

IHI BULLETIN

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Present Dangers To Awakening Believers

A Letter from Robert D. Brinsmead

Dear Friends and Fellow Believers:

Unto what shall we liken the Awakening in the church? It can be likened unto a small boy who throws a stone into the middle of a pond. The ripples extend even to the outermost edge. So the stone of truth has disturbed the pond of Laodicean complacency, and the ripples continue to reach out unto the uttermost bounds of the church.

What Is the Message of the Awakening?

The goals of Adventism were firmly laid in the 1844 period. All who stood on the platform of the three angel messages understood that there would be a sealed, final generation who would reflect the image of Jesus fully, live without an intercessor, and stand without fault before the throne of God. But what was not fully clarified in that early period was the *means* by which the saints would be perfected. Three generations had to pass before God's people would appreciate the light of the final atonement.

Ten years ago in Australia, as clear as if we had seen a vision, we saw a door opened into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. We heard the invitation, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter . . ." We felt the power of the call, "All things are ready: come unto the marriage." We saw the third angel pointing the way into the holiest of the heavenly sanctuary. (*Early Writings*, p. 254.) We obeyed the command, "Blow the trumpet in Zion . . . gather the people . . ."

"The slumbering church must be aroused, awakened out of its spiritual lethargy, to a realization of the important duties which have been left undone. The people have not entered into the holy place where Jesus has gone to make an atonement for His children."—Ellen G. White in *Christ Our Righteousness*, p. 118.

This was the call, we believed the final call, to God's people to gather by faith at the heavenly sanctuary in preparation for the Lord's sudden coming to His temple—the judgement of the

living. Deep repentance and affliction of soul were the conditions to be fulfilled on this great antitypical day of atonement.

We saw by the clear testimony of Leviticus 16:30, Malachi 3:1-3, Zechariah 3, and other passages of God's word, that the final atonement was a final cleansing experience for God's children, and that all those who gathered at the sanctuary in the required way would receive the benefits of Christ's final atonement. The message met with stiff resistance, especially from those who stood as the expositors of truth. Well-meaning Adventist ministers and theologians took the position that since we had justification and sanctification available now as a day-by-day experience, no further experience was required. In support of the truth of Leviticus 16:30, we pointed to certain evidence that the record of sin remained in the mind of the born-again believer as well as in the books of heaven, and that in the final atonement, or blotting out of sins, this record would have to be purged so that the worshippers would have no more conscience of sins.

But as we continued to follow the truth, rising like a star from the east, clearer light began to break on the nature of man. Other texts began to shine with great force—those texts that speak of the unfathomable depth of sinfulness in the human heart. Many of us, in typical Laodiceanism, thought that such texts only applied to heathen sinners. We found that such texts apply to saints as well as sinners. Now the great Reformation light on *original sin* (man's natural sinfulness of heart) began to shine with great luster; and the truth uttered more than 400 years ago by Martin Luther sounded in our time—*Simul Justus et Peccator* (righteous yet impure at one and the same time). Yes, Luther was a great exponent on the truth of righteousness by faith. Believers in Jesus are justified and sanctified in Christ, and in Him they stand fully righteous before God. But because of original sin that still clings to human nature throughout probationary time, by the decree of God, the best saints still confess that they are sinners.

So God's people must come to the day of atonement with affliction of soul, with original sin not reigning, but still remaining. Light from the cross broke in new force upon our minds. Here was seen, in new power, the great sin of all hearts—the will to kill God, the great unconscious sin of all men, even Laodiceans, of whom the Lord says, “Thou knowest not . . .” The cross was now seen as the catalyst that would bring the saints to that great repentance called for in the experience of the cleansing of the sanctuary.

But the greatest light yet to shine upon us was the realization that as wonderful as the final atonement, blotting out of sins, latter rain, and seal of God portended to be for the saints, yet the great motive before us was that the final atonement was for Jesus' sake. We saw Him still enduring the pain and agony of Calvary, the Lamb all mangled and bleeding in the sanctuary above. (*Early Writings*, pp. 78, 79; *Education*, p. 263; Isaiah 43:24, 25.) We were therefore shown that we must seek the experience portrayed on the ancient day of atonement so that Christ might be released from the great burden of sin in the sanctuary above.

These, my dear friends, in great brevity, are the truths of the Awakening that have been unfolded to our minds in this astounding decade of destiny.

Progress

What has been the progress of this Awakening message in 10 years? Has it been 10 years of progress? What are our goals? How are we going to measure progress?

Shall we dare speak the rude truth?—We would far sooner celebrate 10 years of the Awakening than have our hearts shattered by a deeper experience. The foundation of the present truth is in the call to repentance, even the heart-broken repentance of the ages. Inspiration says that “at every advance step our repentance will deepen.” Then, my brother, my sister, has there really been progress with you and with me?

In view of the great truth of original sin—the deceitfulness of the human heart—might we not expect that our old hearts will not really welcome its final showdown of the ages. This is the day of atonement when we are called to afflict our souls, but our hearts would rather do anything than come to grips with the real thing. The greatest danger facing us is that we be drawn away from the powerful and simple truth of the Awakening message—drawn away by our hearts. Friends, cannot we see the root cause of all the side issues and distractions that have pressed themselves upon our path with increasing bombardment as we pursue our way up the path of truth? We would rather print books, hold institutes, build schools, set up medical-missionary centers, start institutions, build something (oh, how the human heart likes a visible monument), than to answer the call to the day of repentance. Do not misunderstand! We are not against the aforementioned activities in their proper place; but it has been all too plainly evident that these activities are used by the carnal heart as ingenious detours around the great Rock of offence. And we wonder why the decree seems to be in double force, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow thou shalt eat of it . . .”

We often think that those who reject the Awakening message are responsible for frustrating the climax of truth. Too often has the Newsletter reflected this false view. A classical example was an article called “What If . . .” The

whole idea of the article was to suggest how well everything would proceed if certain channels would stop resisting the truth. Come now, what if . . . ?

Let us take a look at past history—1888. It is generally thought that those who opposed the message in 1888 were responsible for turning the church back into the wilderness for another long period of wandering. A true view of 1888 would show us that it was those who professedly accepted the message who frustrated the finishing of the work. God could have easily taken care of the opposition, but it was because the ones who professed acceptance did not allow the work of grace to go deep enough that the Lord could not bring His work on earth to a climax.

We must honestly state that we are not in favor of the tone of “Awakening” publications that adopt the self-righteous stance that if the General Conference would do this or that, all would be well. If the Awakening goes in that direction, then it is humbug. If the Awakening is an awakening to the sins of the brethren, if it ceases to be an Awakening to our own state before God on this day of atonement, then it has no authority or place in prophecy, and we are wasting people's time.

The Lord has a greater problem with His people than with the Gentiles. Look how long it took Jesus to get the disciples ready for Pentecost! Think of all the instruction, Calvary and its humiliation, then more instruction, and finally 10 days of preparation! How long did it take the Gentiles to receive the same experience? Why, Peter had not even finished preaching one sermon at the home of Cornelius when the Spirit fell upon the Gentiles in the same way as it had originally fallen upon the 120. This teaches us that sin in the believers of truth is far deeper and more difficult to deal with than sin in the Gentiles. Consider the great preparation that the church must participate in before she will receive the latter rain. Thus far it has taken Christ 120 years to get His people ready—and still they are not ready. But when God's people receive the Spirit, He will have no problem with the Gentiles. “The plowman shall overtake the reaper.”

So, in view of the fundamental truth of the Awakening—the call to repentance—what progress are we making? Oh, we can testify of being in some blessed meetings where the truth and the Spirit have moved our hearts. We cannot deny that, and we bless God for it; but we must repent that in 10 years we have not yet reached that Pentecostal climax which is described in *Early Writings*, page 269. (Every Awakening believer should know this passage by heart.) The great barrier before us is not getting the present truth to God's people in different countries. It is the barrier of our own sinful hearts!

A Temptation to Awakening Believers

There is but one great Advent Movement which arose according to prophecy. True, we have been warned that two companies would appear in the church, and that this would finally climax in the great final sifting among God's people. As that time approaches, one company is called “the little company who are standing in the light.” They are described as those who grieve “over their own spiritual declension” and “mourn over the sins of others.” (See *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 209-211.) Here again is the only way to measure progress—progress in this experience!

The light of present truth places before us privileges and duties previously undreamed of. But it also presents tempta-

tions and special dangers. Soon, wherein the shepherds have been unfaithful, the Lord will arise and take the reigns into His own hands. There will be no problem from then onward. But now we are in a unique time—a period of strife and confusion among God's people, and a time of increasing light for that little company standing in the light.

If we yield to the temptation to take matters into our own hands by commencing a new church organization, or if we become impatient with the church and confront her with any discouraging message, then this constitutes apostasy from the truth. The present truth is a message of great encouragement to the entire house of Israel. What if two or three hundred ministers resigned from their positions and turned their energies against the church? Would that be progress?

It is time again for candid talk. Some time ago we declared that the Awakening was only a voice in the church. It was not the church, and would not become the church. Its work was temporary. Its work was to point God's people to the Bridegroom who stands in the holy of holies, waiting for the marriage to be consummated. And having done this work, the duty of the Awakening is to step aside, and that gladly. It is not Revelation 18:1. It is not worthy to be compared with Revelation 18:1; and its testimony must constantly be, "He that cometh after me . . ." The Awakening calls for no organization, no headquarters, no set of religious leaders to replace the existing ones in the church. The more simple and direct its approach, the more effective it will be.

But there have been some among us who have not been happy with this charter. They have long fretted under the restraint imposed upon them by this concept of the Awakening. There is a group in Cusick, Washington, who several years ago wanted to make a clean break with the church, ordain new ministers, rebaptize converts, call for the tithe, and place the curse of Malachi 3 on believers who would continue paying tithe through the regular church channels. They were all set to throw in their lot with the Fred Wright group which goes all the way and calls the church Babylon and antichrist. At that time, the Lord used me to save these people from that dreadful step, which they themselves testified. But, unfortunately, while the tops were cut down, the roots remained. It is now apparent that their errors were never rooted up, but they simply waited a more opportune time to spring again into life. As far as they are concerned, those only who believe as they do constitute the church. As far as they are concerned, the whole institution known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is finished and doomed, and they urge us to go on our way as if it no longer existed. Now, friends, God has never given the Awakening a message like this with which to confront God's church. We do not hesitate to say that it is apostasy from the truth—in letter as well as in spirit.

When God talked with Moses in the mount, He tested him by proposing that He reject Israel and make a nation out of his family. Was that pleasing to Moses? He chose rather to be blotted from God's book than to enjoy what could be a selfish advantage. And God has been testing us in the same way. He says, "Shall I reject the church and make of Awakening believers the church?" Well, what do we say? Do we answer, "Yes, Lord, I have really been thinking this myself for quite a while now, and I am glad that You see that this is the only solution?"

Our dear friends, God is testing us as well as our brethren in the church. While we must be warned against a false love for the church that would compromise truth for the sake of peace, we must also be warned against an anti-church spirit. We regret that among some this spirit is gaining ground. Under the

pressure of being rebuffed, disfellowshipped, or despised by the church, it is only human nature to react by saying in our hearts, "If the church can do without me, I can do without the church. They have rejected me. I reject them. They do not consider me as belonging to the church, I do not consider them as the church." This reaction may be human, but it is sinful. God cannot bless when this spirit is nourished; and we say frankly that if this is the direction some people are going to go, then it would have been better if they had never heard of the Awakening. The Cusick group can only live and be nourished where this spirit prevails.

Let everyone be warned that when people nourish an anti-church spirit—the spirit that says, "We are now the church"—then they place themselves in a position where they can never manifest the intercessory spirit of Daniel, the very attitude essential in the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. It is the same spirit that cursed the so-called Reform movement, and dried up the souls of those who imbibed it in miserable self-righteousness. Those who receive the seal of God will be sighing and crying for the sins of the church. (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 267.) But once people place themselves in the spirit of being outside the church, they will not sigh and cry like Daniel. Oh, no! Every piece of evidence that points up the decadence of God's people will be consumed greedily as the vindication of one's position. The Reform movement degenerated in this way. The only thing that would cause a "revival" among its people would be some new evidence of further backsliding in "the big church." But love does not rejoice in iniquity. The only way to manifest the spirit of Daniel is to actually identify ourselves with the church—and if not physically possible, at least in spirit.

All that glitters is not gold. If those who read every so-called Awakening publication see no difference between the spirit of some literature and other, it is because they have not drunk of the real Fountain of truth. There is even a proud and smug satisfaction among us that says, "I have seen the light. The church has not. I do not need the church. I am able to discern the truth." Already, some walking in this self-confidence have stumbled or are about to stumble into the most foolish ideas being agitated. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." "My sheep hear My voice, and a stranger they will not follow."

The Future of IHI

As most of you know, I am not on the board of IHI. IHI has no members. My relation to it is only in an advisory capacity, and that advice may be accepted or rejected.

IHI is simply a registered corporation, operated by a handful of men who receive and distribute funds held in trust. Because of U. S. laws which offer special advantages to nonprofit corporations, IHI was registered to reap the advantages of tax concessions, postal concessions, etc, as well as to handle certain funds decently and in order. Operating in this restricted sphere, it has served a good purpose.

There has been increasing pressure placed on IHI to take on the support of certain "workers" in different parts of the world. Although it has never called for tithe, people can soon devise certain ways to get around restrictions. Without any effort, IHI could launch out and become quite a vast employment agency with a corps of preachers comparable to any conference. Are we supposed to move in that direction? We believe not. An unwise push in the wrong direction and IHI

could become a rival church organization, an institution to hire and fire ministers of the gospel. The present Seventh-day Adventist Church organization was ordained by God with one of the specific functions being to ordain ministers. The church of God has a ministry. We see no evidence that God has rejected this established order. Therefore it is not hard to conclude that God has not called into being another organization to perform the same function.

This is not to say that we take the unwarranted position that the only ones ever called to preach are called through the regular church channels. God has often had irregular channels as well as regular ones. In Old Testament times there were priests and prophets. Priests were called to sacred work through the ordination of the religious institution. Prophets were called directly by God, and they gave evidence of their calling by the word of truth and the witness of the Spirit. In principle, the same applies in the New Testament age. Some, indeed most, are called by God to preach the word through the ordination of His ordained institution of the church. Some are called directly by God, especially in times of emergency. A case in point was that of William Miller. He received his calling from God directly, and not through ordinary channels of the church. He preached publicly for two years before his Baptist church gave him a license to signify that it recognized the call God had given him. In this sense, Miller's calling was not the calling of a priest, but of a prophet. We do not mean by this that he was inspired as were the prophets who wrote the word of God.

Now to use the terminology of the Old Testament, IHI's work is not to call men to the priesthood. That is the work of the Seventh-day Adventist organization. Neither could IHI presume to call "prophets" to speak to Israel. That prerogative belongs to God and to God alone. One called to preach by God will give unmistakable evidence of it by his word of truth and by the abundant witness of the Spirit. The percentage of apostasies among those who have gone out to publicly preach the Awakening message points to the fact that God had not called them. Far safer it would be to poke a crowbar into high-powered electrical works than to assume the call of God falsely.

In harmony with the principles here presented, we advise that IHI seriously restrict its activities, and function only in those areas that God could approve and which will not increase problems of church relationships. Grandiose schemes and plans are not necessary for the accomplishment of the mission of the Awakening. In fact, the more activity increases, the greater danger there is in losing sight of the great goal of truth.

A further thought.—The true prophet always respected and recognized the office and function of the priest, even when the priest refused to acknowledge the calling of the prophet. So in this age God has a regular ministry and, in times of need, an irregular ministry. Even though the regular minister fails to recognize the irregular minister, the true irregular minister will still recognize the regular minister. But self-sent irregular ministers will not recognize the office of the regular ministry—and the main reason is that they run greedily after the error of Baalim who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Let us learn what this means!

A Broader View

Some feel that they must restrict their witness to the church of God. Admittedly, the special emphasis of the Awakening is to the people of God; but there is no basis for

restricting our witness in that direction. In some places the Spirit of Prophecy advises us that when the church will not hear our witness, then we must work for others.

In fact, if the Awakening proceeds any further in the direction of concentrating on the church, it will become an unhealthy situation. Ten years of agitation have aroused God's church all over the world to the fact that there is a present issue. We are not obliged to keep hammering on a shut door. When we have done all we can, we must patiently rest matters in God's hands, and work for others. This is the very experience that many who believe present truth need. Let eyes be lifted up to regions beyond the church. Christ belongs to the world. Let us get some vital practice giving truth to those outside the house of Israel. The loud cry will only come to those who are doing what they can, humbly pursuing the work of Isaiah 58.

Seeing this broader work is just what is needed now. It will provide an outlet for restless energies. It will keep us more in sympathy with the great task of the church. It will save the Awakening from narrow fanaticism that already is trying to insinuate its way among believers of present truth. Some are now arising who only have a message for Awakeners—the virgins, as they say (for they would judge the rest of the church as hypocrites, God forbid). Their theories are so finely spun and fantastic that not even Adventists could understand their specialized talk. They think it their duty solely to run around groups of believers who already know the Awakening message; and to be sure, both their hands are held out for tithe. If they would only try and preach their "gospel" to the world, they might preserve their balance and realize that they must have a message that will reach any human being whose heart is open to truth.

Further, ministering the truth to those not of our faith presents fewer problems. You do not need a special calling from God to do this. Here is a legitimate field of service for IHI and others. Let energies be put into placing the best literature possible before those not of our faith. Unless groups of Awakening believers see the need for this work, they will degenerate into narrow, clannish Christians who will lose all the precious experience they have had in the present truth. They will sit around waiting for somebody to tickle their ears with something new and startling.

Tithe

Now a word about the tithe.—The group in Cusick want to anathematize all who would pay tithe to the church. This is not the spirit of the Awakening, brethren. We dare not give the least sanction to that position. We refuse to be drawn into pointless disputes on the tithe question from either side, or to encourage side issues which divert from the message of the hour. But we would ask one question: Do you think that people merit tithe who do nothing except to run around groups of Awakening believers? If so, then the Awakening "is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit unto himself."

The Divine Credentials

May God grant that those who profess to believe present truth might have enough spiritual discernment to discern the difference between testing truth and twaddle. Testing truth will bear the following credentials:

1. It will be Bible based. Every point must be clearly

presented from the Bible. The Spirit of Prophecy has its place for the comfort and guidance of the saints, but Sister White did not sanction any message that found its primary basis in the Spirit of Prophecy. Listen to her own statement:

"All should be careful about presenting new views of Scripture before they have given these points thorough study, and are fully prepared to sustain them from the Bible."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p.106.

If anyone cannot find his message in the Bible and sustain it solely from the Bible, then he has no authority from God to present a message. The present Awakening message may be presented with power solely from the Scriptures. In different places on earth I have had the privilege of presenting it thus, and we have rejoiced to see those outside the faith of Adventism embrace the third angel's message in consequence. And as this message is being preached in areas such as Europe, we practically use only the Bible.

There is a brother from New York who is trying to present what he calls an urgent message to Awakening believers—and mark, only to Awakening believers. Does he present it from the Bible? No! Is there anything in the Bible to support it? No! Does it help anyone understand the word of God? No! It is just based on a mass of idle speculation founded on parallels and a few statements (misused) from the Spirit of Prophecy. Friends, we should sit down and candidly examine the Scriptures with anyone who claims to have a message of truth; but we would save a lot of time in many cases if we simply demanded that the brother first set forth his teaching solely from the Scriptures. Afterward, it would be legitimate to have some confirming counsel from the Spirit of Prophecy.

2. All true light is light from the cross of Calvary. Paul determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Sister White said that the 1888 message uplifted more prominently the uplifted Saviour, the Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. So we must always ask: Does this message more clearly illuminate the cross? Is it central? Or is it a tangent?

3. Is it in harmony with the heart experience of the cleansing of the sanctuary? Will it lead us into the experience of repentance called for on the day of atonement? Or does it lead us away from the experience of deeper and deeper repentance?

4. My brother John always asks, "Is this theory good for snake bite?" Does it present the cure for the sting of that old serpent, the devil? Does it kill sin in the soul?

5. Does it make the great truths of the third angel's message more simple and direct so that it is an aid to explaining the truth to those not of our faith? Or is it making the message so specialized and complicated that only a "special" kind of person would understand what it is all about.

I have never been embarrassed when non-Adventists have been brought along to our Awakening meetings. Not a few times have non-Adventists come forward at the close of the meeting and revealed that God had spoken to their hearts. Let us not merit the reproof of Paul who warned that if "there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?"

6. Finally, the message presented must not only be truth based on the Bible, but it must have the witness of the Spirit. Some things may even be true, but if the Holy Ghost gives no positive witness to its proclamation, it should not be agitated. Remember those people who were rebuked for urging the Adventists to refrain from eating pork in the early days of the Advent Movement? So we are warned: "Introduce nothing

that will cause dissension, without clear evidence that in it God is giving a special message for this time." Testing truth will always be witnessed to by the Holy Spirit in genuine conviction, sorrow for sin, and conversion of hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whatever has these divine credentials should be embraced, no matter by whom it comes.

An Hour of Great Decision

Ever since the great sealing message of the third angel was consolidated into a body of truth by 1848-49, God has especially visited His people with opportunity to move across the Jordan about every 40 years. The first time is well-known. 1888 was the first occasion. That generation was not ready to enter the heavenly Canaan. It seems that when God brings a generation to a great point of decision and they fail, there is no other opportunity for that generation to be the generation to go through. Again, about 1928, at the end of another 40 years, Daniells and McGuire tried to revive the message of 1888 in the church. It never got off the ground, and so that generation had to die in the wilderness. Friends, we have come to the end of the third 40-year period. It is entirely possible that before this decade is passed, God's people today will decide whether this will be the generation. And having been prepared by 10 years of Awakening, what if again God's people fail to make the adequate response? There will never be another chance for us. God and truth will not be trifled with. Can we endure the thought of having Christ sentenced to another needless 40 years of sin-bearing?

Everything indicates that we have come to a very critical point in the history of the church and the history of the Awakening. The Awakening has nothing to fear from outright opposition—that has been adequately demonstrated. But never before have those who believe the present truth been bombarded by so many distracting voices. Never before has the truth shone with such beauty and clarity before God's people. But it must now be proved whether we will be settled upon it so that we cannot be moved, whether we can continue to stand unitedly upon it. I have often been able to say without fear of contradiction that in view of all the conflicting opinions abroad in the church, the Awakening is the only place where unity can be found. As every wind of doctrine blows upon us, will we continue to hold to the great Rock of solid Bible truth?

Recently, I have received some anxious letters from some of my brethren in America; but I must confess my confidence that the Awakening believers around the world will, by the grace of God, defy the machinations from within as well as they have defied the opposition from without. And if this proves true, then—

Lead on, O King Eternal,
The day of march has come!

RDB.