

## 02-The Imminent Christ: Justification Within

Karl Wagner, *November 7, 2020; 9:30 AM, Sabbath Morning*

I-Waggoner's journey for unity with the deity: The Imminent Christ.

1. Parallel with 1<sup>st</sup> century Christian mysticism
  - a. Mysticism is integral to Christian monasticism because the goal of the practice for the monastic is union with the deity.
  - b. Driven by his ecstatic experience
    - i. "It seems abundantly evident that his immanent views of the indwelling Christ, fueled with his panentheistic philosophy, did play a vital role in the development of his spiritualistic doctrine of 'spiritual affinities' and their 'free-love' tendencies."<sup>1</sup>
2. Three Views of Minneapolis<sup>2</sup>
  - a. Uriah Smith, editor of the general church paper, and George Butler, president of the General Conference, and most of the pre-1888 SDA ministry, held that justification involved primarily a means of obtaining forgiveness for "sins of the past." Faith enabled adequate obedience and thus sufficient righteousness to pass the soon-coming final judgment. While sanctification thus overshadowed justification, the latter was perceived as an objective transaction by the pioneers.
  - b. JONES-WAGGONER AND JUSTIFICATION. The Jones and Waggoner focus upon the overwhelming dimensions of the law led to their conclusion that personal righteousness was inadequate both for the past and for the future. Only the righteousness of Christ satisfied the requirements of the law and such righteousness came through faith as a gift. In their scheme, however, Christ's righteousness actually replaced the past sins within the individual and became the instrument of obedience for the present and future. Christ within motif.<sup>3</sup>
  - c. ELLEN WHITE AND JUSTIFICATION. As early as 1884 Ellen White systematically attempted to lead the church to more elevated concepts of the righteousness of Christ as the perspective that would energize the church. Her guidance provided the impetus that would likewise begin reformations concerning the nature of SDA ministry and also modify its organizational concepts as well as its views of the basis for salvation.
3. The Minneapolis Message of Justification<sup>4</sup>
  - a. Was the Message Accepted?
  - b. The rejection of the message during the conference by many is well attested to. This was compounded by the controversy over other theological issues, such as the 10 horns, and their own views regarding the reputations of the two young men and Ellen White. Many, during the 1890s, confessed many of their errors all or in part. Even the leaders of the resistance, Smith and Butler made their amends.

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<sup>1</sup> Woodrow Whidden, II; *E. J. Waggoner: From the Physician of Good News to Agent of Division*, (Review and Herald, 2008), pages 305, 306

<sup>2</sup> Bert Maloriak, *Three Paths to Minneapolis: The Adventist Struggle for Righteousness* (Draft) 1988, page 11.

<sup>3</sup> The 1888 Message Study Committee would refer to this as the "In-Christ Motif."

<sup>4</sup> Background to this paper is largely found in George Knight's book, *A. T. Jones: Point Man on Adventism's Charismatic Frontier* (RH, 2011), from chapter V, The Meaning of Minneapolis, pages 65-82.





- commandments of God and leave the other half scarcely touched, the message is marred in our hands.”<sup>14</sup> This was not new light (1888, 213).
- b. “You know that precious light has shone forth in connection with the law of God, as the righteousness of Christ has been presented with that law. Dr. Waggoner has opened to you precious light, **not new, but old light which has been lost sight of** by many minds, and is now shining forth in clear rays.”<sup>15</sup>
  - c. “The point that has been urged upon my mind for years is the **imputed righteousness of Christ**. I have wondered that this matter was not made the subject of discourses in our churches throughout the land, when the matter has been kept so constantly urged upon me, and I have made it the subject of nearly every discourse and talk that I have given to the people.”<sup>16</sup>
  - d. The gospel of justification by faith was the central theme of 1888. It is both doctrinal and experiential. Ellen emphasized the imputed aspect. To Waggoner, Justification always meant what it did to Augustine; “to make righteous.” Both based their understanding of the word from the Latin. For Waggoner, it was Jesus in you, the imminent Christ. To Ellen, it was the Jesus for you, the one from above. The 1888 message, though not complete, pointed the Advent people to Jesus and to a more balanced view between law and gospel. While largely not rejected but neglected by the people, it has left us impotent and behind in proclaiming the message this movement was raised up by God to deliver. A movement called in time and place, but as the light began to shine, Satan steals a march upon us to make us impotent. Have we lost our apocalyptic calling? Or have we settled down to denominationalism?
7. Ellen White’s Endorsement of Jones and Waggoner.
- a. For a decade she “drove home the idea that God had chosen them (Jones and Waggoner) as special messengers because ‘many had lost sight of Jesus’ and ‘justification through faith’ in Him.”<sup>17</sup> “Why should we not see in that law the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Christ comes in and imputes to me His righteousness in His perfect obedience to that law.”<sup>18</sup>
  - b. Waggoner had some problems with Justification: He viewed it as “make” just. Even the imputed aspect was the result of works which carried into sanctification and conflated the two aspects.
    - i. “By this we see that Abraham’s faith could not have been imputed to him for righteousness but for the disposition to work. And since justification has reference to the law of God, it is evident that the works that make perfect the faith that secures justification, must be the works which the law requires. But this continued obedience is sanctification” Waggoner, ST. April 1, 188
  - c. “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

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<sup>14</sup> 1888 367, & 16MR, 227.

<sup>15</sup> 1888, 75, 76

<sup>16</sup> FW, 18

<sup>17</sup> EGW to OAO, May 1, 1895

<sup>18</sup> 1888, 125

cannot be error? Do I say so? No, I do not say any such thing. . . But I do say God has sent light, and do be careful how you treat it. We want the truth as it is in Jesus.”<sup>19</sup>

8. Many, like Haskell and Wilcox, felt Ellen’s endorsement of the boys made them virtually inspired by God. Even O. A. Olson mentioned that a word from them would end all dispute in Battle Creek. Robert Weiland and Donald Short, in their 1950 work, *1888 Re-Examined*, also place this type of impression of them. But we find that her support was balanced, not as one sided as some have made it.
  - a. Waggoner’s idea of a spiritual connection with Christ is not far-fetched. But it’s more than the idea of Christ in us and must include a Christ for us. How he defines justification as to make righteous and saw it as something God did in the past, flavored his ideas about the full gospel. Ellen White on the other hand understood that the imputed righteousness of Christ is what must be taught to our people; it’s what they need to hear (see FW, 18). While the message isn’t about the law, it doesn’t do away with the law.
  - b. However, the message has been left to lose its power to change lives, and in place of it, **a door would open to the development of a systemized theology of perfection some 40 years later.** But there remains a hope for us still, to preach the uplifted Jesus. A gospel for such a time as this may restore the fire that has been missing in many areas of our denomination.

Go to: 03 - Preaching the Uplifted Jesus – Justified from Above

Suggested Reading:

Whidden, II, Woodrow W., E.J. Waggoner: *From the Physician of Good News to the Agent of Division* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008).

Haloviak, Bert; *After Minneapolis, 1889 and 1899: Three Views of Salvation* (paper written Oct. 1988).

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<sup>19</sup> 1888 Materials, 566