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▲ DENIS KAISER

WHILE THE 1888 MINNEAPOLIS GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION CONSTITUTES A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN ADVENTIST HISTORY, SOME SAW THE NEED FOR A REFOCUS ON REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST YEARS EARLIER. IT APPEARS THAT JAMES WHITE WAS ONE OF THEM.

To illustrate a prevalent issue in the church, James White talked about a particular incident a few weeks earlier in the spring of 1880. A Methodist elder had traveled through Battle Creek and decided to attend the large Sabbath school group at the Dime Tabernacle. He had done the same already 7 years earlier and he got the impression that Adventists were discussing the same subject again, namely, the biblical end-time prophecies. James White doubted that the lesson really dealt with the same subject but acknowledged a possible underlying problem. “It is very possible that the prophecies, the sanctuary, and the messages have occupied time in our Sabbath-schools, a portion of which could have been improved to better advantage in teaching the practical lessons given by Jesus Christ and his holy apostles.” He added that by frequently covering the same doctrinal ground, Adventist ministers might become destitute of the life and power inherent in the various aspects of “the great scheme of human redemption.”¹

A few months later, James White expressed his conviction that “we should write more for our periodicals on the theme which presses upon the mind constantly; namely, Christ the Way of life from Paradise lost to Paradise restored. We have sermons and books to write, and ask time to do that which presses on the mind as a neglected duty. If others think differently, ‘What is that to thee? Follow thou me’ [John 21:22]?”²

In mid-October 1880, he reasoned that during the early years of the church, “Bates, Andrews, Waggoner, Smith, and others” defended, in their sermons and writings, the Adventist position on “the law, the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and the last

message” against those opposing those points, yet over time Adventists may not have made the importance of Christ always sufficiently clear though, giving the impression that “the law and the prophets [were] of greater importance than Christ.” Therefore, he said, “Let him be exalted from the pulpit and from the press.” To exalt Christ more, they were planning to issue, first, a 600-page volume “on the life, teachings, and miracles of Christ, by Mrs. White,” made up from *Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 2–4, and, second, “another volume, embodying our views of redemption through Christ,” entitled *Christ the Way of Life from Paradise Lost to Paradise Restored*, containing “a rich engraving” with the same name, to be sold by five hundred canvassers.³

Although those publishing endeavors may have died with James White in 1881, it appears that the printing of the engraving *Christ the Way of Life* (1883), J. H. Waggoner’s book *From Eden to Eden: A History of Prophetic Study* (1888) that included that engraving, and Ellen G. White’s single-volume *Life of Christ* (1885-1888), published in several foreign languages, and her masterpiece *Desire of Ages* (1898) were still intended to accomplish his goal. ■



¹ James White, “Beasts, Heads, and Horns,” *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1880, 216.

² James White, “Present and Future: And What Shall This Man Do?” *Review and Herald*, September 23, 1880, 216.

³ James White, “Law, Prophets, Christ: What Our Opponents Think of S. D. Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, October 14, 1880, 248; James White, “Five Hundred Canvassers Wanted,” *Review and Herald*, October 14, 1880, 256.

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