaven that is not first accomplished in the believer by his own free will. The statements Waggoner made relative to forgiveness being "more than a mere entry in the books of record in heaven, to the effect that the sin has been cancelled"² and "not a mere book transaction"³ have been interpreted by some as evidence that Waggoner doubted the reality of an investigative judgment.⁴ However, an alternative explanation for this emphasis exists that seems to fit Waggoner, and the historical context in which he wrote, much better.

E. J. Waggoner strongly opposed all "forms" of religion that were mere trappings void of genuine experience. For instance, he said that the Lord's robe of righteousness is not "an outward garment merely," but such that a man "is all righteousness."⁵ Baptism is also "more than a mere form,"—it "is that by which we become Christ's." Waggoner hastened to add that he was not "depreciating literal baptism, or union with the visible church," but only pointing out that there is more to baptism than the external form.⁶ Is it not possible—even probable—that Waggoner saw, in the legalism that pervaded the Adventist church at the time, a reenactment of the Pharisaic legalism Paul so strenuously opposed? This seems

¹ An obvious question is whether or not this same emphasis today would make the investigative judgment seem more relevant, inasmuch as many Adventists have found little meaning in the 1844 dogma by itself.

² EJW, CHR, p. 66.


⁵ EJW, "Bible Study: Letter to the Romans—No. 3," GCB 4 (March 10, 1891): 64.

⁶ EJW, Baptism; Its Significance, pp. 3-4.
especially reasonable for the period just after the Minneapolis conference, as he observed many church leaders spurning his proclamation of justification by faith. Notice the significance for Waggoner of Paul’s concept of the “letter”: “The letter of the new covenant kills. The reason is that holding the mere letter of the new covenant,—the performance of the gospel ordinances while not receiving Christ in the heart,—is really a rejection of Christ.”

Waggoner used similar language when he discussed the judgment. Only man’s works are considered in the judgment, he said; but, “our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, which was only an outward form. . . . We may be ever so strict in outward Sabbath observance and adhere closely to the outward obligations of all the rest of the law, but an impure heart renders every act sinful.”

From Waggoner’s standpoint, a formal religion versus a religious experience was the central issue at the Minneapolis Conference and remained a point of contention for the next several years. As we have seen, whatever else was at issue in Minneapolis, certainly a startling lack of Christian courtesy and love prevailed there. While arguing over the law, many Adventists had lost sight of the extent of the law’s requirements. It seems that Waggoner believed that many Adventists were trusting to a kind of ceremonial righteousness as people had in Paul’s day. Ellen White also was led to warn: “Do not allow your minds to be diverted from the all-important theme of the righteousness of Christ by the study of theories. Do not imagine that the performance of ceremonies, the observance of outward forms, will make you an heir of heaven.”

The danger that theories would take the place of a Christian experience was probably responsible for Waggoner’s emphasizing an internalization of the gospel. However, he definitely did not abandon the objective features

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of Christ's work on our behalf and in the heavenly judgment, a fact which becomes clear from his writings after 1891, in which he set forth more clearly than before his understanding of the judgment.

1892-1895

**Relation of the judgment to law and gospel.** After 1891, Waggoner had even more to say about the judgment than in the years 1889-1891. God will not hold people accountable for sins of ignorance. "No man will ever be condemned for doing that which he did not know, and had no means of knowing, was wrong." Waggoner said the standard in the judgment, in addition to being the law of God, is the word of God and the life of Christ. God is not unfair in requiring people to live as Christ lived. "What He did in Christ He can do in all; for Christ was made a man like ourselves. Heb. ii. 17. And therefore God can require men to be righteous, and judge them by that standard." All will be judged according to their works. "Works and works alone, in the judgment, will determine a man's condition for eternity. . . . The question which the judgment will settle will not be, 'What has this man believed?' nor 'How has he felt?' but 'What are his works?' . . . People are neither condemned nor saved because of their opinions, but because of their deeds." Actually, the judgment "will simply

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3 EJW, "God the Only Judge," PT 11 (July 4, 1895): 420.


5 EJW, "Raised from the Dead," PT 10 (February 1, 1894): 68.

be the announcement of the judgment which people have in this life pronounced upon themselves in their dealing with the truth.\textsuperscript{1}

Further, Waggoner related the judgment to the gospel of justification by faith, just as the context of the first angel’s message (Rev 14:6-7) suggests one should. He believed the judgment is not against the gospel but is actually in accordance with the gospel, because “the righteousness of God—the law—is revealed in the Gospel, and men are judged by the law . . . . The Gospel is in reality nothing else but the law of God in Christ.”\textsuperscript{2}

Though the judgment weighs our works, Waggoner believed that the basis for salvation was still faith. “While it is true that only a man’s works will be considered in the judgment, it is equally true that the character of his works will be determined by his faith. Where there is no faith, there can be no enduring works.”\textsuperscript{3} “A man’s work,” he said, “is decided by his faith.”\textsuperscript{4} None of the saved will base their salvation on what they have done. “One thing alone will avail the candidate for a position at the right hand of God,—Jesus Christ and His righteousness, received and held by the faith which worketh by love.”\textsuperscript{5}

Christ appears in the judgment for His people, “because His life is their life,”—a concept which provides tremendous assurance. The judgment was good news, not bad news. Waggoner

\textsuperscript{1} EJW, “On Trial,” PT 11 (August 15, 1895): 513. Cf. idem, “Justice and Mercy,” PT 9 (February 23, 1893): 54: “Their condemnation [that of the wicked] is not merely the decision of a Judge, but is the natural result of their own course . . . . Since they positively refuse to live with Him, He has no other alternative but to leave them to themselves; and as they have no means of self-existence, they necessarily suffer destruction.”

\textsuperscript{2} EJW, “The Law and Judgment,” PT 10 (July 26, 1894): 468.

\textsuperscript{3} EJW, “Good Works,” PT 8 (August 11, 1892): 248.

\textsuperscript{4} EJW, “Universal Judgment,” PT 10 (July 19, 1894): 452.

removed it from the realm of anxiety and placed it instead in the light of the everlasting gospel.

Think of it! God Himself has wrought the good works with which we are to appear before His throne. . . . God Himself comes to dwell with those who believe His word, and He lives out His own life in them. This thought is enough to fill every soul with love and joy and confidence.¹

By meeting the law “in Him [Christ],” God’s people “will be accounted guiltless” in the judgment.² The only other option, according to Waggoner, is to be judged without an Advocate and to stand only in one’s own works.³

Waggoner continued to stress that God is also on trial before the universe in the judgment—“His character, as well as that of man, is on trial.”⁴ And Waggoner saw a direct relationship between the life of Jesus, the life of His people, and the judgment on God’s character.

The life of Christ was a constant and unvarying testimony to the truth of the words of God and the perfection of His character and government; but our lives give a testimony that is strangely inconsistent with itself. At one time we witness for God; at another time we deny Him. How deny Him? . . . We deny God by sinning against Him. Every transgression is a testimony on the side of Satan. It is a testimony that under God’s government we cannot do that which is right; that His grace is not sufficient for us, and that the misery and the ruin into which we come by transgression are the necessary result of the circumstances which, under His government, surround us; for we justify at the time the act by which we transgress. This is in direct harmony with Satan’s claim, for he declared that God’s government was not a just and perfect one, and seceded from it to set up, as he claimed, a better one. This is the true significance of sin. It is a declaration before all the universe in denial of God, and in justification of God’s great enemy.

But when we obey God, when we exercise faith and claim His promised power to enable us to do His will, we testify that sin is without excuse; that God’s government


² EJW, “Meeting the Law,” PT 10 (February 8, 1894): 84.


is just and right, and that in it every provision is made for the welfare and happiness of His creatures.¹

Thus, Waggoner sought, in his treatment of the judgment, to draw attention away from concern over one's personal salvation to the salvation of others and the justification of God in the judgment.

Issues of chronology. The close of the judgment and the various phases of judgment were not always clearly defined in Waggoner's writings. Waggoner even made one statement that appears to suggest that probation continues right up until Christ returns.

There will not be a man who has ever lived on this earth, who will not be judged at the second coming of the Lord. And that coming and that judgment will mark the close of probation of every man. Of course the probation of many will have closed long before, at death; but there will never be any more probation for any man after the coming of the Lord.²

But he made this statement in opposition to the idea that Christ would come secretly for some, giving others a second period of probation after Christ's return.

Another statement that Waggoner made a year later proves that he believed the judgment of the lives of individuals end prior to the outpouring of the seven last plagues.

"The end of human probation will be signalized by the terrible visitation of the 'seven last plagues,' in which is filled up the wrath of God. Rev. xv. 1."³

It appears that although Waggoner spoke of Christ as Judge, he specifically allowed this title of Christ only with reference to His judging "the quick and the dead at His appearing." "Jesus Christ is not yet sitting as judge, and . . . consequently He has no court." "It is impossible," Waggoner said, "that He should be at the same time the Advocate and the Judge. It is impossible that He should condemn men whom He is laboring to save. [John 3:17

¹ EJW, "Witnesses for God," PT 9 (December 14, 1893): 578.


quoted]”¹ Christ isn’t our “judge” yet—but God is; thus Waggoner could without inconsistency state clearly that “we are now living in the last days, in the hour of God’s judgment (Rev. xiv. 7).”²

In addition to the phases of the judgment now going forward and the one executed by Jesus Christ when He returns, Waggoner saw two other phases of the judgment. There will be a judgment during the millennium, when “the saints will be allowed to sit in judgment not only on the world, but on angels as well. See 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.”³ And following the millennium, the wicked will be resurrected “in order that they may see and receive the result of their choice.” The wicked are in “virtually the same [condition] as though their time in the grave had not been, but their life had continued without break until the final judgment.”⁴ At that time, “the excuses which pass current in the minds of men will turn out to be counterfeit at the bar of God.”⁵ Waggoner asked the reader to consider whether or not he would be comfortable in offering the same excuses before God’s throne.

Will you not then be seized with a terrible feeling of uncertainty as to whether God will look at the matter just as you did,—whether His all-searching eye, which read your inmost thoughts and motives, may not have seen with clearer vision than your own, and beheld self-interest where you imagined there was none? . . .
There, in letters of fire, will appear before you the law of God, which demands death upon every transgressor . . .
Will you dare assert before Him that He did not mean just what He said? . . .
Will you dare tell Him that His requirements were too inconvenient and hard? Will you dare affirm that you were right because you did like the majority, or like the dignitaries of the church told you to do, albeit it was not just what God’s word had

1 EJW, “Church Courts,” PT 9 (August 31, 1893): 342. Saying Christ was not yet a judge was an effective polemic against human courts’ judging in religious matters. “The court that presumes to sit in judgment upon him before that time puts itself in the place of and above the Lord Jesus Christ” (ibid).


commanded? No; no. Not one of those excuses will find its way through the
trembling lips of those to whom it shall be said, “Depart.” One piercing glance from
the eye of the Infinite will discover the hidden motives of each heart, and they
will stand speechless and self-condemned.¹

Waggoner believed the judgment at the end of the millennium will be conducted “not
simply for those who suffer the results of their own way, but for the benefit of all God’s
universe, that all His creatures may have the clearest evidence that He is just and true.”
After this, he said, there will not be a “shadow of a chance for anyone to doubt Him.”
Waggoner also described a panorama that will be watched by all.

In the judgment everything will be set forth clearly before the eyes of all
creatures. A panorama of the history of earth will be presented to them. . . . Then
we shall see everything in one view, and the secret motives will appear. All the
dealings of God will then be manifest. . . .

There will then be the opportunity for any one to step forward if he chooses, to
impeach God to His face before the multitude. Men may repent, if they can, their
charges of injustice on the part of God. . . .

But in all that vast multitude there will not be found one to repeat his
accusations against God. They will then see that they have spoken evil of those
things which they knew not, and every mouth will be stopped. Every knee shall
bow to God, and every tongue shall “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of
God the Father.”²

No one then will be able to argue that they did not have a fair chance, because
“right before them,” said Waggoner, “among the saved, will be some from their own time and
nation, thus showing that God is not only willing that all should come to repentance, but that
He has also given all an opportunity to repent.”³ In the end, everything will be seen in a
“perfect light” and “God will be acquitted of all wrongdoing, even by His enemies.”⁴

¹ Ibid.


⁴ Ibid., p. 516. According to idem, “Universal Judgment,” PT 10 (July 19, 1894): 453, E JW did believe that the wicked will be tormented, “but the torment, however long it may
continue, will come to an end in the utter destruction of the wicked. God’s indignation will
come to an end. [Isaiah 10:25; 26:20-21 quoted].”
Blotting out of sins. Waggoner spoke of the work of Christ in heaven as involving the cleansing of the records of the lives of God’s people from sin. “It is a glorious thing,” he said, “that we have an Advocate by whose righteousness the evil things of life may be blotted out of the records, and by whose power we may in this present life, now, ‘while it is called to-day,’ be kept in the way of righteousness.” 1 It is evident from this statement, that Waggoner understood a connection between the objective work of Christ as our Advocate in the heavenly judgment and the working of His “power” that leads to righteousness in the lives of believers. In a sense, these sins are blotted out “when faith comes” at the moment of justification. 2 Apparently, however, Waggoner did not understand forgiveness or justification as inimical to the idea that the record of sins are blotted out when Christ ends His heavenly ministry.

By the eye of faith we see Him now presenting His blood for the remission of the sins of all those who have believed and will believe on Him till His heavenly ministry shall cease. And it will cease when the gospel of His kingdom has been ‘preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations.’ Matt. xxiv. 3, 13, 14. When that has been done, all people will either have accepted or rejected it, and it will witness either for or against them at the bar of God. Christ’s blood will have secured the remission of the sins of the former class, and His priestly work will cease with the transferring of these sins onto the head of Satan, which was typified by the act of the high priest on the day of atonement and cleansing of the earthly sanctuary, in confessing the sins which had been removed therefrom upon the head of the scapegoat. See Leviticus xvi. 3

Waggoner believed there will be a final blotting out not only of the sins of those ultimately saved but also of sinners and their sins. If people continue to “cling to their sinful lives they must be destroyed with sin.” Without Christ and His righteousness, “which alone

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2 EJW, “Union with Christ,” PT 10 (March 1, 1894): 137.
is life, there is nothing by which their existence can be continued.\textsuperscript{1} After the blotting out of sin from the universe, the saved will be unable to recall their sins.\textsuperscript{2}

\begin{center}
\emph{Preparation of God's People on Earth for Christ's Second Advent}
\end{center}

In a special sense, Waggoner saw the proclamation of the gospel as a “preparation” for the second advent of Christ. As we have already seen, it is also by this proclamation that everyone will make his decision for or against Christ and seal his destiny in the heavenly judgment. Only when Christ returns is salvation “made complete.”\textsuperscript{3} Waggoner linked the proclamation of the third angel’s message with perfecting the character of those who await Christ’s return. At the same time, he stressed that only Christ’s success in obedience guarantees the ability of His people to obey.

In Rev. 14:12 we read a brief description of those who are prepared for the Lord when He comes. “Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” This shows plainly that patience is the keeping of the commandments of God. But patience is perfection; when it has been allowed to complete its work, it makes one ready for the coming of the Lord. And this only shows that the keeping of the commandments of God is perfection. It is that which makes one ready for the coming of the Lord.

The keeping of the commandments of the Lord can be found only in the life of Christ. He alone, of all those who have trod this earth, fully kept the law. But He gave Himself for us, so that we may also have the perfect keeping of the law in ourselves.\textsuperscript{4}

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\item \textsuperscript{1} EJW, GIC, pp. 146-47.
\item \textsuperscript{2} EJW, “Looking Backward,” PT 11 (February 21, 1895): 116: “The time is coming when God will create a new earth, and ‘the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind,’ a time when God will fulfill His word concerning His people, that ‘their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.’ When God will not remember our sins, none of us will be able to remember them.”
\item \textsuperscript{3} EJW, “The Blessed Hope,” PT 9 (June 15, 1893): 178.
\item \textsuperscript{4} EJW, “The Perfection of Wisdom,” PT 8 (November 17, 1892): 355.
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Waggoner identified those who are prepared for the coming of the Lord as “‘the remnant of Israel,’ a pure people.”

He was careful to stress, as has been noticed above in connection with his understanding of perfection, that their purification before Christ’s return does not extend to their physical nature. “The Spirit never yields to the flesh, and the flesh never gets converted. The flesh will be of the nature of sin until our bodies are changed at the coming of the Lord.”

The perfection experienced by God’s people before Christ’s return involves a constant crucifixion of sinful desires and a yielding to God, resulting in a character identical to Christ’s character, while mortality remains unchanged until He returns. “Though still mortal in form, and compassed with human imperfections, we are nevertheless in character just what He is. And being like Him now in character, we shall be like Him in form when He appears.”

Sin is consumed in believers now by their reception of God’s “glory” into the soul “in the shape of grace.” If this grace is not received now, sin will be consumed along with the sinner by the manifestation of God’s glory at Christ’s second advent. “Those who are ready when Jesus comes will not have a single spot of sin about them (2 Peter iii. 14).”

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1 EJW, “The End Approaching,” ST 17 (September 14, 1891): 291.
2 EJW, “Sons of God,” PT 10 (December 6, 1894): 770.
3 EJW, “Dying and Living,” PT 10 (January 25, 1894): 53: “We are coming close to the end, face to face with the coming of the Lord, and eternity. The flesh cannot go there, and we will not go there either if we cling to the flesh. We cannot take it with us. Before the Lord comes, when we will be delivered from this earthly tabernacle, and be clothed upon with the house from heaven, we must have crucified the flesh. That is a practical, everyday work. Paul doesn’t say, ‘I was crucified with Christ,’ but ‘I am crucified with Christ.’ There was a constant crucifixion, and constantly a springing up of life.”
5 EJW, “Consumed by the Glory,” PT 11 (January 24, 1895): 149.
The time of Christ’s coming seemed very near to Waggoner, although he strongly denounced any attempt “to locate the day, or the month, or the year, which will usher in the day of God or witness the return of Christ in power and glory,” because if we could locate that time, it would be impossible to “watch” for the Lord’s return. The fulfillment of the signs did not lead Waggoner to consider Christ’s coming to be delayed, but on the contrary, to confirm that “it must be very near.” Now is the time to be ready, said Waggoner. “The man that doubts God now will doubt him then.”

It is too late now to stand and parley with the tempter. It is too late to sin even though it be to please, and keep company with, our dearest earthly friend. It is too late to try to excuse ourselves by casting the blame upon someone else. The voice of God is already heard walking through the earth. He is almost here! Are we ready? Are we clothed? Are we without spot and wrinkle? Can we go forth to meet him with joy and say, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us”? If we are not ready to do this, yet there is hope; there are a few more moments of time in which to prepare.

Only by learning the lesson of faith now will it be possible to stand then. Clearly, Waggoner held that an individual experience of purification is essential to being ready for the second advent.

Waggoner connected the experiencing of the power of Christ in us to the equipping we need to share the gospel with others.

When we feel that power working,—that miracle which is wrought in us,—the temptations to which we have yielded so often, the sinful practices to which we have given way, will be overcome, and we will rise superior to them. Then we can go out into the world, in the power of Christ, and carry the message as we have never done before.

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2 EJW, “My Lord Delayeth His Coming,” ST 17 (March 16, 1891): 82.
Then the message will go with a loud cry. The reason that it has not gone with a loud cry is because we have not grasped it in its fullness. In the past many have not had the kernel of the message that it is all Christ. When we have Christ, we have everything, and we know the power that there is in him. Then we submit ourselves to him, and the power will rest upon us, and the word that we preach will go with power, and the loud cry of the third angel’s message will be here.¹

Waggoner understood that the light of Christ’s righteousness “is to be manifested in its fulness in the Church before the end, so that the life of Christ will be manifested before the world as plainly as when Christ was here on earth in person.” He likened such a final manifestation of Christ’s life to the witness of the early church. “This will be the standard around which thousands will rally, even as they did on the day of Pentecost. [Isaiah 60:1-3 quoted.]”² It was not simply a message of warning, but a message of joy—“that man is nothing, and that God is everything.”³ “People are to have such an acquaintance with the Lord,” he said, “that the news of His coming will be to them a joyful message. That makes it glad tidings of great joy.”⁴

God and Nature in Creation and Redemption

Perhaps the most difficult—and crucial—area in Waggoner’s theology during the early 1890s is his understanding of the power of God as displayed in what He has made and in His plan of salvation. God’s power was a consistent motif in Waggoner’s writings, but during the years from 1893 to 1895 it is given singular emphasis. Some writers have considered some of his statements pantheistic (though he himself repudiated pantheism) and have claimed that they provided a basis for his later denial of key Adventist doctrines.

² EJW, G/C, p. 63.
³ Ibid., p. 150.
⁴ EJW, “The Coming of the Lord,” PT 10 (February 15, 1894): 98. Recall that EJW sounded this note of joy in nearly identical words as He began His presentations at the Minneapolis General Conference session (see above, p. 84).
such as the investigative judgment. While the scope of this study does not allow a definitive analysis of the relationship his soteriology and eschatology bore to pantheism, important trends in Waggoner's theological development are evident which suggest, when comparison is made with his *Confession of Faith*, where the answer may lie.

**The Power of God**

**God's Word**

Waggoner saw tremendous power in God's word to accomplish exactly the purpose for which it was spoken. "It is an easy thing for man to say and not do," he said, but "it is a far different thing with God. With Him, saying and doing are the same. . . . He 'calleth those things that be not as though they were,' because when He speaks they come into being."\(^1\) Waggoner believed that God's word was "filled" with His life and that thus "the word which names the thing contains the very thing itself."\(^2\) Furthermore, God's word never loses its power, so that God's command to "'Let the earth bring forth grass,' is still causing the earth to bring forth grass, and herbs and trees";\(^3\) and God's upholding of all things by His word shows that all things "owe their continued existence to Christ."\(^4\)

Waggoner extended his concept of creative power and sustenance to God's work of redemption. Since faith comes by hearing God's word and Christ dwells in the heart by faith, he concluded that "the word has Christ in it, because it brings Christ into the heart."\(^5\)

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2. EJW, "Justice and Mercy," *PT* 9 (February 23, 1893): 53; idem, *GIC*, p. 25. EJW's concept does not appear very much different from the concept that all things pre-exist in the mind of God.
4. Ibid., p. 29.
5. Ibid., p. 32.
God’s word in the form of His law “is not a hard, lifeless decree, which weak mortals are to strive in vain to keep, while God watches them with a stern eye, ready to taunt and punish them for failure.”¹ Instead, the ability to do what the law requires is resident in the very words of requirement themselves.²

Creative and Redemptive Power

Waggoner identified Christ as both Creator and Redeemer. It is not surprising, therefore, that Waggoner said that “redemptive power and creative power are the same. To redeem is to create.”³ This creative-redemptive power is manifested in people to save them.

“Redemption is creation. It is the power of God by which he made the worlds, working in men to save them.”⁴ Waggoner identified the Sabbath as a time for the enjoyment of both creation and redemption.⁵ Entering the Sabbath rest is an acknowledgment that “as God through Christ created all things from Himself, so He is able to take men, in all their worthlessness, and create them new creatures in Christ Jesus so that they will be fitted for a home in the earth, which is also to be made new through the same power.”⁶ The goal of redemptive power is to bring people back to Edenic perfection.⁷

Waggoner identified God’s creative and redemptive power with the very power of God “by which Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.” This same power will develop in us all.

¹ Ibid., p. 108.
² EJW, “‘Let It Be,’” PT 11 (May 16, 1895): 306.
³ EJW, GIC, pp. 15-16.
⁵ EJW, GIC, p. 156.
the graces of the Spirit and repress all their opposites. It is also the power of the cross and the power that raised Christ from the dead. Experiencing this power day by day gives assurance of the future resurrection, because it "is simply the application of the same power by which those who were dead in trespasses and sins have been saved from sin."

We know the power of the resurrection of Christ only by experiencing the same power in the forgiveness of sins, and in overcoming sin. Thus we share even now in the resurrection of Christ, and that is the assurance of the future resurrection at His coming.

Waggoner further identified the power of God to keep a person from falling with "the power by which He keeps the host of heaven in their proper places." If God's promises to us were ever broken, "everything would return to chaos and vanish from existence." Therefore "the existence of the stars in the heavens is a pledge to even the weakest soul, that God has not forgotten His promises, and that every prayer of faith will be answered." This power is that "with which God is going to clothe the preaching of the Gospel message in the last struggle preceding His second coming. [Isaiah 51:9-16 quoted]."

God Pervading Nature

Waggoner, on occasion, seemed to de-personalize God when making reference to the power of God expressed in nature. Christ, he said, "is the life of everything," "the force that

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1 EJW, "How Shall This Be?" PT 10 (January 25, 1894): 50.
is manifested in all matter." By doing this, Waggoner seems to have meant that no place exists where God is not personally present. "God is everywhere. It is His presence, and that only, that upholds the universe." Waggoner concluded that those who are lost "have no place left to them but utter extinction," since they have chosen to be eternally separate from God.¹

Christ is the power of God (1 Cor. i. 24), and the power of God is seen in the things that are made. Wherever in nature force and energy are manifested, there is evidence of the personal presence and working of Christ. The force of matter is the power of God, which is Christ.²

Waggoner used gravity and the cohesion of atoms as examples of the power of Christ in nature. He thought he was opposing the deifying of nature when He expressed these sentiments, saying that even professed Christians think it is little less than sacrilege to thus recognize God in everything. Accordingly, God is left out of their system of philosophy, and matter is deified. Thus the truth of God is changed into a lie. The truth that God is seen in all His works, that there is nothing without His personal presence and care, is exchanged for the lie that matter controls itself by certain 'natural laws' residing in it. This is the germ of all idolatry. Instead of seeing the power of God in everything, and glorifying Him, men saw everything as god. To the creature was attributed the power of the Creator.³

If Waggoner meant that no power is merely inherent in the created realm, he was certainly not a pantheist. He expressly opposed the "worldly wisdom" which speaks of "science, ... of evolution, of forces that are 'inherent' in nature and matter, and of the wonderful intellect of man," but does not speak "of the Creator who made all things."⁴ On the other hand, Waggoner's words are open to misinterpretation by modern readers. He said

¹ EJW, "Justice and Mercy," PT 9 (February 23, 1893): 54.
³ Ibid.
⁴ EJW, "Knowing God," PT 9 (December 21, 1893): 596.
“His [God’s] life pervades all things.”

Waggoner used food as an illustration: we get life from food, life which came from the plant, which came from God. Whenever we eat, therefore, we are “taking in the life of Christ.” It may be that Waggoner’s ideas in this area were conditioned more than anything else by His concept of God’s eternal presence. “As God inhabits eternity, so that all time is present with Him, so all His promises and blessings for men are in the present tense. There can be no future or past time to Him.”

Waggoner opposed the notion that “God set up nature like a wound up clock” and is “too far off” to hear one’s prayers.

Need for Recognizing God’s Presence

Waggoner concluded that since God is in all of nature, He is present in all human beings, unless they consciously reject Him. The life of God, according to Waggoner, is communicated through the air and sunlight, as well as through food.

Some one may say, How can I get the life of God? How can the connection be made? How often have we wished that we might get hold of that life in some way. Now the news comes that we have that life, only hitherto we have refused to recognize it. We have perverted it, and have used it to think and speak and do what God would not do. “We have turned every one to his own way,” and we have used God’s life in doing it. . . . The life is already here. All we have to do is to acknowledge it.

This concept of God’s life as present in everyone apparently led Waggoner by 1894 to somewhat modify his understanding of justification by faith: being justified is not so much an act of faith in what God has done through Christ as it is a recognition that one’s life finds its

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2 EJW, “The Fruits of Righteousness,” PT 9 (July 13, 1893): 228. EJW used bread as the example, but one wonders how he understood the life present in poisonous plants.


4 EJW, G/C, p. 92.

source in God's life. When an "unjust man takes the breath by which he lives as being indeed the very breath of the life of God, and lives in the recognition of it, then he is living by faith. And faith justifies. [Romans 5:1 quoted]."\(^1\) In 1895 Waggoner wrote that Christ lives "even in the heart of wicked men, waiting for them to recognize Him." It is when they recognize this fact that "He will dwell in their hearts 'by faith.'"\(^2\)

Also in 1894 and 1895, Waggoner associated several other ideas with the notion that Christ is present in everyone. God has given eternal life to all\(^3\) and faith "is the common inheritance of all," placing salvation within everyone's grasp.\(^4\) God's grace is "manifested" in everyone, so that no one is "totally depraved"—"the Spirit of God works in every heart." "Generous and noble traits are seen in even the worst characters," showing "what God is anxious to do in them all the time if they will only let Him."\(^5\)

Waggoner did set limits on what the presence of Christ can accomplish for unbelievers and for how long it dwells in them. Waggoner did not understand the presence of Christ to cleanse unbelievers from sin. Only when a person actually recognizes Christ's life and lays hold of Him by faith, does His life "cleanse from sin."\(^6\) "We cannot be unconsciously convicted of sin."\(^7\) In addition, Christ's life may be shut out and eternal life forfeited by

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\(^{1}\) EJW, PT 10 (February 22, 1894): 113.


\(^{3}\) EJW, "Saved by His Life," PT 10 (March 22, 1894): 179.


\(^{5}\) EJW, "Our Inheritance," PT 11 (May 9, 1895): 290.


\(^{7}\) EJW, "Follow Christ," PT 11 (February 21, 1895): 114.
refusing to recognize its presence. There is a place that God does not dwell—"the hearts of proud, rebellious, stubborn men." But "even there he stands at the door and knocks for admittance. Rev. iii. 20." Waggoner at times appears even to have directly contradicted the idea that Christ works in everyone:

Satan succeeded in getting man to join his rebellion against God's authority, and so he makes of every natural heart a citadel of opposition against God. But God . . . gave His life to bring to us deliverance 'from the power of darkness' and to translate all who desire it into the kingdom of His dear Son.' Therefore He calls to every one 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.' Every day each one is making the choice. [Romans 6:16 quoted.] . . . Every act of disobedience is the direct working of Satan against the truth of God. Every act of obedience is the working of Christ's power in the hearts of those who choose Him." Waggoner certainly opposed pantheistic concepts directly associated with paganism. The Greeks and Romans deified man, he said, by "looking upon inanimate nature, not as manifesting, but as having, the power of God." This led, he said, to their regarding the weaknesses and vices of humanity "as attributes of Divinity." For Waggoner, the safeguard against this error was honoring Christ as Creator. Perhaps in Waggoner's own mind the distinction between nature's "manifesting" rather than "having" the power of God was preserved, but his statements do not appear consistently to reflect the distinction. He did, however, distinguish clearly between God and nature.

The wise soul sees God in all His works. He has impressed Himself upon all creation. It is all stamped with His own personality. The gross darkness of the heathen came from perverting this truth. Instead of seeing the power of God in


3 EJW, "Which Side Will You Choose?" PT 11 (February 21, 1895): 113 (italics supplied). The importance of the power of choice for EJW is illustrated by his answering an hypothetical objection in idem, "The Fruits of Righteousness," PT 9 (July 13, 1893): 228: "If what you say is true, then everybody must be good; then all those 'works of the flesh' must be in reality manifestations of the life of God; and therefore since God cannot deny Himself, it must be that all will be saved." EJW replied: "Let it not be forgotten that man differs from the plants and from beasts, in that he has perfect freedom and power of choice."

everything, they said that everything is God. Thus they turned the truth of God into a lie.1

Waggoner insisted that no one has inherent power to do right. Christ came, he said, not to "incite men to put into operation power that they already had, but which lay dormant, but to give them power, of which they were destitute. It was when we were 'without strength' that Christ died for the ungodly. Rom. v. 6. There is in man no power whatever to do right."2

It is possible that Waggoner's confusion in the area of God's relationship to nature began as a result of reflection upon ideas in a book by Paul Paquin, entitled The Supreme Passions of Man,3 which he critiqued for the Review and Herald. This book argues that human beings can subdue evil passions by an inherent power or goodness in them. Waggoner took strong exception to this concept in his two-part review, because he felt it gave glory to the creature rather than to the Creator and made "every man his own savior." He objected to the notion, apparently conveyed by the book, that "each individual cell, and consequently every man, has life as an inherent quality"—"that man is self existent, with power to perpetuate his existence, and to evolve good out of his own inherent force." Waggoner wrote that this amounted to saying that "man is God."5 He maintained that the opposite is true. We are to receive "the perfect life of Christ," he said, "in exchange for the sinful life."6

1 EJW, GIC, p. 50.
3 Paul Paquin, The Supreme Passions of Man; or the Origin, Causes, and Tendencies of the Passions of the Flesh (Battle Creek, Michigan: Little Blue Book Company, 1891). Cf. [M. C. Wilcox], "'Supreme Passions of Man' Again," ST 18 (January 18, 1892): 176.
4 EJW, "'Every Man His Own Saviour,'" RH 69 (February 2, 1892): 65-66; idem, "'Every Man His Own Saviour,'" RH 69 (February 9, 1892): 83-84.
5 Ibid., p. 83.
6 Ibid., p. 84.
J. H. Kellogg, a prominent Adventist physician, became extremely upset and agitated when he read Waggoner's negative review and wrote a letter of complaint to Ellen White, who had arrived in Australia a few months before. In her reply, Ellen White strongly reprimanded Kellogg, asking if he believed God was communicating light through Paquin as He had through Waggoner. She compared the situation with that of two other men, Sprague and Fairfield, physicians who had made the mistake . . . that science was everything. Satan was weaving his net about their feet, and very much was made of the powers inherent in man and in nature, and this matter became so subtle in its influence, as they viewed it, that the power and glory of God was not exalted. They were wandering in the mazes of skepticism . . . Even the mediatorial work of Christ, through which is to be derived whatever tends to illuminate the understanding and warm the heart, was not felt by them to be a necessity.

Christ alone, said Ellen White, is the “channel” through which men can have access to God and become partakers of the divine nature. Rather than spreading “erroneous views of science,” people “should be searching diligently to see if they are accepting Christ as their personal Saviour.” She warned Kellogg not to give the impression that “there is in human nature a power to work out its purity, and develop a beautiful character, for this is not true.”

A decade later, Ellen White made a helpful distinction between the power of God operative in redemption and that which is present in fallen human beings. “Our condition through sin has become preternatural, and the power that restores us must be supernatural, else it has no value.” This appears to be the distinction Waggoner had difficulty defining. It was not until 1895 that this distinction seems to have evaporated from Waggoner’s mind.

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1 EGW to J. H. Kellogg, April 15, 1892, Ltr 18, 1892, 1888M, 3:977-78.
2 Ibid., pp. 980-81.
3 Ibid., p. 983 (italics supplied).
4 Ibid., p. 984.
5 EGW, Testimonies for the Church, 8:291.

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Even then, he held elements incompatible with the theology that came to be expressed by Kellogg. By 1904, Kellogg’s pantheistic sentiments had created a crisis of major proportions in Adventism. In that year, Ellen White spoke out unreservedly against his erroneous ideas about the relationship between God and nature.

Only through the blood of the Crucified One is there cleansing from sin. His grace alone can enable us to resist and subdue the tendencies of our fallen nature. This power the spiritualistic theories concerning God make of no effect. If God is an essence pervading all nature, then He dwells in all men; and in order to attain holiness, man has only to develop the power that is within him.

These theories, followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy. They do away with the necessity for the atonement and make man his own savior.1

Up through 1895, Waggoner frequently used nature as an illustration of spiritual realities, usually making clear the distinction between the two.2 “The visible is to teach us of the invisible. From the natural we are to learn of the spiritual.” Waggoner used sunlight as an example of how nature teaches us about God. “The physical light that shines in the world is designed to teach us that God is light, and that spiritual light from Him shines as freely for all, and is none the less real.”3 Since the gospel is the power of God, Waggoner

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1 Ibid.

2 EJW’s illustrations from nature were consistently derived from analogous illustrations in Scripture. E.g., EJW, “Dying and Living,” PT 10 (January 25, 1894): 52 uses the seed as an illustration of burial and resurrection; idem, GIC, p. 62, compares a single torch lighting many others to the life of Christ being spread undiminished itself; ibid., p. 78, says the rainbow is an assurance of God’s mercy in forgiveness; ibid., p. 85, describes God’s power over the sea as an illustration of God’s power to calm “the waves of strife that surge through human hearts”; ibid., p. 100, likens the Christian growth to the growth of plants; idem, “Jesus Christ The Righteous,” PT 9 (November 2, 1893): 486-87: “As the physical life is sustained by breathing and eating, so the spiritual life is sustained by faith; and as we cannot to-day breathe enough for tomorrow, but must keep breathing all the time, so we cannot to-day have faith for the future, but must continue to have faith, if we would continue to live a spiritual life.” In idem, “Last Day Scoffers,” PT 11 (April 18, 1895): 246, EJW saw in the increasingly numerous natural disasters a sign that the earth was growing “old like a garment,” heralding “the approach of the great and terrible day of God.” In idem, “Washing One’s Hands,” PT 11 (December 26, 1895): 818, EJW said the washing of hands in water “should be a reminder and an assurance to us of the power of God’s Word to cleanse from all defilement.”

3 EJW, GIC, p. 51 (italics supplied).
wrote, "We should see the Gospel in the things that are made, in the sunlight, air, food, and drink, and all things. . . . It was the failure to recognize the power and righteousness of God in the things that are created, that made men base heathen." In reacting to sentiments like those found in Paquin's book, Waggoner began to err on the other extreme. His error began as an innocent attempt to demonstrate God's involvement with His creation in contradistinction to naturalistic philosophies that were becoming widely known and popular at the time, not only in the Adventist church but also in the world at large.

Another factor in Waggoner's emphasis on the gospel as proclaimed in nature was his apparent concern for the salvation of those who have never heard the gospel proclaimed human lips. "Men may not only know the fact of God's existence, from the things which He has made, but they may know His eternal power to save them." Waggoner based his argument on Rom 10:13-18, where Paul says that the heathen have heard the gospel through nature (quoting Ps 19). As a consequence of hearing the gospel through nature, Waggoner also believed that the heathen, by yielding to the power of the Creator manifested in nature, would "receive the saving righteousness of God." Willingness to accept truth rather than the amount of truth one accepts was for Waggoner the determining factor in receiving salvation, based on Acts 10:34-35.

There are men in heathen lands who may never have heard the name of God, or seen a line of His written word, who will be saved. God is revealed in the works of creation, and they who accept what they there see of Him are accepted with Him as surely as they are who have learned much more of Him.

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2 This concern may have been stimulated by Adventism's burgeoning missionary invasion of lands that had heard little of the saving power of the gospel. For a good discussion of the Adventist missionary expansion during this time, see Schwarz, pp. 214-32.

3 EJW, "God's Revelation to Man," PT 10 (July 12, 1894): 438.

4 Ibid., p. 439. EJW also contrasted Scripture's portrayal of evil in man with that of Marcus Aurelius who stressed man's inherent goodness.
That the heathen could be saved apart from hearing the gospel from human instrumentalities did not lessen, in Waggoner's understanding, the necessity for missionaries to share the good news with those who do not know it. "None who appreciate the blessings of the Lord," he said, could think it "useless to carry the Gospel to the heathen."

Light is a blessing. The more people know of the Lord, the more they can rejoice in Him, and all who truly know the Lord must be desirous of helping to spread the "good tidings of great joy" to all the people for whom it is designed.¹

Waggoner's Confession of Faith

The so-called Confession of Faith, a letter reportedly found on Waggoner's desk after his death, is Waggoner's attempt to show his logical progression of thought from 1888 to 1916.² With such an aim explicitly stated, one ought to suspect that Waggoner may have had ulterior motives for the history and theology he presented in the document and seriously question whether it is true to the facts. We can assume that it represents the Waggoner of 1916, but whether it is true to the Waggoner of 1888 is another matter entirely.

Waggoner's understanding with respect to God and nature (see above, pp. 190-99) is found preserved in its essential features in the Confession. "God saves by His creative power," said Waggoner. Saving belief amounts to becoming "conscious" that God by His word is already at work inside.³ Waggoner proceeded to claim that the gospel was unchanged even "before the foundation of the world, when only angels had been created." Lucifer and his angels were offered pardon on the basis of Christ's "all-sufficient sacrifice from before


² EJW, CF, p. 2: "You remember Minneapolis. I am making bold to ask you, if you come to some things that you feel inclined to dissent from, to point out to me where there is a break in the logical sequence." Actually, EJW proceeded to push the date back even farther to 1882, the time of his conversion, where he said his "real study of the Bible" began.

³ Ibid., p. 5.
the foundation of the world."¹ The cross is but a painful manifestation in history, necessitated by the Fall, of the gift of God's life that has flowed freely to all God's creation from the beginning.² "Its arms span eternity; through all the ages it stands unchanged—the restorer of life to those who have lost life, and the preserver of life to those who have never forfeited it."³ This statement went far beyond his understanding in 1891 that the gospel of the Old and New Testaments are the same and that after the Fall Christ intervened to save the human race. Yet Waggoner claimed it was "these simple, fundamental, Gospel truths" that made it evident to him "fully twenty-five years ago [1891] that there could never have been any changes, or differences of dispensation, in God's work of saving men." It is true that in 1890 ministerial institute Waggoner's stress on the continuity between the Old and New Testaments was presented eloquently in his lectures on the two covenants; however, no trace of the confusion between God's plan for this sinful world and the worlds unfallen appeared.⁴

Even more pertinent to this study than Waggoner's confusion between God and nature is Waggoner's claim that he abandoned the Adventist doctrines of the sanctuary and investigative judgment in 1891. His attribution of later elements in his theology to a much earlier period should give pause to the unfortunate tendency to uncritically accept Waggoner's assertion in regard to how early he modified his views of prophecy and the

¹ Ibid., p. 6.

² Ibid., pp. 11-13.

³ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

⁴ Other discontinuities between CF and EJW's earlier writings, besides his views of the sanctuary doctrine, include: Christ has been Prophet, Priest, and King "from the days of eternity of old" (p. 7); sin is not an entity (pp. 9, 10, 14, 18); a totally subjective interpretation of the atonement—Christ "bears our sins in us, and not apart from us" (p. 10); Christ is not found "in heaven or in the grave, but only within" (ibid.); Christ does not bear sin now (ibid.); and the assumed necessity for God to "bear our sicknesses and take our death" (p. 13).
atonement. In his Confession, Waggoner rejected the teaching that sins are transferred to the sanctuary in heaven, “thus defiling that place”; that the heavenly sanctuary needs cleansing; that anything of significance took place in 1844; that the little horn of Dan 8 is Rome; that God needs anything like an “investigative” judgment; and that sins are not blotted out when they are forgiven.

Even in the Confession itself, however, there are indications that Waggoner did not really repudiate his views on the sanctuary and the investigative judgment as early as 1891. In the Confession, immediately after he spoke of his 1891 doubts regarding the sanctuary doctrine, Waggoner said the question, “What took place in 1844?” puzzled him for “many years.” From the context, this can be no earlier than 1891. He went on to say:

I had been so thoroughly indoctrinated with the idea of a 2300-year period ending in 1844, that it never occurred to me to doubt it. Indeed, I never did doubt it for a moment; but one day the light dawned upon me, and I saw that that period had no foundation whatever, and then of course I simply dropped it.

The exact time of that “one day” will probably never be definitely known, but it must be “many years” after 1891. If Waggoner entertained any doubts at all about the sanctuary doctrine in the years 1889-1895, it is not evident from his published works, for he never explicitly denied it in print. Actually, Waggoner wrote more with respect to the details of the sanctuary and the judgment in the 1889-1895 period than he did between 1882 and 1888. Any conclusion that Waggoner reputed the Adventist teachings with respect to the sanctuary and investigative judgment between 1891 and 1895 must remain an argument from silence based on one document, which has been attributed to Waggoner and written more than two

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1 See McMahon, p. 93. Webster, pp. 244-45, n. 257, is conspicuous in his dependence on the later statement and appears to ridicule the suggestion that it is inaccurate. See above, p. 169, n. 1.

2 EJW, CF, pp. 14-29. EJW did still believe in the prophetic principle of “a day for a year” (ibid., p. 15) and in a literal heavenly sanctuary (p. 18), as well as records of people’s lives in heaven (p. 20).

decades later. Waggoner himself said in 1916: "My views were not as sharply defined as they are now, since they were a gradual growth."\(^1\) Over twenty years of theological change after 1895 should not be superimposed on the Waggoner of the early 1890s.

In the Confession, Waggoner did emphasize a concern that is present throughout his writings, namely, that many people emphasize religious forms at the expense of the reality to which they point. He objected to the idea that the blotting out of sins "is only a book transaction . . . which can take place without in the least affecting the individual concerned. It is like blotting out extreme hot or cold weather by breaking the thermometer."\(^2\) He maintained that "the blotting out of sins is a vital thing in the sinner himself, and not a mere matter of bookkeeping."\(^3\) He compared the Adventist teaching in 1916 to the Roman Catholic celebration of the mass which has a priest far removed from the people, "going through forms and saying words of which they understood nothing."\(^4\) Waggoner related how he had glanced at an old copy of Uriah Smith's book on Daniel in which he read that Christ's work since 1844 "consists in the remission of the sins of those who should be found worthy to have them remitted," which separates the remission or forgiveness of sins from what takes place in the person. Waggoner objected to such an idea, saying that "the remission of sins is as real a thing as the healing of disease, and cannot take place apart from the individual."\(^5\)

His statement brings the controversy of 1888 full circle and suggests that in 1916 Waggoner still felt that since 1888 nothing had really changed in the denomination's teaching on righteousness by faith—forgiveness was limited to a transaction in heavenly

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 30.

\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 25-26.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 26.

\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 26-27.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 29.
records performed by a priest who was as far distant from the people He serves as heaven is from earth.

Summary and Conclusions

Waggoner continued to develop his soteriology and eschatology during the years from 1889 to 1895. The question posed by the title of this chapter: namely, whether this was a time of clarity or of transition for Waggoner's theology, can now be answered.

Soon after the Minneapolis General Conference session, Waggoner published and proclaimed his understanding of righteousness by faith and the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary in some of the clearest and most eloquent language found among his extant works. The central focus of his message during this period continued to be the power of Jesus to save people from sin and the utter helplessness of human beings to effect their own salvation or to add to that which Christ alone can perform. He said that our helplessness is the assurance of our complete acceptance with God and justification, as we place ourselves on His side. Although confession must precede justification, confession is not meritorious but is rather an expression of our desire for freedom from sin.

Waggoner emphasized that forgiveness is not simply the pardoning of past sins, but also a transformation of life that empowers people to obey. Justification is an exchange of our sins for Christ's righteousness; God declares us righteous, and by His word makes us so. With regard to sanctification, Waggoner stressed that only by Christ's obedience are we made righteous. Works, he said, are the inseparable accompaniment to faith. The same power that justifies continues to save from sin moment by moment in sanctification. Waggoner put no limits on what God may accomplish in His people. He spoke of perfection in terms of stages of growth and the cessation of sin, while he recognized that there will always be an eternity beyond. He clearly distinguished perfection of character from perfection of the flesh, saying that the latter would be realized only at Christ's second advent.
Waggoner's Christology strongly emphasized both the divine and the human aspects of Christ's nature. Christ has by nature all the attributes of deity. At the same time, Waggoner believed that Christ was "begotten" by the Father. On his human side, Christ took sinful human nature and assumed all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies which this implied. While Christ bore the sins of the world from birth, He was perfectly sinless Himself. Never did He yield to temptation; yet He had no advantage that is not freely available to all. Thus, Christ is both Saviour and Example. His life is to be reproduced in His followers, that God's character may be revealed to the world.

Waggoner understood the atonement as objectively accomplished by Christ's death and as subjectively experienced in believers. The sacrifice of Christ is substitutionary and reveals the love of God to effect reconciliation. God does not need to be reconciled to man, because He is not man's enemy. Reconciliation is effected through acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for oneself, which removes the enmity and puts the law into the hearts of sinners. The cross testifies that Christ still suffers with His people and that His crucifixion continues in the lives of His followers.

Waggoner strongly opposed the idea that, since Christ's advent, people are saved differently than during Old Testament times. Outside of Christ, the law can only condemn; in Christ, we receive righteousness by which the law is satisfied. The old and new covenants have existed since the Fall, representing bondage and freedom, respectively. Israel, in promising to obey, sought justification under the old covenant, but could find salvation only through the new covenant promises of pardon and divine assistance for obedience.

Waggoner did believe in a heavenly sanctuary and its need for cleansing. He said the earthly sanctuary, with its two apartments, was a pattern of the sanctuary in heaven. Christ's work was typified by the Aaronic priesthood. Christ's ministry has two distinct phases: the first in which Christ ministered the sacrifices and offerings of His people and
the second in the inner apartment where He has now entered to begin the work typified by
the Day of Atonement. Waggoner believed the judgment to be even now going forward.

Waggoner maintained that God’s law, which is the same as the life and character of
Jesus, is the standard in the judgment. And while no one will be condemned for sins of
ignorance, God’s people will live as Christ lived; God, in the judgment, sees only the image of
Christ in them and life is accorded them. Judgment is related to justification by faith.
Works alone have relevance in the judgment, but these must have been wrought in faith, for
only the righteousness of Christ will pass the scrutiny of the Judge. Much more is involved in
the judgment than an individual’s own destiny. The destiny of others rests on their hearing
from us the proclamation of the everlasting gospel, which Waggoner believed to be uniquely
important now that the judgment is nearly finished. Furthermore, in the judgment, God
Himself is on trial. His character is being judged, and how His people live here on earth
bears testimony either for or against Him. Thus Waggoner’s eschatology and his
understanding of righteousness by faith were very closely related during the period from 1889
to 1895. Perhaps his stress on the experiential aspects of the sanctuary and the investigative
judgment was a reaction to what he perceived among his fellow ministers as an undue
preoccupation with heavenly realities to the detriment of living a righteous Christian life
in accordance with those realities; but more than this, the everlasting gospel of Christ’s
power to save stirred Waggoner’s heart and molded his message of joy and confidence in God,
leading him to present the work of judgment and the second coming of Christ as things that
need never again be feared.

No diminution of Christ’s work in heaven occurred in Waggoner’s presentations
during this period. If anything, he emphasized the importance of that work more strongly
and described it in greater detail than in previous years. Especially evident during the
latter half of our period is a growing clarity in Waggoner’s understanding of separate phases
of judgment, designed to help everyone see God’s fairness and justice in the decisions rendered.
He believed the saints will judge the wicked, including angels, during the millennium. At the close of the thousand years, human beings who are lost will be resurrected in their mortal condition so as to have an opportunity to argue their case before the Judge of the universe. God will argue His case by presenting a panorama of earth's history, in which everything will be made plain and everyone, even His enemies, will ultimately clear God of wrongdoing. Only then will the wicked be tormented—for an unspecified period—and after that they will be utterly destroyed and sin blotted forever from the universe.

To avoid being blotted out with sin, Waggoner stressed the importance of having the heavenly records and our earthly lives blotted free from sin. This work will result in a pure people, ready for the coming of the Lord. The character is changed in the present life, while the body remains in its sinful condition until Christ returns.

The years from 1889 to 1895 were years of clarity; but they were also, to a limited extent, years of transition. A significant development during the period was Waggoner's development of a theology of God's relationship to nature as Creator and Redeemer. The same powerful word of God that operates in creation is the means by which Christ dwells in the heart by faith. The power of creation and redemption are the same, the goal of the latter being to bring God's people back to the perfection of the original creation. In saying these things, Waggoner began making statements that were liable to misunderstanding. In an effort to uphold God's personal involvement with His creation, Waggoner unwittingly used language that tended to de-personalize God, although he himself clearly understood a distinction between the Creator and the creature. The most serious aspect of this development was Waggoner's failure to clearly distinguish, not so much between God's power in creation and redemption, as between man's condition as fallen and unfallen. Waggoner had taught in the early part of this period (1889-1893) that fallen man must be transformed and indwelt by the Spirit, whereas in 1894 and 1895 he sometimes thought that faith was little more than the realization by a sinner of the life of God already present inside him. At
times, however, he continued to say that God will not dwell where He is not wanted, He will remain outside the rebellious individual knocking for admittance, and He will not cleanse the unrepentant person from his sins.

Waggoner objected to the pagan notion that creation contains the power of God inherently; instead, he insisted that creation manifests God's power. Waggoner may have become preoccupied with the relationship between God and nature as the result of reading a book by Paul Paquin, which attributed to human beings an inherent power or goodness that if properly exercised would subdue evil passions. Waggoner rejected Paquin's position, showing that it gave glory to the creature instead of the Creator. He sought to show how nature itself testified that divine, not human, power leads to goodness and life, and he employed Biblical metaphors in vivid language to make his point. Another motivation for Waggoner's perception of God's activity in nature was a concern for the salvation of those who have never heard the gospel proclaimed by human lips. These persons, he said, can learn of God's creating and redeeming power through contemplation of God's handiwork.

Waggoner's final written work, his Confession of Faith, attempted to set forth his beliefs in 1916 as a logical development from his understanding at Minneapolis in 1888. In it, Waggoner ascribed his ultimately congealed theology to earlier moments, before his later theological developments appeared in print; but these later developments were in fact incompatible with what did appear in the early 1890s. No evidence exists that by 1895 Waggoner had abandoned any essential feature of the Adventist sanctuary doctrine. Indeed, his eschatological development became more precise and patently orthodox during the years leading up to 1895 than in the period from 1882 to 1888. Even the Confession itself, when carefully studied, makes clear that Waggoner only many years later dropped the sanctuary doctrine with its attendant features.

Waggoner's proclamation during the early 1890s was that the same Jesus who triumphed over sin not only forgives sin but enters into the human life to keep sin out.
Christ's presence gives assurance in the judgment, because His perfect life is reproduced in the one who trusts wholly in Him for salvation. Waggoner concentrated on the experiential results of Christ's mediatorial and judgment work rather than on the intricacies of a theoretical exposition of the 2300-day prophecy.

Instead of distancing the gospel from the Saviour of the gospel, Waggoner proclaimed both as being within reach of the humblest child who reaches out to receive Christ and of the most ignorant heathen who has never heard the gospel message from human tongue. Experiencing the perfect love of Jesus and sharing this love in a way that draws others to Christ was, for Waggoner, the essence of the third angel's message. He believed that when the message becomes incarnate within us, the final witness will be made to the world in power, and the work of the gospel will be finished.

Waggoner remained remarkably consistent during these years (1889-1895) in what he wrote and said. No explicit evidence has been found that Waggoner had as yet apostatized in any way. Implicitly there are indications that Waggoner could drift into a more mystic understanding of the gospel, based on his desire for the real rather than the ceremonial, for the concrete in place of the conceptual. But during this period his practical emphasis gave his message power and made it an important avenue whereby many could grow in their Christian experience.
CONCLUSION

This study has sought to understand Ellet J. Waggoner's theological development, especially the development of his views on salvation by faith and on the fitness needed for both the judgment and Christ's return, and how these concepts interrelate. The findings from this investigation have tended, in some points, to confirm previous studies; in other points, however, the findings fail to confirm what some historians have concluded regarding Waggoner—especially that he broke with Adventist eschatology very early and that soon after 1888 he headed into pantheism. The major findings are summarized below, followed by some suggestions for further research and a few concluding remarks.

Summary of the Findings

Justification by faith, according to Waggoner, involves a transformation of life. He did not, as some have asserted, hold to an exclusively forensic concept of justification in earlier years and eventually confound it with sanctification. Waggoner's understanding of justification remained essentially unchanged from 1882 to 1895, even though he began equating God's righteousness with the life of God in his lectures at the Minneapolis General Conference and developed this idea more fully in later years. Waggoner distinguished sanctification from justification on the basis of time, justification being the work of a moment and sanctification being the work of a lifetime. The interdenominational holiness movement of the 1880s taught an extreme version of sanctification that was denounced by Waggoner, as it was by other Adventist writers. However, Waggoner taught that Christians are to be perfect to the extent that they do not sin, even though they retain their sinful bodies until Christ's second advent. Some writers have insisted that Waggoner developed a concept of Christian perfection only later, whereas we have found it present
quite early. Motivation for Waggoner's idea of perfection appears to have been rooted primarily in his understanding of the third angel's message as summarized in Rev 14:12.

Waggoner clearly and consistently taught essential features of the Adventist sanctuary doctrine, including its implications of an investigative judgment prior to Christ's return. The judgment, in Waggoner's writings, is based on the heavenly records of human lives and distinguishes the saved from the lost, vindicating God before the intelligences of the universe. During the millennium, the saved will sit in judgment over the men and angels who will be utterly destroyed at the end of the thousand years. Before their final destruction, however, all who are lost will see and confess God's justice. Although Waggoner took issue with such a process of judgment in his 1916 Confession of Faith, there are clear indications even in that document that he did not actually abandon the sanctuary doctrine until "many years" after he first entertained questions regarding it, at the earliest, "many years" after 1891. Furthermore, a number of important differences appear when comparing Waggoner's Confession of Faith with his teachings during the years 1882 to 1895. Some researchers have tended uncritically to accept Waggoner's Confession as reliably representing his views of twenty-five years earlier without testing it against Waggoner's earlier writings. But as this study has revealed, Waggoner's writings from 1882 to 1895 demonstrate that rather than becoming less certain about the sanctuary doctrine, Waggoner appears to have become increasingly more definite in his views and to present the doctrine with greater precision during the years under investigation.

This study has also documented much of what Waggoner probably presented at the Minneapolis General Conference session, W. C. White's notes on the lectures being integral to the task. Waggoner's view of Galatians did not dominate his lectures (although many delegates saw this as the dominant feature); the main issue, for Waggoner, was how people are saved. Also at issue in 1888 was the basis of authority in doctrinal discussions and the proper method of establishing church doctrine.
This study also confirms the conclusions others have reached regarding Minneapolis, namely, that many of the delegates were prejudiced against what Waggoner had to say even though he studiously avoided a confrontational approach.

Minneapolis continues to be significant, not merely because it demonstrates the dangers of discussing doctrine in an un-Christlike manner but also because of the doctrinal content involved. Waggoner’s unique synthesis of the doctrine of salvation with the Adventist understanding of the third angel’s message and eschatology has provided a lasting contribution that has yet to be fully recognized.

With regard to what has been perceived as a steady drift towards pantheism throughout Waggoner’s theology, this study partially confirms and partially contradicts previous research. Our examination confirms that by the mid 1890s Waggoner began emphasizing the immanence of God in a way that inclined toward what could later amount to a form of pantheism. The motivation for this drift, however, was not a faulty soteriology, as has been thought by some writers. It arose instead from Waggoner’s fear of a growing tendency to assign naturalistic causes to phenomena that Scripture represents as resulting from the direct activity of God. It is true that Waggoner’s soteriology emphasized a subjective experience; but it has been shown that this element was present throughout the years from 1882 to 1895 and that it was not at all to the exclusion of the objective work of Christ on the cross or as mediator between God and man. Waggoner stressed both the objective and the subjective aspects of Christ’s saving work.

Concluding Remarks

Prophetic expectation gave birth to Seventh-day Adventism. It is not surprising, therefore, that the relationship between salvation and the expectation of the end has been a major concern of its theological writers. In spite of his eventual denial of key Adventist doctrines, Waggoner made an exceptional and commendable effort to bring Seventh-day Adventist theology into not only a believable and Biblical framework, but also a livable
framework. His effort may be further summarized, following a chronological sequence similar to that of the preceding study, but categorized more philosophically: (1) The Beginning—Justification by Faith; (2) The End—Fitness for the Judgment; and (3) The Bond—a Reconciliation of Justification and Judgment.

The Beginning—Justification by Faith

The years spanned by this study began in 1882, which Waggoner himself identified as the year when his reading of the Bible began in earnest. One gloomy Sabbath afternoon, in a large tent pitched just outside the little town of Healdsburg, California, Ellet J. Waggoner saw what he later described as a vision of Jesus Christ, bathed in a splendor more glorious than the brightest noonday sun, hanging on the cross for him. The memory of that moment never faded; it seemed only to increase in glory and importance. His final description of it, written just before his death, is his most vivid. By his own confession, he sought the guiding light streaming from the cross in all his Bible study.

Seeing Jesus Christ with arms outstretched for oneself is where Waggoner believed all effective Bible study should begin; then the purpose of Bible study is a better glimpse of the inexpressible and unsurpassed love of God that focuses on every individual. Waggoner himself appears never to have lost this focus. His final written words were: “I should be recreant to God if I did not recognize the light that He has given me; I could never understand why it was given me, except on the ground that His gifts are bestowed, not according to deserts, but according to need.”¹ God justifies human beings because of His great love and our great need—because of what we have failed to do, not because of what we have done. Recognition of our indebtedness and helplessness is our invitation to God to enter our experience. As with the individual, so with the church. Recognition of our great need as a denomination is our invitation to God to carry forward the work of finishing what He has

¹ EJW, CF, p. 32.
already begun and has promised to do. God sets no limits on what He can accomplish. Why should we? Human methods reap human results. The starting point determines the end.

The End—Fitness for the Judgment

The end does not determine the starting point. Focusing on what we must be to endure God's scrutiny in the judgment and taking that as our starting point is both human-centered and short-sighted. As many know all too well, it leads to fear, uncertainty, and eventual disillusionment. The problem becomes: once we have done all we can to be ready for the judgment, are we really ready? And even worse: I have done all I can to be ready; what's wrong with you? In contrast to these approaches, Waggoner anchored fitness for the judgment to the starting point of justification. He sketched for his hearers the picture of a prison door being opened and the prisoner walking free into an unlimited universe of possibilities in living God's way. No external law constrains his every move, but an internal law guides his joyful steps and thoughts.

Ignoring the end, on the other hand, only leaves room for wishful thinking and willful blindness. It amounts, in fact, to putting ourselves in the place of God, for we begin to dictate the end from the beginning, believing that what is acceptable to us now will be acceptable to God then. A better approach was suggested by Waggoner, based on the recognition that if our hope is in God, He will not disappoint us. HE will finish the work— if HE has started it. The judgment is the legal ratification of what has already occurred: release from prison. Does the prisoner want to stay confined? Of course not. He cannot unlock the door; but, once it is open, he wants to go free. And in order to go free, he must walk free.

In Waggoner's understanding, the end extends to the perfection of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus has already been judged. Growing into His image brings assurance in the judgment. Being justified by receiving His life is the assurance of growing into His image. There will be a final reckoning and that reckoning will only be interested in what people
have done. No excuses will stand the scrutiny of God. Nor would any find happiness in heaven if such excuses did, for their lives would still be out of place. God will not change the character for anyone at any time apart from his volition, because love never forces or coerces. Anyone who is not willing to be transformed now, will not desire transformation in eternity.

The Bond—A Reconciliation of Justification and Judgment

The 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session marks the middle of the years 1882 to 1895 that we have been studying. It left an indelible mark on Seventh-day Adventist history, as it did on Waggoner. It was the time and place where two seemingly opposite forces, personalities, and ideas met. Waggoner came to the conference filled with the love that would not let him go, while Butler’s men could only see Adventist theology in jeopardy. Although outside the scope of this study, it is significant that prophecy was another burning issue at Minneapolis. Adventist theology, originating as it did in apocalyptic expectation, has naturally stressed prophecy and its depiction of earth’s final hours. But Waggoner could not be satisfied with that single focus, because his heart had been touched by a greater focus—Jesus Christ crucified for him. After Minneapolis, Waggoner sought to reconcile both foci, unwilling to give up either. He blended justification with judgment. Some recent writers have concluded that he confused the two, arguing that justification alone should be the focus. At Minneapolis and in the years that followed, some Adventists preferred to focus on the judgment. The pendulum keeps swinging.

This study concludes the way Waggoner’s own life concluded—somewhat unfinished and by no means the final word. The final year examined in detail, 1895, has left room for further study of Waggoner’s continued theological development until his death in 1916. A broader study comparing Waggoner’s theology with the theological development within Adventism would aid in understanding to what extent Waggoner’s ideas were new. A study
of the English milieu and to what degree it may have shaped Waggoner’s theology during the more than ten years he spent in London would also be enlightening. A very promising area for study would be a comparison of the ideas of E. J. Waggoner, J. H. Kellogg, and Paul Paquin. This could significantly aid in an understanding of the factors that led to the pantheism crisis in Adventism at the turn of the century.

In closing, I think it helpful to observe that, even at the end of his life, Waggoner was haunted by Minneapolis—of the promise it portended and the hope that remained unfulfilled. It is likely that Waggoner became disillusioned because his harmonious balance between justification and judgment, and between earthly and heavenly realities, never took hold as he hoped it would in the denomination. In fact, although many Adventists, including some key denominational leaders, eventually received Waggoner’s message and rejoiced in it, the crisis over pantheism and the sanctuary in the first decade of the twentieth century served to calcify thinking among Seventh-day Adventists for a time and ushered in a conservative reaction that tended to emphasize Christ’s work in heaven to the detriment of its significance for His people on earth.

It is conceivable (and perhaps a study of Waggoner’s later theological development would confirm) that it was the combination of continued resistance, not to the idea, but to the experience of justification by faith and the defense of Adventist eschatology in the early years of the twentieth century that contributed to Waggoner’s retreat from Adventism. Having tried to reconcile justification and judgment and perceiving that he had failed to persuade all but a few, Waggoner ultimately claimed that the two could never be reconciled. Controversies in Adventism since this period over these areas of justification and judgment have sounded like the distant echoes of the Minneapolis legacy. The reconciliation of the Adventist concepts of justification and judgment is yet unfinished. But the promise remains. “The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.”
[Lecture #1, October 15, 2:30 p.m.]
The Law & the Gospel
EJW Oct 15, 1888
Luke 2:10, 11
1 Tim 1:1
Rom 2:13 The Angels are doers of the Law Satan accuses them and they can appeal to the law
R C church shows itself Antichrist in pointing men to pilgrimage penance etc Did Christ speak the Law
G C p 216 We believe in Divinity of Christ He is God He Created all things in Heaven & in the Earth
1 Cor 10:9. Israelites tempted Christ
John 5:21 The Same Honor God has revealed himself through Christ The Justice of God
III — A King offers himself to suffer the penalty of disobedience & redeems the condemned
[p. 36 Blank]

[Lecture #2, October 15, 4:00 p.m.]
If God's Acts are always in Harmony with His Law (Am sorry for the if) is it not necessary for him to keep the Sabbath How can he keep the fifth Com.
God is not a subject of law. But as it proceeded from Him, all his acts will be in harmony with it. It is implied that God enacted part of this Law, & then added to it That is as men do, who find[?] new contingencies. Gods law provides for all creatures & all time Earth
The 10 Com. are the Rule of Heaven & The Lesson
Rom 10:4 He who comes to Christ for Righteousness admits that the law demands R.
I am the Way truth & Life Christ justifies us, by giving us his Life
Rom 1:16; 2:

[Lecture #3, October 16, 10:30 a.m.]
Justification by Faith. Our Anchor A Key to Unlock
Rom 3:28
James 2:17, 22.
Do we work to gain the favor of God or for justification. No. But to show our Love to God.

[Lecture #4, October 16, 2:30 p.m.]
The Ten Kingdoms [A. T. Jones]
The Ten Kingdoms

U. Smith

[Lecture #4, October 17, 2:30 p.m.]
Law & the Gospel John 8:32
Under does not mean condemned
Under the Law no under Grace
Under the Law, is condemned by law
In the Law: is primarily, Subject to the Law

How are we related to the Law
Outside of Christ, & in Christ
Rom 1-6 a compact argument in the rest of the Chap. it is amplified
Augustine says It is one thing to be in the Law and another to be Under the Law. He who is in the Law acts according to Law. He who is Under the Law is acted upon according to Law
John 8:33-35 Jews were slaves
Rom 7:19, 20. The experience of those who struggle with condemnation verse 21 is not Christian Experience

Prov 5:22 2 Pet 2:19
Heb 2:14, 15 Rom 8:17-21
Ps 68:6; 102:19, 20
Pet Spirits in Prison

[p. 48 blank]

[Lecture #5, October 17, 4:00 p.m.]
4 pm
Fruit of 1st husband shows who he was
James 1:17, 18 Our own sinful nature Our own carnal desires
We see Paul so alive to his condition of bondage, almost in despair next verse shows freedom in Christ
We are in love with our carnal nature God wants us to hate it

the law shows the degradation of the union. Christ wants us to be united to Him. He proposes a union with himself
That which in real life would be crime
In the figure the union is unlawful and the end is death

III. Gangrene in the Hand, the arm, the whole Body A Hopeless disease of the Blood
Isai[ah] 1:4, 6

[p. 50 blank]

Mark 7:21, 22
Why do not accept the first offer of 2nd husband because when the old man dies, we die too.
The Old man dies at 2nd death
The Wages of Sin is death, without exception
In Chap 6.1 —

[Lecture #6, October 18, 9:00 a.m. missing]
[Lecture #7, October 19, 9:00 a.m.]
The Law Oct 19, 1888
Acts 15:28, 29. To abstain from pollutions of Idols, in a way covers all the 10 Com. Sabbath with the rest. as Sun worship was the essence of Idolatry

We have taught that the typical law was done away. Did the Apostles fasten on them things done away years before Gal. 2:11-21 v 19 Ceremonial Law nailed to the cross. Did it Kill Paul
If R. by the Law — If favor could be obtained by good works penance etc. Christ need not have died

[p. 52 blank]

Gal. 3:17. Compare the Covenant with Abraham with the Second Covenant They are the same
I am dependent on Christ to lead me
Can be led to the plane of G[od's] R.
Ill Cultured man & uncultured wife
Rom 3:21.
Heb 7:19; 9:10; Gal 5:11

[Lectures #8 and #9, October 21-22 missing]
APPENDIX 2

COMPARISON OF "NOTES BY W. C. WHITE TAKEN AT MINNEAPOLIS

WITH ELLEN G. WHITE'S PUBLISHED SERMON

W. C. White, NWCW, Book Two, p. 29, MMM, p. 477
Sabbath p.m. October 20, 1888, E. G. White; 2 Peter 1:11-12

[1.] God gave Satan a chance to develop himself.

[2.] When Christ came Satan had taken possession of the Jews.


[4.] At first they assented. Afterward they began to doubt.

[5.] All heaven is open to

[6.] When you have the Holy Spirit, you have everything.


[1.] Would it not have cast a reflection upon God if He had destroyed him...? The only way to show the disposition of Satan was to give him a chance to develop himself. [p. 122]

[2.] When Christ made His appearance in our world ... Satan had planted himself on the throne as the sovereign of this world. He had the control of human minds.... He was weaving himself into the Jewish nation, and they were led captive and would not acknowledge Christ as the Son of God. [p. 123]

[3.] In Luke He [Christ] announces what His work is to be [4:18-19 quoted] [p. 123].

[4.] "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."... But a state of unbelief arose and the questions began to come up. [p. 123]

[5.] Through Him is opened all heaven to fallen man. [p.124]

[6.] When we have the Holy Spirit we have everything. [pp. 124-25]
[7.] He gave His son. He could not give
[7.] What condescension God has shown that He should give His Son. [p. 125]

[8.] This little world is chosen
[8.] This little world was chosen in which to carry on this work. [p. 125]

[9.] When Christ was crucified Satan was uprooted from the affections of the universe. John 12:22.
[9.] Just as soon as the trial was ended and Christ was hanging on the cross, Satan thought he had gained the victory; but as soon as Christ arose that thought was uprooted forever for every world that God had ever created. It was final. Never again could he have the least power over the worlds or in heaven. [p. 126]
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