

NEW BOOKS, OLD ERROR

Larry Kirkpatrick, March 23, 2019

God's Character and the Last Generation Symposium, March 22-23, 2019

Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church

Introduction

Institutional Seventh-day Adventist presses haven't addressed Last Generation Theology (LGT) for 20 years. Suddenly, in 2018, several new books:

God's Character and the Last Generation, eds. Jiri Moskala, Jon Peckham,
End-time Events and the Last Generation: The Explosive 50s, by George Knight
Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology, eds. Martin Hanna, Darius Jankiewicz, John Reeve
In All Humility: Saying No to Last Generation Theology, by Reinder Bruinsma

Trees were manufactured into paper that these books might exist. Our time permits only a few responses to the first volume. Along with Knight's book, these volumes were distributed to hundreds of pastors across the North American Division. The issues set forth in *God's Character and the Last Generation* fall into two categories: disagreements and misrepresentations. But before we consider the book we should double-check something. Are we wearing a pair of glasses we don't even know we have on?

The Knight-Whidden Narrative

Our pastors and church school teachers go through our denominational schools; they are assigned required reading about Adventist history. For decades the church's understanding of Adventist history has been especially shaped by the writings of George Knight and Woodrow Whidden, and others who share their viewpoints.

The years from the 1957 publication of *Questions on Doctrine* to the 1980 dismissal of Desmond Ford set up a changed theological landscape. Characteristic Adventist views about Jesus, obedience, overcoming, the close of probation and the sealing, didn't fit well in the new atmosphere. It was within this milieu that the Knight-Whidden Narrative, or the KWN, arose.

The Knight-Whidden Narrative provided an updated salvation understanding more evangelically defined. Teachings by key figures including AT Jones, EJ Waggoner, ML Andreasen, and even Ellen White, became the subject of updated explanations. Long years of book releases, articles, classroom representations, and speaking events made the KWN the institutional self-understanding of the Church.

George Knight's *End-time Events and the Last Generation: The Explosive 50s* introduces two lists. Here is a list he calls the Andreasen supporters (79):

Herbert Douglass
Colin Standish
Russel Standish
Dennis Priebe
Larry Kirkpatrick

And, here is Knight's list of "reactors," that is, persons who have popularized a different view (82-86):

Edward Heppenstall
Desmond Ford
Morris Vendon
Hans K LaRondelle
George Knight
Woodrow Whidden II

Yes, Knight sees the inclusion of Desmond Ford in the list as a positive. Here is what Knight says:

One area where Ford and Heppenstall found common ground was soteriology. Here Ford has often been misunderstood. But he did the denomination a service by highlighting the fact that righteousness by faith in the New Testament is restricted to what Paul calls justification by faith and did not include sanctification (84).

Understand the significance: Knight places his and Ford's salvation theology in contrast with the Church's previously established theology. Knight-Whidden Narrative writers have, with some success recast Jones, Waggoner, and Andreasen as villains. A new understanding of Adventist history has been popularized these past 40 years. All of this new material is not wrong, but at important points of historical development, the Knight-Whidden reading has become the church's reading. And, so much so, that our main press in North America came to the place where in 2018 it published *God's Character and the Last Generation* and *End-time Events and the Last Generation: The Explosive 50s*, books hostile to a correct understanding of the Adventist message and history.

For those who might be interested, I have prepared a downloadable resource. Ron Duffield has written two special volumes addressing key events in Adventist history: *The Return of the Latter Rain*, vol. 1, and *Wounded in the House of His Friends*. The downloadable resource document is a simple list of footnote entries and page numbers specifying claims, factual inaccuracies, and misrepresentations by Knight, Whidden, and others discussed in Duffield's books. This could be a start toward correcting misunderstandings generated by historians sustaining the Knight-Whidden Narrative. Volumes by Ron Duffield and Dave Fiedler make a start at the long process of needed correction.

<http://greatcontroversy.org/resources/gclg/someinitialresources-correcting-kwn.pdf>

General Observations

Now, let's begin with three general observations about *God's Character and the Last Generation*:

First it is a book of opinions. It often attempts to connect ideas to each other with “seems tos,” “tends tos,” and “may have beens.” Examples:

- ... then **it seems** humans would not be able to *perfectly* overcome. . . 17
- ... This **tends to** place the emphasis on human works **and suggests** that. . . 18
- ... some advocates of LGT **tend to** reduce sin to merely actions. . . 20
- ... He **seems to be** the forerunner of those who. . . 24
- ... Irving does **appear to be** the major source of the theology of E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones regarding the postfall humanity of Christ . . . 24-25
- ... It **seems safe to conclude** that. . . 25
- ... We will probably never be able to answer this question. . . 25
- ... It **seems** that the most important idea that Irving **may have** contributed. . . 26
- ... **make it seem** that everything was riding on. . . 28
- ... There is little doubt. . . there is no clear evidence. . . whether or not. . . it is clear. . . 31
- ... It **could have been** that Andreasen was reading articles and books written and published by Waggoner. . . 34
- ... It **could** also very well be. . . 34
- ... Thus, it **seems** more than proper to conclude. . . 34
- ... while we cannot adduce any totally direct literary dependency of Andreasen on Waggoner, their conceptual similarities are so striking as **to suggest** that there was **some sort** of influential linkage. . . 35
- ... they do **tend to** imply. . . 37
- ... such an argument **insinuates** that human obedience adds something to Christ’s all-sufficient obedience . . . 114
- ... This attitude easily **leads to** legalism and perfectionism. . . 117
- ... their subtle twisting of the intention of texts are unsupportable. . . 195
- ... the activities of the last generation, as presented by the defenders of LGT, **seem to be** self-centered. . . 203
- ... It is a self-centered, human-centered attempt to achieve great things and do it all themselves. 206
- ... LGT **tends to** reduce sin to mere actions. . . 272
- ... This allows LGT to at least **give the impression** that humans may *perfectly* overcome. . . 272
- ... This seems to overlook the fact that the human will is itself infected. . . 272
- ... has **tended to** confuse and even conflate. . . 272
- ... it **tends to** lead people to emphasize human works. . . 273

Second, the book is filled with mischaracterizations, synthetic blob-statements, and strawmen. For example, *God’s Character and the Last Generation* presents the following blob statement purporting to give a minimalist definition of LGT:

[S]ome Adventists affirm what has come to be known as last generation theology (LGT). . . [W]e might minimally define it as the view that there must be a last generation of humans who become absolutely sinless and ‘perfect’ in order to provide the grounds to vindicate God’s character and win the great controversy. In this regard, generally speaking, LGT affirms that an additional phase of atonement is necessary, beyond the ministry of Christ, in order to finally defeat Satan. Specifically, there must be a final, entirely sinless generation of humans that, by completely overcoming sin, provides the grounds for the vindication of God’s character, playing a crucial role in deciding the victor in the great controversy. In this view then, Satan was not defeated at the

cross; some group of humans must become perfectly sinless in order for Satan to be defeated (*God's Character and the Last Generation* 17).

Almost every part of the statement is a misrepresentation! No one on the planet holds such a belief. Is it a false representation designed to be propagated as our view, and then easily deconstructed?

Another example of unfair representations in *God's Character and the Last Generation* is this:

The sacrifice of Jesus is said to be of 'sufficient value to save me,' but it is not said to be of complete sufficiency and merit. In subtle ways, LGT affirms the insufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and the added value of one's obedience to the experience of salvation. Such obedience is unmistakably meritorious (104-105).

The *God's Character and the Last Generation* author is commenting on my book *Cleanse and Close*. But what I actually wrote, was

We cannot possibly keep the commandments of God without the regenerating grace of Christ. Do we realize how ready He is to empower? To re-create? He is seeking us, desiring to make us conduits for faith! He does not save us by law; neither will He save us in disobedience to law. Neither faith nor obedience saves, but neither does salvation come without the obedience of faith. Without the faith that obeys, authentic Christianity is impossible. . . . All the merit toward my salvation comes through Jesus. His merit is valuable enough to save. But that is only the objective portion of a two-part plan. My obedience is also necessary. In itself it is insufficient to save me. It is a non-meritorious condition, a necessary but insufficient condition (Larry Kirkpatrick, *Cleanse and Close*, 65-66).

Thirdly, most of *God's Character and the Last Generation* doesn't even refer to statements by the named contemporary LGT authors it attacks. There are 936 footnotes. Nine of the 14 chapters do not refer in any place to these LGT source documents. In the chapter notes, half cite George Knight or Woodrow Whidden *more often* than the LGT source documents!

Charges Posed Against Last Generation Theology

Now let's consider specifics. You've been given a handout summarizing six charges *God's Character and the Last Generation* makes against LGT. There are four columns: the first categorizes the charge; the second in bold gives the *God's Character and the Last Generation* basic complaint; the third presents short quotations and references from *the book*, as well as similar claims published by George Knight; the fourth offers a more accurate Last Generation viewpoint.

<http://greatcontroversy.org/resources/gclg/landscape-lgtcharges.pdf>

Let's look at each of these six charges.

Dependent on Humans?

Let's begin with the charge that LGT makes God dependent on humans. Years ago, in *A Search for Identity*, George Knight wrote,

Andreasen's final generation theology. . . makes God dependent upon human beings, namely, the Adventist Church, for His justification and final triumph (152).

God's Character and the Last Generation, as it does with most of Knight's other charges, repeats this claim:

LGT makes God's victory in the great controversy dependent upon the fidelity of mere creatures, thus requiring the view that divine revelation and action are insufficient to win the great controversy but must be supplemented by human action (17).

This book wants readers to think that biblical teachings like a fallen nature Christ, victory over sin, and a justification that includes regeneration are human-centered. In the end, *God's Character and the Last Generation* recycles Knight's disagreement.

What about the question though? Can an infinite being even be dependent upon human beings?

God's is faithful to humans because of His self-obligation. He cannot lie; He is true to His own commitments. Don't forget:

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13).

God has authority to limit His own course of action; it is an expression of His divine sovereignty. He is omnipotent, but there are things He could do which He wills not to do. He has freedom to obligate Himself to man, and across the history of His people He very frequently does!

He is holy, selfless, and therefore unalterably opposed to sin and self-serving. He sets the conditions within which He operates. When, after Jesus' death on Calvary, Satan brought forth new charges (DA 762-763), God chose voluntarily to address them. He could have left Satan's claims unanswered, but He chose to engage in a demonstration of the validity and fairness of His law, and of the availability and efficacy of His power to enable believers to overcome.

Long ago God exercised His divine sovereignty when He asked Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (Job 1:8). He exercises His divine sovereignty again at the end of time, when He declares, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

Job was a demonstration of God's grace at work in one man. It was God's sovereign idea.

Jesus was a demonstration of God's grace in a man who was God. It was God's sovereign idea.

The final generation will be a demonstration of God's grace at work in an entire church family of believers. It is God's sovereign idea.

God chooses to impose upon Himself a condition to be met before Jesus' return. He has chosen to demonstrate that His law can be kept by a group who live fully for Jesus. The result:

As the redeemed have beheld the power and malignity of Satan, they have seen, as never before, that no power but that of Christ could have made them conquerors. In all that shining throng there are none to ascribe salvation to themselves, as if they had prevailed by their own power and goodness. Nothing is said of what they have done or suffered; but the burden of every song, the keynote of every anthem, is: Salvation to our God and unto the Lamb (GC 665).

God provides the atonement. Non-divine humans do not provide the atonement. The movement for human salvation doesn't come from man but from God.

All that we have was entrusted to us in order to fulfill His mediatorial plan. . . . We were brought into existence because we were needed. How sad the thought that if we stand on the wrong side, in the ranks of the enemy, we are lost to the design of our creation (*Signs of the Times*, April 22, 1903).

How were we needed? To reflect the image of God, to be finite reproductions of His infinite character. Satan wanted to destroy every possible mirror that could give glory to God and reflect the beauty of holiness back into the universe. We are needed by God because He imposes upon Himself the task of securing a universe in which beings are given free choice. It is not our business to tell God how to win the war, just as it was not Job's business to tell God how to win the war.

Can Man Experience Victory Over Sin? (Can the Fallen Human Condition be Transcended?)

The issue under this heading is simple: original sin. *God's Character and the Last Generation* puts it this way: "Adam's first sin was voluntary; but after this, he and his descendants possess a corrupt nature and, therefore, we sin both voluntarily and involuntarily . . . Sin is 'a lack of conformity to the will of God, either in act or state' 'into which we are born (original corruption)'" (*God's Character and the Last Generation* 48).

But the Bible is clear; we fallen humans are called to transcend our situation in this present age in the power of Jesus. The sin issue is central (Matthew 1:21). Christianity—without victory over sin—is not a New Testament religion. And yet, the closing pages of *God's Character and the Last Generation* hopelessly intone "as has been seen in the previous chapters of this book, if sin is more than actions, including an infection of our very being and character, the free will of humans is severely constrained by this enslaving alien force of sin (cf. Romans 6:6, 12, 13, 16-18; 7:14, 17-20)" (*God's Character and the Last Generation* 272).

The *God's Character and the Last Generation* author chooses not to mention Bible content which contradicts his hopeless view, including Romans 6:15:

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!" (NKJV).

In the *God's Character and the Last Generation* chapter addressing the question of what sin is, important Scriptures are drawn from Romans chapter five, verses 16, 18 and 19. Paul links our sinning to Adam's sinning, but never says that guilt is involuntarily transmitted.

There is a connection between Adam's sin and ours. Paul tells us that Adam's sin introduced weakness (Romans 5:6; 8:3). But also that Christ's victory makes divine strength available so that the Christian is not obliged to follow previously established habit patterns of sinning (Romans 8:12-13):

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

There is a sense in which Adam's sin initiates a series of chain reactions. But the sins that follow Adam's sin, just as Adam's was, are individually chosen. If Adam hadn't sinned, we wouldn't have inherited weakness. Because of his sin, his descendants inherit a human nature modified for the worse.

Ellen White gets it:

The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Co-operation with that power is man's greatest need (*Education* 29).

There is in each of us a "bent to evil," which, apart from God's help, we cannot resist. Every human experiences a self-serving, self-destructive inclination. Inevitably, unless we are cooperating with God, we succumb to this force through our own intentional, willful, premeditated choices. Without divine intervention we would destroy ourselves.

Humans are "born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil." Each person becomes morally accountable and sins, and by a voluntary decision enters the path of rebellion. But we are gifted with that most godlike of attributes—free choice. The Holy Spirit stands ready to empower every believer and make Jesus' victory effective in the life. Jesus' victory over sin is available to you through the Holy Spirit. And so, Ellen White can write,

It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character on His Church (*God's Amazing Grace* 193).

How does Christ make righteous those who are in Him? Jesus lived victoriously in humanity like ours, but that doesn't automatically save us. We still determine whether we will give our allegiance to self or God. *Steps to Christ* states,

If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breath His Spirit, do His will (SC 58).

This is an actual change. Humans cannot be forced to sin, but must first consent. Christ indwelling us is actually righteous, and so His righteousness becomes our righteousness. When we choose self we choose to reproduce in ourselves the same kind of sin as the first Adam. All sin is actual. When we

choose Christ, we are without strength to do right, but we invite Him into our heart, and He indwells us. His presence brings an actual righteousness. We can never stand apart from His actual righteousness. All righteousness is actual.

We don't have any righteousness we can call our own. We always need Jesus and will never come to a time when we don't need Him.

God's Character and the Last Generation mentions Ellen White's statement from *Child Guidance* 475: "As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death." But any who pause long enough to read the entire passage will see she is commenting on the challenges of parenting, and assures readers that through wise Christian parenting "Satan's power is broken" and the child can become "a partaker of the divine nature." Read it for yourself in Manuscript Releases, vol. 9, 236.

The Bible promises victory over sin for the believer. Jude 23: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." In LGT, actual victory over sin is possible; in the revised gospel, it is not.

Justification more than Forensic?

Another dispute is over Justification. The *God's Character and the Last Generation* author's argument alleges justification to be strictly forensic, that is, counted-only. His views here hardly differ from the changed form of Lutheranism that followed Luther's death. *The God's Character and the Last Generation* author's justification theology is Lutheran all the way through, teaching that we are, as Luther claimed, *simil justus et peccator* (59, 75, 78, 84, 97), "at the same time just and sinner," discussing Christ's "alien righteousness" (59, 80), indicating that we sinned "in Adam" (67, 68, 80, 91), and referring to our standing *coram deo* (59) ("in God's eyes"). He even claims that the idea that in justification God works inside the believer is Roman Catholic (61, 62, 65). But a study of early Adventist teachings and the writings of Ellen White finds little correspondence with the *God's Character and the Last Generation* author's Lutheran theology. White's most positive statements about Luther refer to the events of the 1520s.

The author, after quoting Ellen White's "corrupt channels" statement (we'll look at that document in my second presentation), and claiming that our sanctification always falls short of the glory of God (84), quotes his favorite Ellen White statement summarizing "the essence of justification by faith" as follows:

If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

This statement from *Steps to Christ* page 62 is all good. Then he stops quoting. But hear Ellen White's very next words:

More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say,

‘The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.’ Galatians 2:20. So Jesus said to His disciples, ‘It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.’ Matthew 10:20. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience.

In Ellen White’s view, Christ changes the heart; there is more than being “accounted righteous.” The author failed to include this continuation in his main text.

The selective use of Ellen White happens again. He quotes White:

The danger has been presented to me again and again of entertaining, as a people, false ideas of justification by faith. I have been shown for years that Satan would work in a special manner to confuse the mind on this point (FW 18).

A key point in Ellen White’s *Faith and Works* chapter is the utter impossibility of our meriting salvation because of our works. And we agree. But she also makes clear that God’s plan for us is no mere forensic declaration:

The soul temple is to be sacred, holy, pure, and undefiled. There must be a copartnership in which all the power is of God and all the glory belongs to God. . . The law of the human and the divine action makes the receiver a laborer together with God. It brings man where he can, united with divinity, work the works of God. Humanity touches humanity. Divine power and the human agency combined will be a complete success, for Christ’s righteousness accomplishes everything (FW 27).

Christ’s righteousness accomplishes everything. Cooperating together with God doesn’t mean that our works merit us salvation. But White says, “In order that there be an outflowing, there must be an income of divinity to humanity. ‘I will dwell in them, and walk in them’ (2 Corinthians 6:16)” (FW 26). This is transformation language.

One of the most disappointing features of the *God’s Character and the Last Generation* chapter is the author’s charge that Adventists who disagree with him are embracing a Roman Catholic view (61-63).

It is a pity that the author quotes Alister McGrath’s summary of the Magisterial viewpoint on justification (60-61), but fails to mention the pointed observation in McGrath’s monumental work *Iustitia Dei*, that

The most accurate description of the doctrines of justification associated with the Reformed and Lutheran churches from 1530 onwards is that they represent a radically new interpretation of the Pauline concept of ‘imputed righteousness’ set within an Augustinian soteriological framework (Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 209).

McGrath candidly states,

I am aware that neither Martin Luther nor Huldrych Zwingli can be said to have understood justification in precisely this manner (*Iustitia Die* 213).

And, that “Luther does not make the distinction between justification and sanctification associated with later Protestantism. . .” (Ibid. 227). Because, as McGrath correctly points out, “The essential distinguishing feature of the Reformation doctrines of justification is that a deliberate and systematic distinction is made between justification and regeneration” (Ibid. 217).

That is, for the first millennium-and-a-half of Christianity, justification was understood as including regeneration. Not until after Luther’s most active years is justification commonly referred to in the forensic, legally-accounted sense, sanctification being something separate. Not until the period from Melancthon to Chemnitz does the teaching become common that regeneration is something separate, human, and forever incomplete. And so, on the question of justification, we simply have a disagreement over what it is and what is and is not included in salvation.

Must Attain Absolute Perfection?

Let’s move on to another charge. According to *God’s Character and the Last Generation*, myself and others believe that in order to be saved we must attain “absolute perfection,” and by our own bootstraps transport ourselves spiritually to the place where we “no longer need Christ.” Here’s how *God’s Character and the Last Generation* describes our view:

[L]ast generation theology advocates perfectionism, which maintains that humans can become absolutely sinless. This tends to place the emphasis on human works and suggests that one might reach a point prior to glorification when one is perfectly ‘sanctified’ and thus no longer in need of the imputed righteousness of Christ. . . . If they “must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor,’ does that mean that they must have fully overcome sin, in all respects, prior to glorification and in a way that they no longer need the work of Christ in their behalf? (18, 19, emphasis in original).

This allegation has the same flavor as Knight’s claim so many years before:

In actuality, according to his [Andreasen’s] theology, humans must get to the place where they don’t need Christ, where they can stand without a mediator on the basis of their *own* achievements (Knight, *A Search for Identity* 151, emphasis in original).

Knight repeats his charge verbatim in *End-time Events and the Last Generation: The Explosive 50s* (31). The new books lather, rinse, and repeat. But none of us have taught we must attain to absolute perfection. Ever. We agree that without Christ we are hopelessly lost. We can never reach down inside ourselves for righteousness. We can never in eternity come to a place where we no longer need Christ. More than we need air to breath we need Christ for spiritual life.

So what about the phrases these books of a new order put into our mouths, like “absolute perfection,” “absolute sinlessness,” “perfectly sinless,” “sinlessly perfect,” and “sinless perfection”?

I don’t use them.

Dennis Priebe doesn’t use them.

Herbert Douglass didn’t use them.

M.L. Andreasen didn’t use them.

A.T. Jones didn’t use them.

E.J. Waggoner didn't use them.
Ellen G. White didn't use them.
Nor did anyone in the Bible use them.

And yet, these phrases supposedly represent a Last Generation Theology viewpoint. Such phrases occur 69 times in *God's Character and the Last Generation*, 18 times in *End-time Events and the Last Generation: The Explosive 50s*. I can only even think of one individual on our side of the question who uses some of that phraseology. Is it fair to tar a whole group on the basis of one individual using ill-advised terminology?

Is Jesus Just Like Us?

Let's turn to the question of the nature of Christ.

According to the authors of the material found in these two books, those who believe in Last Generation Theology insist that, and I quote,

[W]e can be absolutely sinless *even as* Jesus was absolutely sinless. In order for Christ to be our example, it is argued, He must have been *just like us*; if He did not, He is not fully human like us (*God's Character and the Last Generation* 18, emphasis in original).

The only problem with this is, again, that it is not a fair or accurate representation of what LGT teaches. None of us teach without qualification that Jesus is just like us. There are many respects in which Jesus is *not* just like us.

For example, Jesus is NOT LIKE US in that

- He is God, eternal and preexisted His experience as a human being (John 1:1-3; 8:58)
- He never sinned (Hebrews 7:26)
- His character is sufficient in value to redeem all humanity by His life of meritorious obedience (Ro 5:10-11)
- He condemned sin in human flesh (Ro 8:3)
- He is equal with the Father (Phil 2:6)
- He is one person of a three-person, self-existent being (Deuteronomy 4:35; Isaiah 45:5-6)
- All things are placed in subjection to Him (Hebrews 2:8)
- He tastes death for every human (Hebrews 2:9)
- Jesus alone is great high priest (Hebrews 2:17)
- He has authority to lay down and to take up His own life (John 10:18)
- He alone has authority to forgive sin (Mt 9:6; Mk 2:7, 10; Lu 5:21, 24; 1 John 1:7, 9)

But Jesus is LIKE us in these respects:

- He took our infirmities (Mt 8:17)
- He bore our sicknesses (Mt 8:17)
- He Took upon Him the form of a servant (Phil 2:7)
- He was Made in the likeness of men (Phil 2:7)
- He was tempted in all points like as we are (Hebrews 4:15)
- He is able to die (Hebrews 2:14)
- He took on Him the seed of Abraham, an inferior-to-angelic nature (Hebrews 2:16)

- His experience in our humanity gives us an example of victory (Hebrews 2:18)
- His mind, thoughts and attitudes can be echoed in our humanity (Philippians 2:5)

So Ellen White writes,

Christ did not make-believe take human nature; He did verily take it. He did in reality possess human nature. 'As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.' Hebrews 2:14 (*Selected Messages*, book 1, 247).

And:

Christ's perfect humanity is the same that we may have through connection with Christ.... Christ took our nature, fallen but not corrupted, and would not be corrupted unless He received the words of Satan in the place of the words of God (*Christ Triumphant* 208).

Yes, we who believe in Adventism, or in other words, Last Generation Theology, do point to our understanding, based on the Bible and supported by Ellen White, that Jesus' human nature is like our own. Jesus was made like His brethren.

The Saviour took upon Himself the infirmities of humanity, and lived a sinless life, that men might have no fear that because of the weakness of human nature they could not overcome. Christ came to make us 'partakers of the divine nature,' and His life declares that humanity, combined with divinity, does not commit sin (*Temperance* 107).

Our future, eternal happiness depends upon having our humanity, with all its capabilities and powers, brought into obedience to God, placed under the control of Divinity. Many have no real faith in Christ. They say, 'It was easy for Christ to obey the will of the Father; for He was divine.' But God's Word declares, 'He was tempted in all points like as we are.' Christ was tempted according to His elevation of mind; but He would not weaken or cripple His divine power by yielding to temptation. In His life on earth He was a representative of what men may become through the privileges and opportunities granted them in Him (*Signs of the Times*, October 14, 1897).

I ask you, Is this heresy?

Have We Delayed the Second Coming?

The weakest material in *God's Character and the Last Generation* is the chapter on hastening and delay. There is not even an attempt to discuss the main Ellen White delay/hastening statements. The chapter spends its first half on tangents, and last half intoning that we cannot be saved by our works. Only briefly does it mention that the timing of Jesus' Second Coming could be contingent on believer behavior (260). The author conflates two entirely different matters:

1. Personal salvation
2. God's character vindication demonstration through His people

It is one thing to be saved; it is a completely different thing to participate in God's character demonstration by which He will show that He is right in requiring obedience to His law.

Several Bible incidents show human action delaying or advancing God's deliverance. Numbers 13 and 14 record how unfaithfulness on the part of Israel delayed their entrance into Canaan. Mark 4:26-29 is the parable of the farmer harvesting his crop as soon as it is ripe. Second Peter three affirms the certainty of the Second Coming while pointing to the kind of people we should be that we might speed its arrival.

Nor is inspired evidence lacking in support of delaying and hastening God's deliverance. For example, Queen Esther and God's praying people intervened so that Haman was slain and a counter-decree issued before the execution of the death decree against the Jews (Esther 5-9). And, there are Ellen White statements like these:

Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith, and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward (1SM 68).

It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in 'because of unbelief' (Hebrews 3:19). Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them.

For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years (1SM 68).

By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return. We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God. 2 Peter 3:12, margin. Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory (DA 633).

None of these EGW statements are even mentioned in the chapter in *God's Character and the Last Generation*. Nor are the Numbers or Mark passages addressed. Second Peter three is mentioned but momentarily.

Conclusion

Where do we land? Half the charges against LGT are relatively straightforward disagreements, the remaining three, unfair straw-man misrepresentations.

What then about the books we have today spoken of? *God's Character and the Last Generation* grossly misrepresents Last Generation Theology. It gives no particular help where we have straightforward

disagreements about teachings, and is worse than useless because of its decided misrepresentations. For someone who actually wishes to understand Last Generation Theology, the new 2018 books are a needless consumption of trees.

To our Presses: it could just be me, but very few of my church members are clamoring to buy books filled with “tends to” and “seems to” opinions by authors who repeat the viewpoints of George Knight.

Those who do wish to understand Last Generation Theology should immerse themselves in the Bible, and read Ellen White. Additionally, I point you to ML Andreasen’s *The Sanctuary Service*, and, to my little book, *Cleanse and Close: Last Generation Theology in 14 Points*. These are widely distributed and a fair analysis of the truth or falsity of Last Generation Theology should critique these sources, rather than manufacturing misrepresentations unrecognizable as our ideas.

The Knight-Whidden Narrative has become the establishment story. The KWN stands in exact contrast to authentic Adventist positions. A chasm divides scholars from lay people who read the Bible and Ellen White writings. There are different conceptions of Adventism. The publication of these 2018 books has taken matters too far. I hope that we have come to a time when some of our younger scholars will think for themselves, and revisit Knight’s representations concerning last generation themes.

The way I see it, it is basic Adventism versus the Knight-Whidden Narrative. Basic Adventism does a good job of explaining itself. But the new 2018 books are unfair, incorrect, and an embarrassment to the seminary, the press, and the church.

The church is alive where an authentically Adventist message is being proclaimed. But when, instead, we are lost to the design of our creation, we begin to shrivel and become nervous about whether we are relevant by the standard of the world. We become timid when we should be bold. May our Lord Jesus help us see why He raised up His church, and how He has brought us to the kingdom for such a time as this.

END
version 1.09

Presentations:

Sacramento Central CA SDA church 2019-03-23