

The Real Issues at Minneapolis

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From *The Messenger and News Review*, December 1979

The presence in the Advent Movement prior to 1888, of conflicting beliefs on the great verities, was the fruit of a deeper problem. It was to correct this root of difficulty and to effect in the believers the spiritual condition necessary to their obtaining the final victory, that the fourth angel was sent.

1. Loss of the Real Message

By late 1844, the Adventists had been given the first, second, and third angel's messages which came to be known in combined form as the third angel's message. But it was not very long before they lost the message, though they did not know they had.

Subsequently, they preached the laws and doctrines of the message under the title belonging to the message itself which is, in verity, justification by faith, or the everlasting gospel. Thus, the mighty unifying power contained in the real third angel's message was lost to them, permitting the continuation and development of divisive theories among them.

In order to correct the fault, the third angel's message had to be reintroduced to them. Let it be stressed that it was not a call to a re-emphasis of something they had held all along but

had allowed to become second place after prophecy and doctrine. Nor was it merely a re-statement of what had been taught back in the 1840's.

2. Re-Introduction of the Real Message

It was a presentation of the third angel's message with a scope and glory never before announced among the advent people. It was a message sent from God through His chosen servants which is the message to be given to the world and which is designated the third angel's message.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 91-92:

The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God.

Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent.

This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angels message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.

When they heard it, many Adventists were puzzled. They had never listened to such teachings before and questioned the place for them in Adventism, the movement commissioned to teach nothing but the third angel's message. They were assured by the Lord that they were hearing the third angel's message in verity, even though the message as they had been taught it, was quite different from this.

3. Justification by Faith is the Third Angel's Message

The Review and Herald, April 1, 1890:

Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity."

The language here is more emphatic, assuring the reader that the truth then brought, was the real thing. There were counterfeits abroad, one of which, as will be demonstrated in this article, was even called by the name, the third angel's message, but the one brought by God's servants at Minneapolis was the real thing, the message in verity.

The message sent previously through other servants of God, William Miller, Fitch and Litch, Edson and Crosier, James and Ellen White, Joseph Bates, and others, was also the third angel's message in verity. Assurance is given of this because the message they proclaimed by that name came to them by revelation from above and was confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy.

Therefore, the message of justification by faith proclaimed by Waggoner and Jones, was the same message as delivered by the original pioneers. In short, it was the everlasting gospel.

Elder Waggoner both understood and preached this. In 1891, he delivered a series of studies at the General Conference session on *Romans*, at the end of which he told the audience that during the whole period they had been studying the third angel's message. He said,

Bible Studies on the Book of Romans, p. 47:

Perhaps some in the audience have not realized the fact that the lessons we have been studying for the last dozen evenings on the book of Romans, have been nothing but the third angel's message.

This truth should be self-evident for it is so plainly written in Scripture that the first angel flies,

Revelation 14

⁶ ...in the midst of heaven, having the *everlasting gospel* to preach...

That is his message and therefore that of the angels which follow him for they cannot deliver anything else but the gospel. Waggoner explains this very clearly:

Bible Studies on the Book of Romans, p. 48:

The question arises, If the third angel came along and added his sound to the cry of the first and the second angel, do not we have something more to tell the world, than those who labored under the first message had? Well, we certainly can have nothing more to preach than the everlasting gospel.

The second angel announces a fact, that Babylon is fallen, because of her apostasy from the gospel. Mark you, the second angel has no new truth to tell; merely a fact, that something has occurred.

The third angel merely announces the punishment that will fall on the men who do differently from the truth announced by the first angel.

But the first angel keeps sounding, and the three go together; and since the three keep sounding together, and the first is telling the everlasting gospel,—that which is to prepare men to stand blameless before God,—and the third angel is telling the punishment that will befall them if they do not receive the everlasting gospel, it necessarily follows that the entire threefold message is the everlasting gospel.

Mark it, the first angel proclaims the everlasting gospel; the second proclaims the fall of every one who does not obey that gospel; and the third proclaims the punishment that will follow that fall, and come upon those who do not obey. So the third is all in the first,—the everlasting gospel. Yes, that everlasting gospel carries with it all truth. It is the power of God.

That everlasting gospel, remember, is all summed up in one thing,—Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and of course risen again. We have nothing else in this world to proclaim to the people, whether we be preachers, Bible workers, colporteurs, or canvassers, or simply people who in the humble sphere of their own home let the light shine. All that any of

us can carry to the world is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The statement from the pen of inspiration that the third and not just the first angel's message is justification by faith or the everlasting gospel, confirms the truth of Waggoner's arguments. Thus the three witnesses of *Revelation* 14:6, the Spirit of Prophecy, and E. J. Waggoner testify that the third angel's message is the everlasting gospel, the power of God to save from sin, and prepare for eternity.

4. Doctrines without the Gospel

But, let the average Adventist today be asked what the third angel's message is and he will name a series of doctrines such as the Sabbath, state of the dead, prophecies of *Daniel* and the *Revelation*, the sanctuary, and so forth, as making up the message. Why does he do this when the answer is manifestly wrong, even though those doctrines have their place in the message? The gospel is the message, not the doctrines, so unless the doctrines are taught as a living gospel presentation, they lack life and power and are no longer a part of the third angel's message.

The tragedy is that when the gospel's light and power go out of the message, the people do not know it. They then continue to preach the doctrines without the gospel, believing that there has been no change from the original. This is what happened to the early Christian church:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 548:

But gradually a change came. The believers began to look for defects in others. Dwelling upon mistakes, giving place to unkind criticism, they lost sight of the Saviour and His love. They became more strict in regard to outward ceremonies, more particular about the theory than the practice of the faith. In their zeal to condemn others, they overlooked their own errors. They lost the brotherly love that Christ had enjoined, and saddest of all, they were unconscious of their loss. They did not realize that happiness and joy were going out of their lives, and that, having shut the love of God out

of their hearts, they would soon walk in darkness.

There is no place for complacent confidence in anyone's heart that he could not possibly have lost his first love and thus the living heart of the message. It happened to the greatest church of all time, the Spirit-filled apostolic church, and it also happened in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

5. The Laodicean Condition

Shortly after the great disappointment, urgent warnings began to be sounded by God through the Spirit of Prophecy. In 1855 came these solemn words:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 113:

I saw that the Spirit of the Lord has been dying away from the church.

In the remainder of the testimony, the reasons for this spiritual decline were given. The believers were diverting their energies and means to add house to house and land to land. Unless they desisted from this, God would depart from them and leave them to the selfishness they cherished in preference to the sacrificial spirit. Apparently, the call went unheeded for, over the next year or so, the Spirit of God pleaded with them to prepare to meet the Lord and to cease from conformity to the world.

Then in 1858, or very close to it, came this sobering statement from the True Witness:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 186:

I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time.

The testimony to the Laodiceans is the solemn pronouncement uttered with the authority of God, that the people are lacking gold, white raiment, and eye salve, but, most dangerous of all, they do not know their condition or need. To understand the seriousness of the situation, consideration needs to be given to the symbolism employed in the Laodicean call.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 88-89:

The True Witness counsels us to buy of Him gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eyesalve. The gold here recommended as having been tried in the fire is faith and love. It makes the heart rich; for it has been purged until it is pure, and the more it is tested the more brilliant is its luster.

The white raiment is purity of character, the righteousness of Christ imparted to the sinner. This is indeed a garment of heavenly texture, that can be bought only of Christ for a life of willing obedience.

The eyesalve is that wisdom and grace which enables us to discern between the evil and the good, and to detect sin under any guise. God has given His church eyes which He requires them to anoint with wisdom, that they may see clearly; but many would put out the eyes of the church if they could; for they would not have their deeds come to the light, lest they should be reproved. The divine eyesalve will impart clearness to the understanding. Christ is the depository of all graces. He says: "Buy of Me."

The gold is faith and love or as stated elsewhere,

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 158:

...is faith that works by love.

This is the faith which brings to the repentant sinner the blessing of justification and is so essential that, without it, this experience cannot be attained. Therefore, if the people are described as being destitute of this gold, then they do not have the faith which brings justification and so are an unjustified people. This is to say they no longer have the gospel and consequently do not have the third angel's message.

These are the only conclusions which can be drawn from the facts presented from the testimony of the True Witness. Christ declared that they had fallen into the Laodicean condition and who is prepared to argue with Him? What He declares is so, is so. He speaks the truth because He is the truth and He makes no mistakes, for His knowledge is omniscient.

Of course, they could not see it because it is part of the

Laodicean problem not to know the real state of affairs. Even when they were positively told by the greatest and most reliable authority in existence, they were not able to see, believe, or accept it.

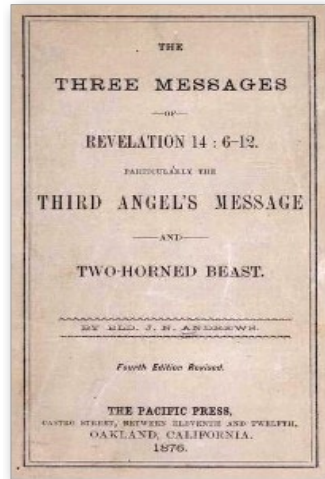
Confidently they continued the work they were doing for God and which they happily supposed He was gladly accepting of them, not knowing that the light and power of the gospel had gone out of their lives and preaching so that they no longer had the third angel's message.

6. A Counterfeit Third Angel's Message

But, they had something which they called the third angel's message. This was the doctrines and prophecies which they had previously preached as a living part of the message.

Clear proof of this is provided in the publication of a book entitled, *The Three Messages of Revelation 14:6-12, Particularly the Third Angel's Message and Two-Horned Beast*, by John N. Andrews. The preface to it was written in 1877, when, no doubt, the first edition appeared.¹ The fifth edition was produced in 1892.

John N. Andrews was and is regarded as being an outstanding Adventist. He served the Advent cause devotedly and sacrificially all the days of his life and today the Adventist University at Berrien Springs, Michigan, is named *Andrews University* in his honor. As such then, his book is representative of Adventist thinking at the time, went through at least five editions, and its claim as set forth in the title to its being a true statement of the third angel's message



¹ Actually, the first edition was published in 1855.

was, as far as we know, never challenged.

Inasmuch then as the third angel's message is justification by faith in verity, it would be expected that John N. Andrews' book would be a series of studies on this subject especially when, in the preface he has these words to say about the third angel's role:

By what means shall the saints of God be gathered in one people and prepared for translation? What mighty truths has God in reserve for the last generation, with which to accomplish this great work? (Page iv)

These are excellent questions. The answer given is also excellent.

In answer to these questions we cite the fourteenth chapter of Revelation.

This answer is the truth, provided that the message of *Revelation* 14 is seen to be the everlasting gospel or justification by faith in verity. But, while we might expect that John N. Andrews' book would be a detailed and living presentation of justification by faith, there is not a single page in the book devoted to this topic. Instead, the material covers prophetic developments in the rise of the Advent people and of the two-horned beast pictured in *Revelation* 13. Thus the Adventists had come to call something which was not the third angel's message, by that name.

By 1888, they had become so far removed in time from the original message that they had quite forgotten what the real thing was and were busily preaching the counterfeit. This is why, when the real message of the third angel was brought by God's appointed messengers in 1888, the church could not recognize it as such. They compared what those men had to teach with what they had always regarded as being the third angel's message and they correctly recognized that they were not the same.

This imposed upon them the necessity of making a specific

choice between what they regarded as being the real message which they fondly referred to as being the old landmarks, and what the True Witness told them was the message in verity. The lapse into the Laodicean condition in 1858 or thereabouts, was not a temporary one. It settled into a fearful permanency so that by 1888, they were in a state of even worse spiritual poverty.

The Review and Herald, August 26, 1890:

Since the time of the Minneapolis meeting, I have seen the state of the Laodicean Church as never before. I have heard the rebuke of God spoken to those who feel so well satisfied, who know not their spiritual destitution. Jesus speaks to these as He did to the woman of Samaria: "if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

Like the Jews, many have closed their eyes lest they should see; but there is as great peril now, in closing the eyes to light, and in walking apart from Christ, feeling need of nothing, as there was when He was upon earth. I have been shown many things which I have presented before our people in solemnity and earnestness, but those whose hearts have been hardened through criticism, jealousy, and evil surmising, knew not that they were poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Those who resist the messages of God through His humble servant, think they are at variance with Sister White, because her ideas are not in harmony with theirs; but this variance is not with Sister White, but with the Lord, who has given her her work to do.

Therefore, they were no more able to see what God was plainly telling and showing them in 1888 than they were back in 1858. But, this did not mean that their cases were hopeless, that they had to cling to that which they regarded as being the real truth. All they had to do was to trust in the Word of their divine Commander, taking the attitude that if He says it is so, then even though they could not see it, it is so. They would believe and accept it.

But the leadership, together with the majority, did not step out by faith. Instead, they chose to walk where they could see, in what was to them, the old familiar paths. That those were paths of death and darkness did not trouble them.

7. The Real Issue in 1888

This then was the real issue back in 1888, the question of whether the actual third angel's message would be reinstated in the church which had unknowingly lost it, or whether the counterfeit would remain. That was the issue and, as history and the Spirit of Prophecy testify, the formalists won the day.

Subsequent to the dying out of the message and the departure of the messengers from the church, the doctrines which have been regarded as being the third angel's message, continued to be the message of the church. The result is that any Adventist raised since then has been taught that laws and doctrines are the third angel's message whereas in fact, justification by faith is the message. Therefore, he has been taught that something other than the message is the message.

This places him in the same predicament as the Adventists in 1888. It has been instilled into him that a certain message is the message in verity, whereas it is not. We may marvel at the blindness of the Jews and the Adventists who refused to believe what God told them, but will God's people today prove any more receptive to the divine counsels?

In 1888, God sent the real third angel's message. That and that alone is the light which will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness. No matter how sincerely we may believe otherwise, this is the truth. Therefore, even though we cannot see what the Lord is telling us, let us believe it just because He says it.

In 1858, there was a tragic departure from the real message which has directed our feet unwittingly but surely, in the same pathway. Only by recognizing these deviations and in

being prepared to correct them so far as our own lives are concerned, will it be possible to escape the fearful consequences.