

COMMENTARY

BRI SURVEYS INDEPENDENT MINISTRIES

EDITORIAL

All three of the synoptic Gospels in recording Jesus' prophetic discourse state that He began with the admonition - "Take heed lest any deceive you." (Mark 13:5; See also Matt. 24:4, Luke 21:8) Besides this, the nature of the deception to be is given. Said Jesus - "Many will come in my name, ... and shall deceive many." (Mark 13:6) Deception in the guise of truth is the hallmark of the last days. This deception will be so intense and subtle that if possible, "the very elect" could be deceived. (Matt. 24:24) But this situation is compounded by the fact that those deceiving are themselves deceived - they think they are voices of truth. (See II Timothy 3:13)

We fail to see the nature of the final conflict between truth and error. We are sure that when Satan appears as Christ, we will not get hooked; we know that this will take place. But a key verse upon which we base this deceptive appearance says much more than this. It reveals that "his ministers" will "also be transformed as ministers of righteousness." (II Cor. 11:13-15) A cloak of righteousness as a facade will cover the intent and actions of professed voices of truth. This deception is intensified at a time when "righteousness by faith" is being stressed.

Terrible is this present hour; for every voice sounding in Adventism today among the "independent ministries" must ask himself the question - "Am I truly God's voice, or am I self-deceived and only a minister of the devil under a cloak of professing to teach fundamental Adventism and righteousness by faith?" Paul told Timothy that "the church of the living God" was to be "the pillar and the stay of truth." (I Tim. 3:15 margin) But when one discovers that this is no longer the state of the Church, what is he to do? This discovery is what has produced the "independent ministries" whether they will face up to it or not. But Paul had something else to say in this same context. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." (I Tim 4:1) If I give heed to a "seducing spirit," I become self deceived, and thus will deceive others.

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In January of this year, the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference released "A Survey of Some Independent Ministries." This four-page document gives a short, but comprehensive summary of eight of these ministries. Included in the list are Charles Wheeling (Countdown Ministries); Dr. Robert Hauser; John Osborn (Prophecy Countdown); Vance Ferrell (Pilgrim's Rest); Ron Spear (Hope International); Dr. Colin Standidish (Hartland Institute); Elder Joe Crews (Amazing Facts); and Elder William Grotheer (Adventist Laymen's Foundation).

Noticeably absent from this list is the 1888 Message Committee. Its newsletter - "The 1888 Message" - edited by Mrs Helen Cate is the official organ of Elder R. J. Wieland. There is no question, had such a committee existed in 1950 when Wieland and Short first submitted their original 1888 Re-Examined, this committee would have been the No. 1 "Independent Ministry" in the General Conference books. This should tell the careful observer something. Has this committee controlled by Helen Cate so completely maneuvered Wieland that he is now no longer considered by the church as an independent ministry, but rather one of them with a slightly different emphasis? Over the years, Wieland has craved acceptance to such an extent that he has now compromised his original thesis. So this new status of not being on the list of "independent ministries" may appeal to him.

We found the summaries to be honest, fair, and over-all conciliatory. Naturally written from the viewpoint of the hierarchy, they stated the position of the Church in regard to each in a very forthright manner. It must also be kept in mind that this survey was released in January, and thus in the case of John Osborn is not up-to-date. But BRI cannot be blamed for this, due to the vacillation of John Osborn. Really does anyone know where he stands from month to month!

Before further comments on the other independent ministries, we will quote in full what was written about this editor. It was factual, and we will add only explanatory comments to it. This summary read:

8. William Grotheer. This brother was for many years

a pastor-evangelist in several conferences. He was teaching Bible at Madison College when it closed. He was eventually disfellowshipped, and presently operates a ministry under the name, Adventist Laymen's Foundation in Lamar, Arkansas. Brother Grotheer publishes a paper entitled, "Watchman, What of the Night?"

He is very critical of church leadership ("the hierarchy") and his paper usually reveals a critique of some aspect of the church. He is, among other things, quite critical of the 27 Fundamentals as they were formulated at Dallas, Texas, General Conference Session in 1980. On the other hand he is also critical of the stance that such persons as Robert Hauser has taken on interpreting the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

Certain facts following the closing of Madison College where I served as head of the Bible Department need amplification. When Madison was closed, I was placed under the sponsorship of Southern Missionary College and sent back to Andrews University to complete my graduate work. Hearing what I heard in the classes at Andrews, and knowing what I knew had taken place in the previous decade as a result of the SDA-Evangelical Conferences, I asked for and obtained a leave of absence from the ministry of the Church, June 1, 1965, so that I would be free to write and speak without any entanglements. Holding at that time credentials from the Southern Union Conference, I requested and secured a letter stating that in taking this leave of absence, I was doing so as a minister "in good and regular standing." (This letter was signed by the then president of the Union Conference.) Since no longer in the employ of the Conference, my credentials were allowed to "lapse" at the next union session.

In December, 1967, we published the first issue of "Watchman, What of the Night?" (WWN, Jan, 1968) It was a small beginning. No funds were solicited at that time, nor at any time since. However, funds were sent to us and receipts were requested. To enable us to give bona fide receipts, four laymen and I formed the Adventist Laymen's Foundation. It was immediately branded as a subversive organization, and from the viewpoint of the hierarchy would appear to be true. The objective of the Foundation was to research, document and publish what the hierarchy was doing behind the backs of the laity. Further we were concerned about the doctrinal apostasy in the book - Questions on Doctrine, and would soon become aware of the Church's dialogue with representatives of the World Council of Churches. The laity and the rank and file of the ministry needed to know. The hierarchy didn't think so, and they moved in on me assuming if I were disfellowshipped, the laymembers of the Board of Directors would cave in. They didn't.

Resulting from the action, an appeal to Neal C. Wilson, then vice president for the North American Division, created a "blue ribbon" committee known as "The Grotheer Hearing Committee." They were very generous from their viewpoint. If I would dissolve the Foundation; give them all the money; the names of all contributors; to whom any of the funds had been sent (we had sent money to the mission field); defrock myself (they couldn't, for they had no grounds) and sit on a back pew for awhile, I could have my name restored to any church list I might

choose without being rebaptized, or making a profession of faith. I could not and would not deny my call by the Lord to His ministry, so I told them they could keep their offer.

There have been no regrets nor bitterness, and now for some twenty plus years, we are still moving forward without soliciting one penny, and yet lacking nothing. God is good, and His truth is marching on!

Now to the other "independents" surveyed.

Both Charles Wheeling and Dr. Robert Hauser are scored for their prophetic interpretations, and rightly so. What is said of Hauser can equally apply to Wheeling. The attempt of "a marriage of futuristic and historic thought, ...employing unsound principles of interpretation" as done by these men, weakens the prophetic foundation which forms the basis of the Advent Movement.

Vance Ferrell's connection with Brinsmeadism is noted: "In the '60s he wrote often for the 'Sanctuary Awakening Fellowship Newsletter' which featured the doctrinal teachings of Robert Brinsmead. He labels his theology as 'traditional Adventist theology' - beliefs that appear to be substantially in agreement with the old SAF positions." This is Ferrell's deceptive base, and not recognized by many because of the facade he constructs in reporting on various actions of the Church leadership, such as the Hungarian schism. But as this survey states - "Ferrell's material appears to be widely read, but it is not always trustworthy." This we have found to be very true.

Ron Spear has the longest write-up in the survey. His deceptive practices are only suggested by the BRI. More could have been noted. His solicitation of funds is mentioned, and here the survey has been overly kind, for Spear boasts of his going after "the deep pockets" in obtaining money. It is obvious to any observer that Spear is attempting to set up a church within a church, mimicking the old Review, having a Signs of the Times-like publication, and then planning "a medical missionary-colporteur training center and health retreat." He professes "loyalty to the SDA church" and teaches that the "church" is going through, but does he mean "his" SDA church? Again one must go behind the facade which Spear has erected, and see the doctrinal deviations from truth which have marked Spear's trail.

Both Crews and Standish are connected with the conference; Crews working "under the umbrella of the Chesapeake Conference, while Standish "holds ministerial credentials from the Potomac Conference." Hartland is a member of the ASI, and Crews has a relationship with the hierarchy similar to the Quiet Hour. These men are scored because at times they may expose the apostasy in the church, which in the judgment of the BRI writer "only builds distrust."

The final paragraph of the survey is very revealing. It reads in part:

It is probably safe to say that there is a common thread that link persons who are conducting independent ministries. You could place them right of center. They have certain concerns that relate to the nature of

DECEPTIVE WORDS

Christianity Today (Jan. 15, 1988) featured an article by Dr. David Wells of the faculty of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary captioned - "How to Avoid Offensive Language While Saying Absolutely Nothing." This article describes how current language is used in such a way as not to offend others, and in so doing, fails to call sin by its right name. The article begins -

I was startled the other day to hear myself talking about "alcohol and drug abuse." The words tripped off my tongue so smoothly and easily that it almost seemed as if they had a life of their own. Did I really say "alcohol and drug abuse"?

This kind of language is used by TV announcers and social commentators, as well as the millions like myself who listen to them. But such phraseology is, nevertheless, an odd way to use words. Abuse implies that there is a proper use. And yet, whatever we may think about the use of alcohol, we have indubitably crossed the lines of legality and good sense to suggest that there is a proper use of pot, crack, angel dust, and heroin. Why, then, do we speak of "drug abuse"? (p. 24)

The same use of language is applied to sex. Dr Wells comments further on this misuse of language:

Have you noticed, for example, how we talk about a person's "lifestyle"? We may know someone who enjoys the company of loose women. "Well," we say, "that is not my lifestyle." We mean that we do not approve of the promiscuity. In a pluralistic society, however, one has to be careful about offending people who have different values from our own, or who have no values at all.

Fortunately, we have at hand a linguistic convention that short-circuits any possible embarrassment. It is the word lifestyle. A style is simply a fashion. But styles are hardly ever intrinsically right or wrong. They have more or less appeal, but seldom can they be commended or dismissed on moral grounds. So, a "lifestyle" becomes something we may or may not like, but it is not something that is either good or bad. The awkward moment has passed. We can now distant ourselves from those in the fast lane without having to say that what they are doing is wrong.

Now we are ready for something bolder: that newly created hybrid, the "alternate lifestyle." What we have in mind, of course, is the person who is homosexual. Not only does the word lifestyle conceal the wrong doing, but the suggestion is made, ever so subtly, that being gay is a legitimate option, an alternative. This is their "sexual preference." Sexual preference? What on earth are we talking about? God offers no such alternative, and He allows no such preference. (Ibid.)

The following letter was printed in the March 18, 1988 issue of Christianity Today as a response to Wells' essay:

As I'm sure many readers noticed, Wells's article was really about sex. Nine-tenths of it dealt with various sexual illustrations. And what forcefully comes through his pen is not so much that we have used "linguistic sleights of hand" in our sexual terminology, but rather that sexual promiscuity has become all-pervasive, and we evangelicals are in danger of getting caught up in all the fun! How can Wells be so sure?

Certainly being gay is not an "option," but neither is being straight! I've never met a homosexual who made a well-thought-out decision to have sexual urges for someone of the same sex. And I have yet to meet a heterosexual who made a similar decision for someone of the opposite sex. Is being gay a sin? The Scriptures have little light to shed in response to that question.

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(This article in Christianity Today and response was called to our attention by the Executive Secretary of the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Canada.)

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Editorial - from p. 1, col. 1

What is the answer for anyone in an "independent ministry"? Because the time is upon us when many "having itching ears" are not really desirous of "sound doctrine" but want to listen to "teachers" of all sorts, Paul's counsel to Timothy is apropos - "Preach the Word." (See II. Tim. 4:2-3) This doesn't mean speculative prophetic interpretation, nor reading back into the Scriptures perceptions from compilations.

Then we come to a very crucial question. In the light of the many voices sounding today on the periphery of Adventism - and they cannot all be right - what is the concerned layperson to do, who has discovered that the 27 Fundamentals are not really fundamental truth but a mixture of truth and error? A word of counsel given in 1884 contains the answer. It tells us:

So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true, that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the word of God. (Great Controversy, 1884 ed., p. 411)

The chapter in which the above quotation is found is on the Bible as a safeguard. This counsel alone will rule out most of the "independent ministries" in one stroke. Ask yourself - Is what you are reading and hearing preparing you for the crisis through diligent instruction from the Bible? Or are the Writings being used to make you believe that the compiler is indeed a fundamental Seventh-day Adventist, instead of doing what the Writings state ought to be done at this hour - finding support for the truth from the Bible? The basic and unique truth which made Adventism what it still should be, was and is the sanctuary teaching. What "independent ministries" are seeking to give you a defense of this truth from the Bible and the Bible alone as we are counseled to do? In the same chapter as quoted above is this promise:

God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. (Ibid., p. 413)

Herein is to be found the answer to deception, and the means to discern deception in these last days.

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WHAT IS "THE LATTER RAIN"?

Seminars Unlimited, "an entity of the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists," is a promotional vehicle for the sale of Revelation Seminar materials. It publishes a paper by the same name for the purpose of "sharing successful soul-winning ideas and materials." In this 12-page publication, one finds testimonials of the effectiveness of the "Revelation Seminar" approach, advertisements for the materials, order blanks, explanations of the how and why of "Revelation Seminars," and articles designed to promote the desire to witness using these seminars.

In the Summer 1988 issue of "Seminars Unlimited," was an article captioned - "The Latter Rain." Elder Bob Boney who authored it received his stimulus from a conversation with a General Conference executive who told him - "I believe the latter rain is falling." Boney's emphasis is on power! Here are some of his perceptions: (All emphasis supplied)

Who will be the recipients of its awesome power? For what reason is it necessary for this power to be demonstrated in the remnant church?

Only the Lord Himself knows if we are presently experiencing the latter rain power from on high. Although, the implicitness of scriptural testimony verifies a time of great power for the church just prior to the Lord's return.

... I am convinced that another outpouring of God's mighty power will be given for a final culminating proclamation of the gospel to all the world.

Is it possible for us to receive the latter rain of power from the Lord? I believe so. (p. 3, emphasis is supplied)

After quoting Revelation 18:1, Boney writes:

Yes, I, like our General Conference friend, have recently seen and heard of hundreds of stories where miracles are happening and God's people are awaking out of sleep, and asking for and receiving the latter rain.

Friend, let us repent daily and be converted; be changed into His likeness and constantly in His presence so that we can be ready to receive power from on high to help finish the task God has given us. Ibid.

Without question, the Holy Spirit is to be poured out in these last days, but is that pouring out, one of power alone? Is this the emphasis God desires us to understand?

First, we need to clarify that in Revelation 18:1, where the word, "power" is used, it is the Greek word, exousia, which means, "authority." It is so translated in all modern translations including the NKJV.

What is the "Latter Rain"? Is it just a great empowering, or is there more involved? What is the work of the Holy Spirit? What connection does the Bible reveal between the Holy Spirit and the Latter Rain? Let us note the words of Jesus at the Last Supper:

I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, ... even the Spirit of truth. ... But the

Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, ... (John 14:16-17, 26)

Jesus called the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit of truth." He was to come to carry on the work of "The Truth." (John 14:6) Jesus had told the disciples previously that the Holy Spirit would teach them. He said - "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." (Luke 12:12)

After leaving the Upper Room, Jesus gave His disciples further insight into the work of the Holy Spirit. He told them:

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. (John 16:13-14)

Here, once again, Jesus refers to the Spirit as "the Spirit of truth." He indicates that the Spirit will "guide into all truth." The Spirit would "show" that which was from Christ. He had stated just before - "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." (John 15:26) The mission of the Spirit was and is to reveal Christ, not Himself.

What was the great mission of Christ? He said: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost?" (Luke 19:10) If the Holy Spirit is the personal representative of Christ, will not His mission be the same? In Christ, we find the embodiment of truth. Jesus called the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of truth." The Spirit is a teacher and a guide; therefore, the emphasis of the mission of the Spirit will be to reveal truth for the saving of souls.

The Biblical basis for the early and latter rain is to be found in the book of Joel. There we read:

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former [early] rain, and the latter rain in the first month... And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (Joel 2:23, 28-32)

What is the purpose of the early and latter rain? "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved." (verse 32, margin) The bottom line is salvation! Peter used this text from Joel on the day of Pentecost. (See Acts 2:17-21) What was the bottom line? "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (verse 21) Again the message was a message of salvation.

The text in Joel makes reference to dreams, visions, wonders and signs; yet other than

the gift of languages which was given so all could hear in their own tongue the call to salvation, how many "miracles" as we use the word today, were performed on the day of Pentecost? There were no dreams or visions mentioned. No dead were raised! No sick were healed of any physical ailment! This is not to say that these things did not happen later. However, when the early rain fell, a message of salvation was given first, and then power exhibited in signs and wonders followed.

Has a special message of salvation been entrusted to Seventh-day Adventists? Yes, most assuredly. Of that message, we read:

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 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 angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure. ...

Now it had been Satan's determined purpose to eclipse the view of Jesus and lead men to look to man, and to trust to man, and be educated to expect help from man. For years the church has been looking to man and expecting much from man, but not looking to Jesus, in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. Therefore God gave to His servants a testimony that presented truth as it is in Jesus, which is the third angel's message, in clear, distinct lines. (TM, pp. 91-92, 93, [1896]; emphasis supplied)

It is important to know how Ellen White looked upon this message in 1892. She wrote then:

The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth. (R&H, Nov. 22, 1892; emphasis supplied)

Prior to this S. N. Haskell recognized the import of this message. He wrote:

The light has come; the light which will enlighten the whole earth with its bright rays, has been shining from the throne of God... Will we walk in the light? ... How long will we disappoint Jesus by a cold, half-hearted life, destitute of love? ... I tell you, God is testing us now, just now... The light is shining now, and how hard it is for proud hearts to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour... Let self be crucified. ...

This is really the beginning of [the loud cry], and is not this now taking place? (R&H, July 26, 1892, quoted in A Warning and Its Reception, 2nd Printing, p. 80, White Section)

Haskell called it "light." O. A. Olsen, then General Conference President, also recognized that something special was taking place. He challenged:

We have long been talking about the loud cry of the

third angel's message... well, has the time come for that loud voice to be heard? Has the time come when that warning should be given with earnestness and power? -- It certainly has brethren... Then don't be looking forward to it any longer; don't be expecting it at some place way off; realize that it is here, and that it means something. (R&H, Nov. 8, 1892, quoted from A Warning and Its Reception, 2nd Printing, p. 80, White Section; emphasis supplied)

Ellen White, S. N. Haskell, and O. A. Olsen, all recognized the latter rain with loud cry power in the message of righteousness by faith. While both Jones and Waggoner may have prayed for people to be healed as all ministers are called upon to do, there are no records of mass faith healings. Neither did Jones or Waggoner's prayers ever raise a dead person. (I have never seen any documentation that they even prayed for such. Other than the vision which Waggoner saw at his own conversion, the "messengers" never claimed to be seers.

Is there any evidence to support the view that the latter rain is primarily light? Yes! The Scriptures give a clear presentation of the relationship between the light of truth and the latter rain.

The clearest text of Scripture is to be found at the beginning of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32). The song begins:

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." (32:1-2)

Here Moses in song declares that his "doctrine" of God (verses 3-4) "shall drop as the rain." His proclamation of the "name of the Lord" as "a God of truth" would be "as showers upon the grass." The "God of truth" as "Wisdom," tells us - "I will pour out my spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you." (Prov. 1:23) Here the pouring out of the Spirit is making known His word - His doctrine, His teaching - to men. Jesus said - "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63 NKJV)

We need to get our thinking straight concerning the latter rain. We have been thinking in terms of receiving "awesome power" to preach a message we already have. But God's plan is to give a message by His Spirit, and then give power by His Spirit for its proclamation. This brings us face to face with certain facts, and as President Reagan has been recently quoted, "facts are stubborn things." If we are preaching nothing more than an Evangelical gospel, will the Holy Spirit empower that? Will the Holy Spirit give "mighty power" to proclaim a completed atonement at the Cross? Is the "New Theology" from the Spirit of truth? Is that what we are to give as the loud cry? The answer should be clear - "No, No, No!!! Yes, "facts are stubborn things."

It is interesting to note that A. T. Jones accepted the testimony of Ellen G. White for just what it said concerning the loud cry. He realized that he was preaching latter rain light. Note what he said in 1893:

You remember the other evening when I was reading that

second chapter of Joel, that one of the brethren, when I had read that 23rd verse,--Brother Corliss--called attention to the margin. Do you remember that? And I said we would have use for the margin at another time. Now all of you turn and read again that margin. The 23rd verse says: "Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain, moderately." What is the margin? "A teacher of righteousness." He hath given you "a teacher of righteousness." How? "According to righteousness." "And he will cause to come for you the rain;" then what will that be? When he gave the former rain, what was it? "A teacher of righteousness." And when he gives the latter rain what it will be? "A teacher of righteousness." How? "According to righteousness." Then is not that just what the testimony has told us in that article that has been read to you several times? "The loud cry of the third angel," the latter rain has already begun, "in the message of the righteousness of Christ." Is not that what Joel told us long ago? Has not our eye been held that we did not see? Did we need the anointing? Brethren, what in the world do we need so much as that? How glad we ought to be that God sends his own Spirit in the prophets to show us, when we did not see! How infinitely glad we ought to be for that!

Well then the latter rain--the loud cry--according to the testimony, and according to the Scripture, is "the teaching of righteousness," and "according to righteousness," too. Now brethren, when did the message of the righteousness of Christ, begin with us as a people? [One or two in the audience: "Three or four years ago."] Which was it, three? or four? [Congregation: "Four".] Yes, four. Where was it? [Congregation: "Minneapolis."] What then did the brethren reject at Minneapolis? [Some in the Congregation: "The loud cry."] What is that message of righteousness? The testimony has told us what it is; the loud cry--the latter rain. Then what did the brethren in that fearful position in which they stood reject at Minneapolis? They rejected the latter rain--the loud cry of the third angel's message.

Brethren, isn't it too bad? Of course the brethren did not know they were doing this, but the Spirit of the Lord was there to tell them they were doing it, was it not? But when they were rejecting the loud cry, "the teaching of righteousness," and then the Spirit of the Lord, by his prophet, stood there and told us what they were doing,--what then? Oh, then they simply set this prophet aside with all the rest. That was the next thing. Brethren, it is time to think of these things. It is time to think soberly, to think carefully. (GCB, 1893, p.183)

The declaration from the Review & Herald (Nov. 22, 1892) was not all that Ellen G. White had to say on the point. She also wrote:

To-day God has given to men the truth with power. He has opened His Word to those who are searching and praying for light. But when these messengers gave the truth they received to the people, many were as unbelieving as were some of the Israelites. To-day many are caviling over the truth brought to them by humble messengers. How can this message be truth? they question. How is it possible by looking to Jesus, and believing in His imputed righteousness, I can gain eternal life? Those who have refused to see the truth do not realize that it is God with whom they are in controversy, that in refusing the message sent, they are refusing Christ. God designs that the message of redemption shall come to His people as the latter rain. (ST, March 6, 1907; emphasis mine)

When we understand that the latter rain is primarily light, then it helps us to understand some of the following statements:

The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man. (TM, p. 506)

The work that God has begun in the human heart in giving His light and knowledge must be continually going forward. Every individual must realize his own necessity. (Ibid., p. 507; emphasis supplied)

It is God who began the work, and He will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. (Ibid. Emphasis supplied)

It [the latter rain] may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it. (Ibid.)

Often in past years I have wondered, how could this great power be falling on those around me and I not even discern it? How do we receive the early rain if it is necessary for the latter rain? The understanding that the latter rain is primarily light clears up these questions. Light of truth can be perceived by those around us, and yet we not perceive it, or know that they have. Only the Lord reads the receptive mind. But to have the latter rain - truth for the last days - we must have the early rain, truth that forms the basis of the firm platform. New light is not to nullify previous light, but rather it is to develop "that truth [to] a higher scale than it has hitherto been done." (M.V.H, March 30, 1987) It is in this sense that we must have the early rain before we can benefit from the latter rain. If we deny the final atonement, and truth of the condescension of Christ to the slave form of man, can we receive the latter rain? NO!

The loud cry that constitutes the latter rain has a special message in it. It is not signs and wonders. In the last days, God designs that His people base their experience in the Word, not signs and wonders that can be seen. Miracles are not enough for we are warned of the devil and those under his control performing such in the last days. The Bible teaches:

And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do. (Rev. 13:13, 14a)

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils working miracles... (Rev. 16:13, 14a)

Miracles and great power are not to be the test in the last days. The gifts of the Spirit will continue until the end of time, but the emphasis is a message of redemption. Today we are seeing a great false revival starting to swell in the Adventist church. Many will be fooled because they are "looking" instead of "hearing." We are to "walk by faith and not by sight." (I Cor. 5:7) And "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the word of God." (Rom. 10:17)

We are instructed to "sow in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up the fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." (Hosea 10:12) James counsels that "if any...lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5) And Zechariah tells us to "ask ye of the Lord rain in

the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field." (Zech. 10:1) May we be willing to receive the light that God has yet to give us on the great controversy and the final atonement that we may be prepared for "the battle of the great day of God Almighty." The following testimony, published just three weeks after the testimony of November 22, 1892, should warn us about receiving any error. It reads:

At the time of the loud cry of the third angel those who have been in any measure blinded by the enemy, who have not fully recovered themselves from the snare of Satan, will be in peril, because it will be difficult for them to discern the light from heaven, and they will be inclined to accept falsehood. Their erroneous experience will color their thought, their decisions, their propositions, their counsels. The evidences that God has given will be no evidence to those who have blinded their eyes by choosing darkness rather than light. After rejecting light, they will originate theories which they call "light," but which the Lord calls, "Sparks of their own kindling," by which they will direct their steps. (R&H, Dec. 13, 1892)

One last concept must be addressed. When Peter quoted from Joel on the Day of Pentecost, he omitted the last part of verse 32: "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." When Peter failed to quote this sentence, was he rightly dividing the word of truth? Peter was filled with the same Spirit that inspired Joel to write. Why did Peter not quote the last part of verse 32? Because salvation which had been of the Jews and in Jerusalem was no more! Salvation was not to be found in the Jewish Church and the earthly Mount Zion. Paul writing to Christian Hebrews could say: "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, ..." (Heb. 12:22-23) And so it is forever. Matt. 25:10; Luke 21:24.

A.S.

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~~BRI Survey - from page 2~~

Christ, to the nature of sin, and to sanctification. For the most part they are conscientious persons who mourn for the sins which they perceive in Zion. ... Since we believe a common core of truth in the 27 Fundamentals, it would be a great boon to this church - as well as to them - if we would pull together.

Here is the crux of the whole issue. Only one of the eight independent ministries surveyed by the BRI takes a positive stand in regard to the 27 Fundamentals, and that is the Adventist Laymen's Foundation. We took it immediately following the Dallas session. All the rest tell you about apostasy, schisms and financial problems in the Church, but they use this as a facade to appear concerned. Yet they refuse to take a stand on the 27 Statements of Belief as voted at Dallas. Anyone carefully studying the Sabbath School lessons this quarter must know by now that the 27 Fundamentals are a deadly mixture of truth and error, a veritable "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." Yet seven of

these eight ministries, along with the 1888 Message Committee, are giving lip-service to the fruit of this tree. Each one has to make his own decision in regard to these independent ministries. All we can do is what we have been doing these past twenty years, document, and warn of the deception being practiced. But on the decision you make will hang your eternal destiny. It is just that serious.

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NOTICES

COMMENTARY Publication: This will be the last issue of Commentary as a quarterly publication. However, it will not be the last issue of Commentary. In the future it will serve as a supplement to "Watchman, What of the Night?" with an irregular publishing schedule. It will contain articles and news items which now backlog due to limited space. There will be no separate mailing list. The WVN list will cover all mailings.

WE NEED YOUR HELP! The Adventist Laymen's Foundation is searching for the following 2 volume set by J. Garnier:

The True Christ, Vol. I, 329 pp.

The False Christ, Vol. II, 348 pp.

(London: George Allen, 156 Charing Cross Rd., 1900)

We are asking our friends to search the following places for these 2 volumes: - Used bookstores, second hand stores, such as Goodwill, Salvation Army, and "thrift" shops.

Thank you, and thank you, P.H. for this suggestion.)

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"To all the testing time will come. ... Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses. Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible, and the Bible only?"

The Great Controversy, 1884 ed., pp. 443-444

"None but those who have trained the intellect to grasp the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict."

Ibid., p. 412

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