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The Doctrine of the Everlasting Covenant in the Writings of

Ellet J. Waggoner

by

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From its beginning, the Christian church has been in constant turmoil, and sometimes great conflict, in regards to the relationships between the law and the gospel, faith and works, and the goal of the Christian life. This discussion has never really been resolved so that the church could realize the practical application of Biblical counsel to the daily life. Questions such as, "What is the duty of man in response to God's commands?", and, "What is the mission of the church to the world?", have not been answered to the place where the laity can readily relate their spiritual experience to their personal and collective lives. Furthermore, little headway has actually taken place in the theological areas of sanctification and the transformation of the believer's character. For many church members, the call to higher standards of ethical and moral living appears to be theoretically correct, but in actual practice, it becomes a source of frustration and of perpetual failures. In short, the church has not been able to clarify the relationship of the theory of salvation to the experience of the believer.

Attempts have been made to bridge the gap between theory and practice; yet, they have been inadequate because there has not been proper attention to a basic tenet of Christian living, known as the everlasting covenant of God. This doctrine holds the key to the problem because it provides a setting for the gospel that allows God to determine rightly what He expects from man and what man should expect from Him.

Several men have recognized the covenant concept as being the solution to this gap. Peter De Jong described American Protestantism as lacking any "unified and unifying conception of the Christian life" because it has failed to understand the

covenants.¹ He further states, "Too much of our religious life, also in its practical expression, is at loose end."² This is due to improper concepts of the Christian life. David Neilands, another Reformed writer, suggests that the church has failed to understand the promises of God or the covenants, as given in the Old Testament; there is a need to establish unity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, because those promises are still applicable today.³

Others have also attempted to deal with the covenant concept by interpreting the covenants as being different periods of time in which God makes specific agreements with specific individuals or groups with varying restrictions and requirements. This view tends to follow the doctrines originally taught by the Anabaptists. These two views, the Reformed and the Anabaptist, have been predominant in today's theological world, but neither has really produced results that fit the description of God's vision for His people. The Reformed position has been greatly influenced by predestinarian beliefs that frustrate the quality of the covenant relationship. The Anabaptist-based view focuses upon a more narrow application which fails to understand the everlasting covenant as a whole. It also has portrayed God as One who changes His requirements for salvation for different people.

This paper is concerned with a view that is neither predestinarian nor dispensationalistic, although it incorporates selected points of the two above views. This view was primarily presented by a young Seventh-day Adventist in the 1880's, Ellet J. Waggoner, and secondarily by his friend and close colleague, Alonzo T. Jones. Their understanding was excitingly simple, and yet profound. They saw history as an unfolding drama of the everlasting covenant, from Eden before the Fall through the ages to Eden restored. God was portrayed as One who was seeking sinful

man to restore the dynamic relationship they once had before sin entered the world. Salvation was understood as God's means of restoring this relationship and delivering man from its counterfeits. God's people were those who responded to God's invitation to enter this relationship regardless of nationality, race, or the like. The law and the gospel were uniquely linked together without encountering the problems of legalism, or espousing cheap grace. This view of the covenant, combined with a special understanding of eschatology due to the doctrine of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, paved the way to prepare a people to witness to the world God's complete power to redeem sinners and make them obedient to His law.

Not only is the view of these two men important of itself, so also are the various steps which led up to their presentation. The Second Great Awakening of the nineteenth century brought about movements that should have given great strength and power to the Christian church through the covenant concept. However, the paths which many churches took after the middle of the century reveal serious weaknesses inherent within their beliefs. These weaknesses are still producing damaging consequences today.

The Development of the Covenant Doctrine

Although the early church fathers mentioned the doctrine of the covenants, none of them such as, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, nor Augustine, really emphasized it.⁴ There was not much consideration given to the idea until the Protestant Reformation.⁵ This change was based upon the switch of emphasis from the "mechanical theories" of the Catholic church, such as the sacraments as a means of salvation, to the "organic and spiritual relation in which man stood to God by virtue of creation."⁶ This opened the way for the clarification of the covenantal

relationship between God and man, and how man is to live from day to day.

De Jong states that Luther and Melancthon believed in the covenantal base for man's relationship to God, but neither developed it to any great degree because of their strong Christological emphasis.⁷ Two streams of thought on the subject emerged out of the Reformation, those that followed Calvin, and those that followed the Anabaptist line of belief.⁸ These two views represent the different approaches that have struggled to apply the commands of God into the practical realm of daily life. The settlers that came to America arrived with elements of these divergent views.⁹ Thus, one might suggest that the conflict over practical Christian living has been with America from its very beginning. And due to the unique opportunities in the New World, such as the braking with the old ways and beginning with the new, the conflict could take on a new perspective.

The Reformed-Calvinist position that came with the Puritans understood the covenant concept as a tool for stressing conformity and Christian conduct.¹⁰ Due to its doctrines of double predestination, limited atonement, unconditional election, and the perseverance of the saints, the Reformed position of the covenants stressed the, "sovereignty of God in the work of salvation."¹¹ God made all the decisions and man was only to respond as he was elected. There was a strong emphasis upon forensic or legal aspect of salvation. Salvation was understood as being a continuum from the fall to the time God restores man to original perfection. This salvation history was connected to the covenant concept by way of the promises made to Abraham. The establishment of the nation of Israel as God's people represents how God still seeks His elected people and how He expects them to live. Thus there was taught a

theocratic ideal based upon the covenant made at Sinai that all elected people should become covenantors with God.

The Anabaptists, instead of applying the covenant concept to Christian conduct, saw the covenants as normative in the areas of ecclesiastical organization and membership. Walker says it this way,

That system (Congregationalism) recognized as the constitutive act of a church was a covenant individually entered into between each member, his brethren, and his God, pledging him to submit himself to all due ordinances and officers and seek the good of all his associates. In like manner this compact bound its signers to promote the general good and to yield obedience to such law as the community would frame.¹²

Coupled with a democratic tendency and their firm belief that the sphere of secular politics were only a necessary evil, this view heavily favored voluntary commitment and a desire to become pure by means of doing right and avoiding evil.

De Jong summarizes the effect of these two streams of thought upon American Protestantism by saying,

The early settlers of New England were indebted to the Anabaptists for their conception of the church covenant and to the Reformed for their teaching on the Covenant of Grace and related subjects. The question challenging the Congregationalists was whether the two conceptions were homogeneous and if not, which of to be victorious at the expense of the other.¹³

With this understanding of the tension between the two traditions over the ways in which the covenants were to be applied, one can foresee what would happen if there was to be a strong religious revival, one that would work as a catalyst for these views. The Second Great Awakening was just that test.

The Nineteenth Century and The Second Great Awakening

Towards the end of the eighteenth century and the carrying into the nineteenth, there was a movement to return to Bible-based primitive Christianity.¹⁴ One reason for this movement was due to the fact that after the War of Independence, people recognized the loosening of moral standards which had prevailed during wartime. There were those who publicized the rise in crime, the breaking of the Sabbath, the decline in church attendance, and the growing influence of French liberalism.¹⁵ Many other faiths began to rise up all over the newly independent nation. The general trend was the shying away from the state churches and their dogma, leaning more towards a "personal and emotional religious experience."¹⁶ Those churches that incorporated the democratic way of organization, such as the Baptists and the Methodists, tended to grow much more rapidly, especially in the frontier lands.¹⁷ However, in the churches in the east, which were more settled and where scholarship and theology were highly esteemed, the revival movement took on a more sober and steady nature.¹⁸

The Second Great Awakening was an opportunity to incorporate religion into daily living. Both secular and religious groups sought to remove a variety of abuses in the areas of temperance, education, and social responsibility. Many religious groups that began during this time formed communes in the hope of escaping the evils of the world and establishing a pure church. The motivation for these endeavors was found in preparing for the imminent coming of Christ.¹⁹ Some of the reforms were quite practical, such as vegetarianism: yet, there were other groups that got fanatical like the "complex marriage" doctrine of John Noyes of the Oneida group.²⁰

One would not be wrong in stating that this reform movement gave great opportunities to those who understood the covenant concept. With the emphasis upon primitive Bible religion, and the growing awareness of the fulfilling prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation, one would think that the work of reform would produce results that would shake the earth. The actual results of this period are far from spectacular. The health and temperance reforms gradually faded from the consciousness of many main-stream churches as did educational reform. One cannot say that these churches also gave up the study of the Scriptures, yet the action which they were to take in the latter half of the century reveals convictions that are far from Biblical.

The National Reform Movement

During this period of religious revival many people believe Whitby's postmillennium theory that the world was becoming better and better until Christ would come.²¹ However, with the coming of the American Civil War, the churches saw that the nation was not "co-operating with God" and sought to bring the country back to God. Instead of relying upon personal conviction or the doctrine of election, this reform tended towards government legislation to prepare the world for Christ's reign.

In 1863, the first National Reform Association convention was held. The principle speaker stated that the Civil War resulted because of America's failure to acknowledge God's authority and declare itself a "Christian nation."²²

This movement set out to purify the nation by initiating a constitutional amendment acknowledging the authority of God.²³ Although this amendment was to be defeated, it was the beginning of a drive to coerce the nation to unite "under God."

With the defeat of the amendment, there came a move to restrict work and close businesses on Sunday. Here the reformers were more successful. These "blue laws" were passed by different states which cause considerable persecution of several denominations.²⁴ The opposers say that the real issue was the uniting of church with state which would limit the freedom of others.

The struggle came to a crescendo in 1888 with the alliance of several church reform groups bent upon national Sunday legislation. This alliance was made of various temperance organizations as well as missionary societies of the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, the Reformed church and others.²⁵ When this coalition introduced its bill, most of the religious community appeared to be in favor of such actions. This bill, the Blair Bill, failed to pass in Congress by a single vote. It was followed by the Breckenridge bill of 1890, which would have prevented any work to be done on Sunday in the District of Columbia.

Finally, there was a bill that did pass in 1892 that required that "no exposition or exhibition for which appropriation is made by Congress shall be opened on Sunday."²⁶

In taking these steps, the popular churches revealed their relationship to the concepts of the law and the gospel. Instead of preaching the gospel and allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work through personal conviction, they were trying to legislate it. By doing so, they exhibited a spirit quite contrary to the Bible. The situation is made clear in the words of Mario Cuomo, the present governor of New York State. During the 1984 elections, the issue of abortion was transformed into an important debate. Cuomo was upset that the Catholic church was attacking a woman candidate's spiritual commitment, because she refused to encourage legislation

of her church's line on abortion. His response to this was, "Are we asking government to make criminal what we believe is sinful because we ourselves can't stop committing the sin?"²⁷ This action would suggest that if a church seeks outside help to make people good, the reason might well be due to the lack of spiritual depth inside. It would also reveal the church's understanding of law and grace, law and the gospel, and covenantal living. It is interesting to note that the opponents of this movement recognized that the leaders of this National Reform Association were all Reformed Presbyterians and the theological base was deeply involved with the covenant concepts of the Reformed tradition.²⁸

The Rise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The roots of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are in the Millerite movement which arose during the Second Great Awakening. The main distinguishing characteristic of this group was their calculation of the coming of Christ based upon the prophecies of Daniel. They were at first accepted in the mainstream churches as reformers but were later ostracized for setting a specific date for the coming of Christ.

After the disappointment at the passing of October 22, 1844, the shut-door Millerites, one of the groups that survived, restudied their calculations and discovered that what was to happen in 1844 was not the cleansing of the earth by the coming of Jesus. Instead, there was to be a change in Christ's mediatorial work in heaven. This change consisted of the final work to be done in the redemption of man and the final judgment of the earth. This conclusion was to build a base by which the covenants could be better understood. The reason for this is simple. The other churches had generally disregarded the Covenant of Grace, leaving the subject of the covenants primarily in the areas of church organization and membership. The doctrine of the cleansing of the

heavenly sanctuary opened the door for an intimate view of the closing events that would completely restore the covenant relationship of Eden before the entrance of sin. This understanding was not apparent to the shut-door Millerites at first; another subject took precedence, the law. The evidence shows that the Millerites, who became the Seventh-day Adventists, arrived at the decision to keep the seventh-day Sabbath by an understanding of the heavenly sanctuary and the Sabbath as an everlasting covenant given to God's people.²⁹ They also believed that the health reform that had been previously espoused during the time of Great Awakening was to be followed since it affected one's spiritual and moral life.³⁰ When the goal of obedience to the whole law of God and the affects of one's daily health habits were established, many Adventist sought to convert the world to these insights. This generally took the form of defensive debates with those who did not see the Sabbath issue. The Seventh-day Adventist church was in danger of neutralizing their spiritual gains by becoming legalistic in their approach to the gospel. Ellen White was to call the preaching of some during this time, "as dry as the hills of Gilboa."³¹

A.T. Jones was to say in retrospect of this period,

Twenty years ago God sent the Seventh-day Adventist denomination a message of the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ to deliver them from any appearance of liability to the charge of legalism ... At Minneapolis, in 1888, the General Conference 'administration' did its very best to have the denomination committed by a vote of the General Conference to the covenant of 'Obey and live,' to righteousness by works. The attempt failed then; but from that day till this, that spirit and that element have never ceased that endeavor; though when they found that they could not accomplish it just then, they apparently and professedly accepted righteousness by faith. But they never did accept it in the truth that it is. They never did accept it as life and righteousness from God; but only as 'a doctrine' 'subject' to be put in a list strung as a with other 'doctrinal' subjects.³²

Jones here has connected the problem of legalism in the church with the message of 1888, a message that both he and E.J. Waggoner presented. Their message was to deliver the church from the charge of legalism. Furthermore, Jones has identified the problem of legalism with the old covenant as well as stating that the message of Minneapolis was the answer to avoiding the old covenant experience. This is important to note for these connections have not been always seen in this light. Without the unique understanding of the covenants, the presentation of Christ's righteousness as given by Waggoner and Jones becomes a theoretical concept that fails to capture the heart of man and draw him back to the relationship that God wants. Thus when one approaches the writings of these men, the covenant concept must be always in the forefront in interpreting their views of righteousness by faith.

The Law in Galatians Controversy and the Covenant Concept

In the year 1886, E.J. Waggoner was the editor of the Adventist paper, *The Signs of the Times*. Beginning in the July eighth issue, he wrote a series of articles in response to one written by O.A. Johnson in the April thirteenth issue of the *Review and Herald*. Johnson had claimed that the law in the third chapter of Galatians was the ceremonial law. Waggoner took exception and maintained that the law in Galatians referred to the moral law. Through an interesting series of events, George I. Butler, then the General Conference president, published a pamphlet entitled, "*The Law in the Book of Galatians*." Butler opposed Waggoner's view and supported Johnson's interpretation. Waggoner countered with a pamphlet significantly named, "*The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*."

This debate between Butler and Waggoner was the first in a series of conflicts over certain subjects and issues that would bring forth a message that Ellen White would label the beginning of the loud cry and latter rain; the message of righteousness by faith.³³ The issues in this encounter obviously involved the proper identification of the law in Galatians. However, the underlying arguments reveal that both men were dealing with the covenants. Waggoner was to develop his views of righteousness by faith from this exchange, changing little until his death in 1916. In reviewing Waggoner's writings, it will be necessary to compare Butler's beliefs to clarify the presentation. Furthermore, Ellen White's assessments of the whole situation will also be referred to since they reveal what was truly at stake in the debate.

First, it is important to establish what points Butler and Waggoner did agree upon. Both men believed that man was to be a keeper of all the commandments of God, including the seventh-day Sabbath.³⁴ Neither man disagreed that God had made a covenant with Abraham, which defined the terms of salvation for all men.³⁵ Even though the two held different views of the old covenant, there was a mutual understanding that God's remedy for sin had been offered to the Jews and anyone who chose to accept its terms was eligible for the blessings given to Abraham.³⁶ Both men believed that God desired a people who would rightly represent Him on this earth and be the base for the evangelism of all nations.³⁷ Although it was not forthrightly said, neither man would have ventured to state that God had made a mistake in making any covenant. Their whole arguments would not tolerate such a notion. Any fault must be attributed to the people of Israel. From these points of agreement, one can see that the conflict over the identification of the law in Galatians chapter three would have to center around such issues as the meaning and purpose of the old covenant, and its relationship to the new covenant. It would also include the

relationship of law to the gospel and the application of these subjects to present experiences of the church.

Butler's purpose for disagreeing with Waggoner on the law in Galatians was to protect the church's argument for the need to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. It had not been a part of those ceremonial laws that had been nailed to the cross.³⁸ But Waggoner also believed the Sabbath was to be kept as a part of the Decalogue. Then, why was Butler so opposed to Waggoner's view? Surely, part of the discussion was due to misunderstandings and emotions that had been strained by improper communication on both sides. Waggoner had not followed proper channels in presenting his view in open forum in the Signs. Butler had been fostering a "kingly" attitude in which he sought to mold the work to his particular mind.³⁹ This, however, does not account for the actual content of the two presentations.

Butler was convinced that the ceremonial law was connected with the old covenant and the ten commandments were connected with the new covenant, which was the common Adventist position at the time.⁴⁰ Judging from the statements he made such as,

The errors in the Galatian church which Paul was so vigorously combating, were not merely the theoretical view that they were justified by their obedience to the moral law and hence needed not a Saviour; but they practices which really undermined the truth of the gospel, those connecting it with circumcision, the symbol of all laws particularly Jewish.⁴¹

and,

Before we close this argument, we wish to impress point more fully, to convince our friends, if possible, who hold the opposite view, that this question of circumcision in the apostolic church was not one of minor importance, but in its effects upon the progress of Christianity and the presentation of gospel truth, was equal in the apostles' mind to even the much-vaunted doctrine of justification by

faith. As we have said, we hold to the latter to be a very important doctrine. But the special thing with which the apostle had to contend in his work among the Gentiles, was to show the proper relation between his work and the old system that was passing away.⁴²

The issues involved the proper relationship of law to the covenants. Butler was arguing that Waggoner was being too theoretical with the "much-vaunted doctrine of justification by faith," and not seeing the importance of "practices" or works or obedience to the law of God. Waggoner was arguing that Butler was too much of a legalist, in danger of making the same mistake as the Israelites at Mt. Sinai.

Taking this position, the analysis of the two pamphlets become very interesting. Butler never had a complete grasp of the gospel despite his frequent statements that he firmly believed in righteousness by faith.⁴³ Butler never did ever specifically explain how man is to keep the law of God or how He will write the law within the hearts of man. The old covenant was a compact that God made with the Israelites where He would bless them if they would abide by the rituals and ceremonies given at Mt. Sinai. This condition would make this covenant in simple terms, "obey and live, disobey die." This is a legalistic arrangement, an arrangement that, if not contrasted with the true gospel, will suggest that salvation is really legalistic procedure. This Butler never attempted such a contrast. He correctly believed that the law was to be kept but he could not present the gospel as a means for God to work out His will in the lives of men. His interest was not the gospel only the law, especially the Sabbath, and man's obedience to that law.

Butler did give some evidence of his position on the covenants when he stated that it was God's purpose to separate the Israelites from the other nations by giving them the ceremonial

law. This arrangement was to establish them as God's special people.⁴⁴ The interesting point here is that Butler believed that God's people were "elected" in the sense of the Reformed tradition. They were special because God decided to make them His people. Furthermore, his argument in regards to the law in Galatians led him to suggest that salvation was only figurative in the Old Testament. It was as if there were two different plans of salvation, one in the old and one in the new.⁴⁵ This seriously affected his understanding of the relationship of law and the gospel by suggesting different methods for different dispensations.

Waggoner was convinced that the law in Galatians was the moral law. The function of the moral law was that of pointing out sin by revealing the standard of righteousness. The reason for the giving of the moral law at Sinai was because the people were not clear in their hearts that they were sinners.⁴⁶ The ceremonial law was the means by which a believer exhibited or exercised his faith. This was in direct contrast to Butler's view on the need for the ceremonial law. By following the rituals and ceremonies, he saw in the symbols the real truth that by faith his sins were truly forgiven. Justification by faith had not been revealed only at the coming of Christ; it had always been understood by any sincere Jew. The whole of Waggoner's presentation emphasizes strongly that law, any law, did not make a person righteous. What makes men righteous is the condition of man's heart response of faith which is brought about by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷

At this point, the counsel of Ellen White in this matter of the law in Galatians is very important. She did not really get involved with this debate until, 1888 in Minneapolis. There, she heard Waggoner for the first time and was enthralled. Soon after that time she began to make statements to the effect that the law

in Galatians was not the issue; in fact, it had never been. The true issue was that of righteousness by faith.⁴⁸ Uriah Smith, a close friend and supporter of Butler, disagreed. He believed that the subject was the law and that Waggoner was undermining the truth.⁴⁹ Then Ellen White began to question the spirit that Butler and his supporters were exhibiting. She called it an unchristlike spirit, one that resembled the spirit of the pharisees of the New Testament. She questioned any position that needed such a negative spirit to sustain it.⁵⁰

She saw the theological issues in the debate and encouraged all to study and come to a unified position from prayer and Bible study. She also revealed that the struggle was for the heart of man. Correct theology would produce spiritual fruit.⁵¹ This viewpoint became increasingly more vital as the conflict progressed because it was the only way that the real issues could be discerned.

One can see that in this first presentation of Waggoner on the covenants, he set the groundwork for the covenant concept by defining the proper position of the moral and ceremonial laws. Whether or not every point of argument he used in his pamphlet is important or technically correct would be a study in itself. The main issue is that he understood the moral law as being binding upon man, including the Sabbath. That true worship was not the performance of any law although it included it. True worship consisted of a heart response, an attitude which was to be revealed in obedience to the law. Butler verbally agreed with this, but denied it with his inconsistent reasoning on the "two-plan salvation" idea. This was due to his narrow line of argument in regards to the law in Galatians.

At the same time as the law in Galatians was being discussed by Waggoner and Butler, the subject of the covenants was also being discussed. Several articles were written to show that the Decalogue was not the old covenant and, therefore, the Sabbath was still the seventh day. The most prominent of the authors of these articles was Uriah Smith. He presented the subject in the *Review and Herald* in a series beginning in September of 1887 and continued until November of the same year. He also had articles in the *Bible Echo* and *Signs of the Times*. There is still another article, *The Two Covenants*, that is not dated which seems to have come from this same period.⁵²

The burden that Smith had in all these articles was to defend the seventh-day Sabbath just as Butler had in his pamphlet on the law in Galatians. The argument differs little from Butler in regards to establishing that the ceremonial law was the old covenant and the new covenant was connected with the ten commandments. The new material is found in defining what a covenant is and filling in the gaps in Butler's two "dispensations" or plans of salvation for the human race.

As for the definition of a covenant, Smith goes to a standard dictionary and states that a covenant is,

'A mutual agreement of two or more persons or parties in writing and under seal, to do or to refrain from doing, some act or thing; a contract; stipulation.' This is the primary, leading definition of the word; and in looking for the old covenant, we look for some transaction to which this definition will apply.⁵³

This definition set the tone for the ensuing conflict after the 1888 conference because Waggoner and Jones were convinced that the meaning of "covenant" in scripture was not so definable from extra-biblical sources. They believed that the covenant of God was a promise on His part and a "so be it, amen" on the part of the

people.⁵⁴ This issue was to be a keystone to the disagreement between the two groups.

Smith also believed, as Butler did, concerning the two dispensations of salvation. Smith described the faultiness of the old covenant as being imperfect "simply because its provisions were not ample enough."⁵⁵ He further clarifies by saying that the people had broken God's covenant, the old covenant, by disobeying the moral law. Being sinners, they needed to return to the position before their sin to receive favor from God. They had the rituals and sacrifices but these could not take away sin or guilt. Something "more effectual" was needed to do that and the new covenant was just it. Smith said that the ceremonial could not take away sin, but the way in which he has stated it has left the impression that sin was not taken away until Christ came.⁵⁶ This was the same thought Butler reached in his interpretation of Galatians three.

The only other concept that Smith gives in these articles that deserves mention is that both covenants, old and new, were made with Israel.⁵⁷ This questions the common idea that the old covenant was made with the Jews and the new with the Gentiles. In this argument, Smith makes his best contribution, which by the way Waggoner also taught.⁵⁸

The Covenant Controversy of 1890

Waggoner was asked in 1889 to rewrite some Sabbath school lessons on the book of Hebrews because the originals, which had been written by his father, had been lost and the elder was unable to rewrite them himself. The younger had re-written five or six of the lessons because he could not agree with some of the ideas concerning the covenants. He was given the freedom to write his own views and the lessons were hastily sent to the different

committee members for criticism. Unfortunately, Uriah Smith's name had been accidentally left off that list of review members. To atone for the mistake, C. H. Jones, the manager of the Pacific Press, sent a set of the lessons to Smith with all the additions. But Smith, seeing the name of J.H. Waggoner on the front, passed them on since he agreed with him theologically on the subject. Jones had sent a note explaining the mixup and the changes that the son had made, but Smith did not notice the attached explanation and sent them on for publication for the first quarter of the year 1890.⁵⁹ This oversight was to cause Smith a great deal of trouble.

At the same time this was taking place with the Sabbath school lessons, Waggoner was teaching at the ministerial school in Battle Creek. He had begun a verse by verse study of the prophecies found in the book of Isaiah with the emphasis upon the nature and work of Christ.⁶⁰ However, at the beginning of the year, 1890, he abruptly changed his topic to the covenants. This was done without consulting either Uriah Smith or Dan Jones, the secretary of the General Conference and the board member in charge of the school. Dan Jones suggested that the subject be left out of the school, due to its sensitive nature. He went to Sister White and she felt that it should be studied but should be investigated more thoroughly before taking it into the school. There was a meeting the night before Waggoner was to begin his study. It was unfruitful. The next morning Waggoner turned in his resignation to teach that particular class period forcing Dan Jones to cover the class. Finally U. Smith took over.⁶¹

By this time the Sabbath school lessons that Waggoner had edited concerning the book of Hebrews were being studied by the whole church. Dan Jones had noticed the situation when the lessons

first appeared. Smith, however, "saw them for the first time" and claimed a dirty trick had been played. He wrote a disclaimer in the *Review* saying that "none need feel bound to accept any doctrine simply because it appears in the S. S. lessons or *Review*."⁶² People had become interested in the subject of the covenants. The ministerial students complained that they were unable to study the subject; yet, the children could study the covenants in the Sabbath school lesson.⁶³ Ellen White wrote Smith after observing his strong efforts to oppose Waggoner's views.

Night before last I was shown that evidences in regard to the covenants were clear and convincing. Yourself, Brother Dan Jones, Brother Porter and others are spending your investigative powers for naught to produce a position on the covenants to vary from the position that Brother Waggoner has presented. Had you received the true light which shineth, you would not have imitated or gone over the same manner of interpretation and misconstruing the Scriptures as did the Jews. What made them so zealous? Why did they hang on the words of Christ? Why did spies follow Him to mark his words that they could repeat and misinterpret and twist in a way to mean that which their own unsanctified minds would make them to mean. In this way, they deceived the people. They made false issues. They handled those things that they could make a means of clouding and misleading minds.

The covenant question is a clear question and would be received by every candid, unprejudiced mind, but I was brought where the Lord gave me an insight into this matter. You have turned from plain light because you were afraid that the law question in Galatians would have to be accepted. As to thg4law in Galatians, I have no burden and never have.⁶⁴

It is evident that Ellen White saw more in this situation than did most of the people. False issues were confounding the real message that was needed because some of the brethren were cherishing a particular belief concerning the law in Galatians. One can see how Smith would be bound to interpret this letter by thinking that if Sister White was endorsing Waggoner on the covenants, then it would seem that she was also accepting

Waggoner's view in Galatians. This, he would feel would bring the church down.

In March of 1890, there was a meeting called in Battle Creek to discuss the current theological disputes and to clear the air of the mounting personal conflicts caused by the polarizing of the different groups. Dan Jones wrote to the brethren around the nation about it.

We had a meeting in the General Conference office a few evenings ago. About twenty-five were present including all the leading brethren in Battle Creek. Sister White came in. The meeting lasted about five hours. The Minneapolis matter and other things that have come in since that were talked over freely. They made some explanations that relieved the minds of some of the brethren considerably, among others, my own mind. It seems from what has been said that brethren White, Waggoner, and Jones, did not have any preconceived plan when they came over from the Pacific Coast to the Minneapolis meeting to lay their views before the brethren at that time, and have not been attempting to carry through any such plans since. Sister White has come out a little stronger in favor of Dr. Waggoner, but yet has not committed herself definitely as to the points of doctrine in his exposition of the two covenants. She says that she has been shown that he had light on the covenant question, but was not shown as to what that light was. At least that is the way I understand it at the present time.⁶⁵

Well, the minister's school is almost over. The investigation on the covenant question closed up with no better satisfaction than before it began ... For a time it was thought that she (Ellen White) fully endorsed Dr. Waggoner's position on the covenant question, and as so reported to be when I returned from Tennessee ... but later developments show that such was not the case. It turns out now that the doctrinal points in the matter have (not?) been the real issue. It is the spirit alone that has been manifested to which she has objected, and to which Eld. Waggoner takes exception. Both Sister White and Dr. Waggoner stated that the doctrinal points were not the points at issue. So that removes the real point that was in my mind all the time. I understood that it was the bringing in of new doctrines that were not approved by the denomination, that was the real point at issue. But if I have been mistaken in that matter I am glad to be corrected. I have thought all the time that Sister White did

not mean to say that Dr. Waggoner was correct on the covenant question as far as doctrine is concerned; because (it) was so manifestly wrong that I could not at all be reconciled to the idea that she would give it her unqualified approval. I think we have been consuming time and labor on points that are not of the most importance at the present time, and have been striving about these doctrines when we ought to have been putting our shoulders to the burden and pushing along the car of truth. As far as I am concerned I am willing to drop the whole question, if others will do the same, and put my thought and labor toward the advancement of truth. I think, however, some good points will be gained by this investigation this winter. Perhaps both parties will respect each other more than they have in the past, and there will be more counsel in reference to introducing any points of doctrine in the future, than there has been in the past. This has been a very unpleasant winter to me ..."⁶⁶

Based upon these accounts, one would be inclined to believe that the covenant question, as well as the law in Galatians were two peripheral issues that were distracting the church from its real mission. Any personal clashes would seemed to have been resolved. However, there are some disturbing questions that arise when the situation is observed as a whole, beginning from 1888 to the turn of the century.

For example, how is it that Dan Jones speaks of the theological subjects as being of no consequence when Ellen White was claiming that the message that Waggoner and Jones were presenting was the "third angel's message in verity?"⁶⁷ True, she had been very strong on the unchristlike spirit but that does not explain a statement like this, written in 1896,

An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, (the moral law a schoolmaster) lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren Waggoner and Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the

day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.⁶⁸

The description that Dan Jones has given, even with its confession and reconsecration, fails to show that the subjects of the law in Galatians and the covenants were not important. Neither the personal relations between the brethren and the messengers, nor the theological material discussed was not properly resolved or explained. Dan Jones's assessment does not match with the overwhelming statements Mrs. White gives in support of Waggoner's theological presentation such as the one excerpt above.⁶⁹ When Ellen White and Elder Waggoner said they did not care about the doctrinal points and were only interested in a Christian spirit, they very well could have had other concerns in mind.

In the letter she sent to Uriah Smith concerning his futile attempts to prove Waggoner wrong on the covenants, Ellen White compared his actions, and those of like persuasion, to the Jews of Christ's day. This comparison was extensively used to portray the opposition to the message of righteousness by faith. The specific characteristics that she saw in common between the Jews and the opposition were numerous. She named a critical and unforgiving spirit;⁷⁰ an intent upon a legal religion;⁷¹ despising the messengers of God;⁷² wresting words, falsely interpreting presentations;⁷³ and exhibiting the same hatred that Cain had for Abel.⁷⁴ Note that this comparison of Cain's hatred is also used to describe the spirit of the Jews in crucifying Christ.⁷⁵ An interesting study for the future would be the complete comparison of the spirit of opposition to the Minneapolis message and pharisaism; however, for the present, it is extremely important to point out that Ellen White regarded pharisaism as being human nature.⁷⁶ Any judgment of those men who had opposed the message is emphatically misplaced and very wrong. The real issue in all of

this is that pharisaism is only another name for sinful human nature. The actions and spirit exhibited against Waggoner and Jones were a revelation of what is in the heart of every man. What Ellen White sought to impress upon that meeting in Battle Creek was to direct all to the realization that they were convinced they were following Christ and doing His will, when they were not. Their minds were so agitated to defend their position, that the only way to reach their hearts would be to neutralize their mind set and create an atmosphere where they could see their true condition.

As for the theology of Waggoner and Jones, it was understood by Ellen White as the very solution to the problem of human nature, of pharisaism. She wrote in 1895,

The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. they needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world: It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure. ...⁷⁷

The following points stand out in summarizing the conflict within the Seventh-day Adventist church beginning in 1886 with the debate over the law in Galatians, which then led to the covenant debate. The church was in danger of emphasizing the law without comprehending the gospel. When the message of Christ's righteousness was preached, the reaction of many was, "we already believe it, now let us get on with more important things." Later,

they saw the message as a dangerous error that should be shunned at all cost, all the while still believing they were right concerning the gospel and the will of God. This reaction to the message was actually facilitated by the creating of false issues, ones that clouded the real issues of salvation and heart conversion. Ellen White's role in the matter was that of a spiritual referee. She began by encouraging honest, open investigation, but after the opposition set in, she strove to disarm the hostility by downplaying the theological differences and fostering a spirit that would make it possible to look at the true doctrinal issues aright. Her rebukes and comparisons of the opposition to the history of the Jews gave insights into the heart of man. The application of the history of the Jews to modern situations opened the way for a type of Bible study that reveals the power of the Word of God to convert modern man. Finally, Ellen White revealed a second criteria to her usual, "to the law and to the testimonies."⁷⁸ She added that a teaching should be evaluated as to its correctness by the fruit it produced, fruit that was of the Holy Spirit. Bad fruit, i.e. criticizing, agitation, jealousies, does not result from a true message of God.

It is difficult to overstress at this point that the turmoil over the law in Galatians and the covenants were caused by opposition to the message of righteousness by faith. Personalities and politics surely entered in, but the crux was the resisting of the gospel that would transform the heart. Once this idea is established, one is able to move on to evaluating the actual presentation of Waggoner concerning the law and the gospel as seen in the covenants.

Waggoner's Understanding of the
Doctrine of the Covenants

For Butler, Smith, Dan Jones, and later, R. A. Underwood, the main conflict with Waggoner and A. T. Jones over the covenant question was the statement, "that the old covenant consisted mainly in the promises of the people."⁷⁹ They believed that God had purposed to give the old covenant as a hedge to separate Israel from the heathen nations and for doing this they would be rewarded with wealth, prosperity, and honor.⁸⁰ These men believed that the people had made a mistake when they thought they could obey the law of God in their own power, not that the whole covenant was wrong as did Waggoner and Jones. The key to the differences between the two sides is how God determined to make the people special. For Butler and his supporters it was by an act of a contract where God promised blessings if the people would keep His statutes.

Waggoner did believe that the old covenant was a covenant that the people arranged due to the response they gave to God, "Whatever God says we will do." He saw that the people had tried to establish their own righteousness not only in the sense that Butler's group understood it. The people were in error in more of a basic nature, namely, they truly did not comprehend the type and quality of covenant relationship God wished to have with them. Waggoner put it this way;

God said, 'If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, (my commandments) then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people ... and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.' God did not say that he would make them such, but that they would be such a people if they obeyed his commandments. It could not be otherwise. The keeping of God's law would constitute them a holy people; and as such they would indeed be a peculiar treasure, even as are all who are zealous of good works. All that was set before them was simply what would result from obedience to

the law, and that covenant contained no promise of help in doing that. Therefore the first covenant was a promise on the part of the people that they would make themselves holy. But this they could not do. The promise was a good one; with it alone there could be no fault; the fault lay with the people. The promise was faulty, through the weakness of the people who made it; just as we read in Rom. 8:3, that the law was weak through the flesh.⁸¹

The contrast between Waggoner and the other group is now quite clear. The brethren were convinced that God had deliberately decided to make Israel a special people for a given time with special blessings that would elevate them above all nations. God was offering a contract; God would bless if the people would obey. God needed to keep the lineage of the Seed (Christ) pure until He came and was able to bring in a more effectual system of salvation than the figurative system of the ceremonies and rituals in the Old Testament times. At that time God could bring full salvation to all. Waggoner understood the event at Mt. Sinai as being an opportunity for the people to become the children of God through adoption by the transformation of their hearts, yielding their allegiance to Him instead of another lord.

Ellen White supported Waggoner and his view as seen in this excerpt for *Desire of Ages*:

When the law was proclaimed from Sinai, God made known to men the holiness of His character, that by contrast they might see the sinfulness of their own. The law was given to convince them of sin, and reveal their need of a Saviour. It would did this as its principles were applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. This work it is still to do. In the life of Christ the principles of the law are made plain; and as the light of Christ reveals to men their need of His cleansing blood and His justifying righteousness, the law is still an agent in bringing us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.⁸²

Sister White connected the "schoolmaster" law in Galatians with the covenant issue. But this statement also reveals her belief that what happened at Sinai was a Holy God offering

spiritual life to a people, who, through receiving Him as their Lord in their hearts, would become a peculiar treasure and a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. The brethren opposing Waggoner did not see this because they were caught up in defending the law, and especially the Sabbath, from all attacks. The stand that they had taken on the law in Galatians would constantly blind them to what Waggoner was really saying. Thus Ellen, White's repeated rebukes to Smith and Butler concerning their, "weighing every precious heaven-sent testimony by your own scales as you interpret the law in Galatians"⁸³; repeating the "same piece that was manifested by the Jews"⁸⁴, of Christ's time; and, "cherishing a hobby as to usurp the place of Christ"⁸⁵, reveal a problem of the heart of man in accepting God as Lord. Waggoner's presentation was totally committed to remedying this problem. Because of this basic difference, the two groups would never really communicate on the same level throughout the whole discussion.

After setting the basis of the covenants upon the response of the heart to the sovereignty of God, Waggoner went on to show that the means by which Israel received pardon and salvation was the same promised in the new covenant. His argument went like this: 1) the difference between the old and new covenants was the promises upon which they were founded: 2) the promises of the new covenant were to cause the law to become a part of the people's minds so that they would "delight in it and acknowledge its holiness", that it would become the rule for all actions through love; 3) those whose hearts had the law within would not sin, and would delight in doing God's will: 4) the characteristics of those who had the law written upon their hearts would be, according to Paul, exactly what God offered the Israelites at Sinai, to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.⁸⁶ In this manner, Waggoner connected the salvation of the Gospel in New Testament times with that of the Old. In addition to this, he showed that the covenant

made with Abraham was nothing less than the new covenant which was then the everlasting covenant.⁸⁷ God had one single plan in mind for the restoration of man to God from the beginning to the end. By defining salvation in terms of the everlasting covenant, righteousness by faith became more than merely a transaction or a contract; it included a heart response in which the believer gave his affections as well as his mental consent to God. By including both, man was able to receive the transformation needed to redeem him from the bondage of sin.

Again, Ellen White confirms this as the message she heard and was so excited about. She wrote a special testimony in 1896 to some at Battle Creek concerning her convictions in regards to Waggoner's message. The reader is encouraged to carefully examine the whole testimony found in *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*.

This is the testimony that must go throughout the length and breadth of the world. It presents the law and the gospel, binding up the two in a perfect whole, (see Romans 5 and 1 John 3:9 to the close of the chapter.) These precious scriptures will be impressed upon every heart that is opened to receive them ... "As many as receive Him, to them gave He to become the son of God, even to them that believe on His name." These have not a mere nominal faith, a theory of truth, a legal religion, but they believe to a purpose, appropriating to themselves the richest gifts of God ... This is the very work which the Lord designs that the message He has given His servants shall perform in the heart and mind of every human agent. It is perpetual life of the church to love God supremely and to love others as they love themselves. There was but little love for God or man, and God gave to His messengers just what the people needed.⁸⁸

As for the interpretation of the new covenant being present in the Old Testament, she was clear that the Abrahamic covenant contained all there was needed for salvation. Nothing more was to be added. Notice what she said in 1890 concerning the entering of the "old covenant."

But if the Abrahamic covenant contained the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai?— In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. In delivering them from Egypt, God sought to reveal to them his power and his mercy, that they might be led to love and trust him.

But there was a still greater truth to be impressed upon their minds. Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God's law, Saviour. All this they must be and they must be taught.⁸⁹

This was the core of Waggoner's presentation on the subject of the covenants. It dealt with the proper nature of God's covenant, stating that it was not a legal transaction as humans perceive it; it was a relationship in which God promised and man responded with heart and mind in believing that God would accomplish what He had promised in His own strength and His own way. Waggoner also showed that the same gospel was present in both the Old and the New Testament times. This salvation of meant that the methods, means, and goals of the men have been consistent from the original promise of redemption God gave Adam and Eve after the Fall.

This message revolutionized the doctrine of righteousness by faith as it was being preached within the Seventh-day Adventist church. Sister White saw it correcting errors that had side-tracked the church's mission and give it new life and power.

The ceremonial law, instead of being seen as an imperfect means of salvation as well as a "wall of separation" between the Jews and the Gentiles,⁹⁰ served as superadditions to the everlasting covenant, giving a visible and public way of confessing faith and teaching how God dealt with sin. Only believers could expect forgiveness, for the ceremonies did nothing

to clear sin and guilt. The second major area that the message transformed was that of making a man righteous, that is, obedient to the law of God. The statement, "to make righteous," has caused problems for some but it must be understood that Waggoner did not believe in the Catholic idea of infused righteousness.⁹¹ He simply believed that God could and would make man, through faith, a keeper of the law which would place him in harmony with heavenly principles. The method, by which man was to receive this transformation, was based upon the experience of Christ here on earth.

Waggoner had stated as early as 1887, that he believed that Christ had taken the fallen sinful nature of man after the fall.⁹² Thus he held that Christ was man's substitute and man's exemplar. As man's substitute, he satisfied the penalty of sin for all men. As man's exemplar, he took our nature and without yielding to sin in any way to give man evidence that true faith produces perfect obedience and overcomes the power of the devil in our personal lives. His faith is to be our faith, His confidence in the Father's power to deliver is the same we are to have. And by possessing this faith, this great appreciation of God's ability to do what He promises, sinful man can overcome sin.

From the idea of Christ's example of faith, Waggoner developed the concept of sinless living based upon the doctrine of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Many have been confused with this concept, because it seems difficult to believe such a doctrine without falling into legalism. Again one must understand what faith is and how it is related to the everlasting covenant. A. T. Jones best stated what the two of them meant;

And in this word "faith" I mean not a mere theoretical notion, but "faith" in its only true meaning of the will submitted to Him, the heart yielded to Him, and the affections fixed upon Him ...

And "Obey"?—Of course they (the angels) obey. But the obedience is not an outward compliance, or of law; but the free-flowing service of love, which is the only true obedience in heaven or earth. And in this obedience, of course, they live; for it is the very expression of the life and righteousness of God which is the faith of Jesus Christ through the grace of God.⁹³

(quoting Ellen White from *Mount of Blessing*, p. 161) "But in Heaven service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry, the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God make their service a joy. ...

Again note the sentence that "in heaven service is not rendered in the spirit of legality." A holy angel, of his own choice, rendering service by the law would be "legality." But for angels to be constrained by bargain and "compact," upon "condition," and proviso, to render service by the law and in order to get life or to have life—that would change it from "ity" to "ism" to and make it only legalism. And for sinful man to render service by the law is also only legalism.⁹⁴

Waggoner and Jones were convinced that the new or everlasting covenant was based upon a heart relationship that resulted in obedience to all of God's commandments. This went for angels in heaven and it was the case for all men. When Christ became a man, He too served God according to the everlasting covenant and not out of a sense of legality. And the fact that He truly took our fallen sinful nature, without yielding to sin, gives every sinner the same method of overcoming sin, namely, true faith. Understanding these men's definition of faith clearly shows they were not espousing a perfectionism which would be a life of ever striving to reach a standard by one's self by performing perfectly. They sought to establish righteousness by faith upon the principle that one was converted from sinful ways by believing and appreciating God's power to keep His promises of salvation. There are several articles that have been compiled in a book,

Lessons on Faith, in which both men explain this concept repeatedly.⁹⁵

Waggoner's Later Presentations of The Everlasting Covenant

Waggoner continued to teach and publish his core views of the covenants up until the turn of the century. He was, however, to become involved with certain ideas that tainted the thrust of his earlier presentations. He began to teach what he called, "spiritual infinities," which proposed that one's spouse here on earth might not be one's partner in heaven; thus it was proper to form a "spiritual" union with someone now in preparation for heaven.⁹⁶ By 1897 he was also teaching what would be called a subtle form of pantheism. This latter teaching was included in his final two books, *Glad Tidings*, a study of the whole book of Galatians, and *The Everlasting Covenant*, both published in 1900.

*Glad Tidings*⁹⁷ reiterated the basic themes Waggoner had championed in his reply to Butler in 1887. Most everything remained the same, such as the identity of the "schoolmaster", the proper place of the ceremonial law, the covenants, and the identification of "the elements of bondage." A quick perusal of chapters three and four would convince the reader that Waggoner had not changed his views. There are places, however, where he interjects pantheistic sentiments in the form of applications to one's personal spiritual life. This is best illustrated by McMahon's comparison between the 1900 edition and the 1972 edited reprint.⁹⁸

The same evaluation of *Glad Tidings* can also be applied to *The Everlasting Covenant*. The views to which Waggoner first presented in the Sabbath School lessons of 1890 are still prominent in this final book. He still taught that the problem at

Sinai was primarily with the promises of the people.⁹⁹ The Abrahamic covenant was identical to the everlasting covenant.¹⁰⁰ The purpose of God for Israel was for them to be His people by accepting Him as their God and allow Him to make them obedient to His law which would make them a special nation on earth.¹⁰¹ These are just a few examples of the continuity of Waggoner's message up until 1900.

There is also a large section in *The Everlasting Covenant* which distorts the original message, due to pantheistic leanings. This section, chapters twenty to twenty-three, speaks of Christ becoming a part of man through the intake of physical food. This idea was to affect Waggoner's view of the incarnation, for he would apply it to John 1:14, "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." He reached this view by removing the distinction between figurative speech and literal speech. Here is one example. Waggoner answers the question, "But how can we eat His flesh and drink His blood?" Then he states the truth that Christ's words are spirit and life. Then he follows with this explanation,

The life that we get from bread is the life of Christ, the Word of God, since everything that grows comes from the Word ... By ordaining that men shall live by eating, and making them absolutely dependent on their daily bread for life, God has preached the Gospel to every creature, and put before them and into their hands, yes, into their bodies, the way of salvation and life.¹⁰²

Waggoner goes even farther by applying this to the Lord's Supper, almost implying a form of transubstantiation.

So the bread of the Lord's Supper, although it was the ordinary bread that was being eaten in every Jewish family at that time, was nothing else than the body of Christ. The words of Jesus are absolute and unequivocal, and admit to no interpretation. They state a simple fact: "This is My body."¹⁰³

The thrust is clear that Waggoner has used some fanciful logic. By minimizing the distinction between figurative speech and

literal speech, he confuses the understanding of God's person with nature. This confusion tainted Waggoner's earlier understanding of faith. Instead of it being a heart appreciation of a God transcendent and above man, it becomes an acceptance that God is in man by means of physical things like food, water, and air.

There is much to be said for the simile of eating food and accepting Christ personally as one's Saviour,¹⁰⁴ But Waggoner's application is by far incorrect. One wishes that he could have heeded his own words in 1890;

How the power of God can work in a man, accomplishing that which he could not possibly do for himself, no one can tell. It would be as easy to tell how God can give life to the dead. (John 3:8 quoted). How the Spirit works in a man to subdue his passions, and to make him victorious over pride, envy, and selfishness, is known only to the Spirit; it is sufficient for us to know that it is done, and will be done in everyone who wants that work wrought in him, above all and who trusts God for the performance of it.¹⁰⁵

Waggoner's basic presentation of the covenants, from 1887 to 1900, was consistent in respect to most of his views. The major departure from that message is found in the interjection of pantheism which, in essence, nullified his strong emphasis of his earlier days of the nature of faith. Ellen White did support Waggoner's earlier message both in her writings and in her actions by rebuking the opposition. She by no means endorsed his pantheism and was moved to write him accordingly.¹⁰⁶ Thus, when one reads Waggoner's latter works, he should be careful to distinguish between the underlying consistent presentation and the added foreign interpretations.

An Evaluation of Waggoner's Covenant Concept

In evaluating Waggoner's views of the covenants, one must remember the views others had of the subject during the same time period. There was tension within the Christian community

concerning the covenants at the time the Seventh-day Adventist church was in the process of formation. The two major traditions, Reformed and Anabaptist, were in many respects, contrary to one another in the area of the covenants. This was due to their different emphases, the former upon the sovereignty of God and the latter upon the importance of man. De Jong states that the Reformed-Calvinist position had been eclipsed by the more individualistic and experimental approach of the Anabaptists by the time of the Second Great Awakening.¹⁰⁷ His solution to the covenant tension in the church is to return to the Reformed position. By doing this God would be again seen by sinful man as the only source of salvation and restore man to his proper relation to God.¹⁰⁸ More recently, McMahon has echoed the same sentiments, but arrived at his conclusion by actually comparing the Reformed view of the law and the gospel to Waggoner's views.

McMahon states that Waggoner denied the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith by teaching, 'effective' justification, sanctification by faith alone, the sinful nature of Christ, perfectionism, and the mystical atonement. He also claims that this was the reason for Waggoner's fall into pantheism.¹⁰⁹ But one must understand that McMahon is judging Waggoner's teachings by his understanding of Reformed theology. The question that needs answering is whether or not the Reformed position is really the solution by itself.

There are, however, serious problems with the Reformed concept of salvation. This is best explained by Sequeira in his pamphlet, "How Can We Know The Truth Of Righteousness By Faith?". He suggests that the main weakness of Reformed position is that it fails to deal effectively with the "central issue of justification", namely, how God can justify the sinner and still be true to the law which condemns the sinner to death. Although

Christ is our Substitute, by law, the results of sin cannot be transferred from the guilty to the innocent. The position really fosters a kind of "legal fiction." Due to their stand upon legal justification, the Reformed portray Christ as unable to deliver man from the principle of sin and self. Because of the doctrines of predestination and election, they deny that Christ's death gave legal justification to all men. This results in a misunderstanding of the new birth experience, the relationship of sanctification to justification, and the nature of faith.¹¹⁰

The Reformed position is also weak because of its beliefs concerning the application of the covenant concept to church polity and political theory. The great emphasis upon the "theocratic ideal" has many times in their past been another name for the combination of church and state. The weakness is not so much the ideal of a "holy community" as it is the ways in which attempted. The New England theologians consistently developed a theocratic ideal which, to an observer, resembles the establishment of a second Israel.¹¹¹ The "nation under God" ideal was a vestige of the national church concept that these settlers brought from Europe. True, democratic tendencies were latent in some of their theories of church government, but they resemble Anabaptist theology and not Reformed. This is supported by the history of the strict Calvinistic covenantors of Ireland and Scotland who applied the covenants to church and state issues.¹¹² De Jong identifies the Presbyterians as being those who brought this concept to America.¹¹³ This emphasis would prove to be the foundation for the National Reform Association of the late 1800's.

Many good points can be found in the Reformed position. The covenants were understood not as a doctrine of the church but as a "basic motif or pattern continuing and modifying various doctrines in systematic theology." The Fall of Man is seen not only as the

breaking of law, but also the breaking of a relationship or covenant. Salvation was to restore that relationship. God is always pictured as initiating all covenants and defining all limits and requirements. the view of the Christian life is one that the entire life and everything with it should be consecrated to God, not just one's spiritual life. Finally, history should be interpreted from Eden lost to Eden restored in light of the covenant relationship.¹¹⁴

The Reformed position, due to its weakness in the area of "the central issue of justification", really does not offer the solution to the tension within the Christian church in regards to the covenant question. It does hold certain views that enhance the covenant concept which truly aid in affecting a unifying influence in the religious and practical life of the church. The Anabaptist tradition also has its good points, such as the voluntary membership in the covenant. This would be considered more in line with Christ's legal justification for all men and the nature of faith which affects regeneration of the heart of man. Historically speaking, this approach has placed less emphasis upon ritual and sought to incorporate religion into one's daily life. Civil government should be obeyed unless it conflicted with Scripture.¹¹⁵ All these positions strengthen the moral side of the church in ways that the Reformed position has failed. The revivals of the 1700's changed many religious notions within this tradition.

Revivalism set its mark indelibly on American church life. It explains the intensely emotional quality which has persisted in certain strains of American Christianity; it is responsible for the slightly defiant repudiation of the intellectual elements in the faith. Undoubtedly it met the basic needs of the frontiersman: the stark simplicity with which it set forth sin and salvation as alternatives demanding an immediate choice were close to his experience and within his grasp. ... The profounder regions of Christian experience remained outside of the grasp of the revivalist. The crudity and violence of frontier life naturally resulted

in a strong emphasis on the moral transformation which faith effects. But morality was conceived wholly in personal terms. Its wider implications were ignored, and its attack was often limited to the more obvious evils—drinking, swearing, gambling. ... It lacked theological depth, but like the society which it served it was possessed of abundant vitality, and had as little doubt of its power to claim America for Christ as of its duty to do so.¹¹⁶

The danger that the revival movement represented to the Anabaptist approach can be understood when one remembers that it already tended towards the practical instead of the theological.¹¹⁷ With the coming of the revivals of the 1800's, there was a great difference between, say, Menno Simons' teachings, and that social gospel of the revivalists. Thus, due to the overbalanced preaching during these periods, much of the good doctrine had been neutralized into simple legalism, moralism, and emotionalism.

The National Reform Movement that arose during the mid-19th century was a mixture of the above traditions. Unfortunately, it appeared to have the worst of both. It combined the "theocratic ideal" of the Reformed theology with the emotionalism of the revivals. The results were bad, not only for those it discriminated against but for the churches that espoused it. By accepting such a position, spiritual matters were forgotten by the all-consuming crusade to make everyone religious. It is ironic that in striving so hard to institute religion, many would actually lose their ability to represent God aright as One who seeks the best good by love.

As for Waggoner's presentation itself, the evidence shows that he incorporated concepts of both the Reformed and old Anabaptist views of the covenants and justification by faith. He accepted the Reformed ideas of the sovereignty of God without the predestinarian slant, the covenant concept as a "basic motif", and that all of a person's life is to be consecrated to God in

willing service. He accepted the voluntary membership from the Anabaptists as well as the emphasis upon the practical, but he also interjected ideas that make his presentation unique. First and foremost, he saw that the nature of faith was active, and such a heart response from man was different from the legal justification that Christ gives to all men. The change of affections of the heart constituted conversion which opened the way to grasp the promises of God to deliver man from sin and self. The second element that makes his presentation unique is found in his application of the distinct Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. This revealed God's covenantal promises, His methods, His goals, everything that pertained to the covenant relationship. The law of God was reinstated as the rule of life, not just morality. The perfecting of a character countered effectively the popular push to make others or one's self righteous because the goal was not just to change actions, it was also to change the heart. Waggoner seems to have steered clear of the weaknesses in those views that were prevalent at his time and yet restored the good to an even better position.

There is difficulty in determining why Waggoner fell into pantheism. McMahon's theory that it was latent in his teachings from the start does not satisfy the problem because he depends so much upon the Reformed position of justification by faith which has been seriously questioned as being incomplete. Ellen White's descriptions of the effects of Waggoner's message strengthen the conviction that what he taught in and after 1888 was the genuine gospel.¹¹⁸ The subject of Waggoner's pantheism is surely too complex and broad for this study. Yet it might very well be that the answer lies in the counsel Waggoner himself had given when discussing the Galatian problem. This author is inclined to believe that Waggoner lost his faith, something that Ellen White

mentioned could happen and its possible reasons.¹¹⁹ As a result, he put his trust in something other than Christ for his salvation.

Given the time in which Ellet J. Waggoner lived, one must admit that his views of the covenants were novel in many respects and deserve more study and evaluation in regards to the subjects of justification by faith and the relationship of law to the gospel. Such a study could explain and possibly vindicate, to some extent, the Seventh-day Adventist church in its distinctive beliefs of the seventh-day Sabbath and the cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary. With the present emphasis of many American churches upon prophecy and events that foretell Christ's soon return and the growing interest to restore religion on a national basis, Waggoner's presentation takes on greater significance and power. His message might offer the only viable means of preparing a people who can properly represent Christ to the world.

ENDNOTES

1. Peter De Jong, *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology: 1620-1847*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1945), p. i.
2. Ibid.
3. David L. Neilands, *Studies in the Covenant of Grace*, (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), p. v.
4. De Jong, *The Covenant Idea*, pp. 15, 16.
5. Ibid., p. 17.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 18.
9. Ibid., p. 73.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 48.
12. George Leon Walker, *Some Aspects of the Religious Life of New England with Special Reference to the Congregationalists*, (New York: Silver, Burdett and Co., 1897), p. 89, quoted by De Jong, *The Covenant Idea*, p. 7.
13. De Jong, *The Covenant Idea*, p. 73.
14. R.W. Schwarz, *Lightbearers to the Remnant*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979), p. 14.
15. Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic*, vol. 1, 4th ed., (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1971), p. 134.
16. Schwarz, *Lightbearers*, p. 14.
17. Bailey, *The American Pageant*, p. 134.
18. Alec R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, The Pelican History of the Church, vol. 5, rev: ed., (London: Cox 61 Wyman, Penguin Books, 1974), p. 238.

19. Schwarz, *Lightbearers*, p. 14.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., pp. 22, 31.
22. Eric Syme, *A History of SDA Church-State Relations in the United States*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1973), p. 20.
23. Ibid., p. 21.
24. Ibid., pp. 24, 25.
25. Ibid., pp. 29, 30.
26. Ibid., p. 38.
27. Ed Magnuson, "Pressing the Abortion Issue," *Time*, September 24, 1984.
28. Alonzo T. Jones, "National Reformed Presbyterianism," *The American Sentinel*. August 1, 1889, pp. 2-6.
29. Schwarz, *Lightbearers*, pp. 59, 67-68.
30. Ibid., p. 109.
31. Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, rev. ed., (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948), p. 165.
32. Alonzo T. Jones, "God's Everlasting Covenant," Remarks made in the Battle Creek Sanitarium Sabbath School, n.p., July 20, 1907, p. 31.
33. Ellen White made several statements to this effect. See *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), pp. 235, 363. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1962), p. 89.
34. George I. Butler, "The Law in Galatians," (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1886), p. 10; Ellet J. Waggoner, "The Gospel in the Book of Galatians: A Review," (Oakland, Calif.: n.p., 1888), p. 11.
35. Butler, "The Law in Galatians," p. 38; Waggoner, "The Gospel in the Book of Galatians," pp. 26, 29.
36. Ibid.

37. Butler, "The Law in Galatians," p. 9; Waggoner, "The Gospel in the Book of Galatians," p. 6.
38. Butler, "The Law in Galatians," p. 7.
39. The reader is referred to Schwarz, *Lightbearers*, pp. 183-197 for an overview of the problem. Waggoner admitted his mistake in the *Signs* in "The Gospel in the Book of Galatians," p. 4. Schwarz mentions that Butler had the impression that he was infallible, *Lightbearers*, pp. 186, 189. Ellen White wrote Butler a letter found in *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 297-300, that rebukes him for trying to mold the work to his mind. She also warned him that if he and others did not change their course they would not recognize the latter rain and loud cry when it came.
40. Tim Crosby, "Ellen G. White and the Law in Galatians: A Study in the Dynamics of Present Truth," (paper presented for graduate class, Andrews University, 1980), p. 22.
41. Butler, "The Law in Galatians," p. 78.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75, 78.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 44. Waggoner identified this tendency in, "The Gospel in the Book of Galatians," pp. 11-12, 29-30.
46. Waggoner, "The Gospel in the Book of Galatians," pp. 19-20.
47. This is evident from Waggoner's arguments in regards to circumcision and the function of the ceremonial law, "The Gospel in the Book of Galatians," pp. 6, 43-45.
48. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 55, 1890, quoted by Crosby, "Ellen White and the Law in Galatians," p. 27.
49. Uriah Smith to Ellen White, February 17, 1890, quoted by Crosby, "Ellen White and the Law in Galatians," p. 20.
50. Crosby, "Ellen White and the Law in Galatians," p. 17.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
52. Uriah Smith, "God's Covenants with Men," *Review and Herald*, September 1, 1887; "The Two Covenants, September 13 to November 1, 1887," *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, November, 1887 to March, 1888; *The Two Covenants*, (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and

Herald, n.d.).

53. Smith, *The Two Covenants*, pp. 5, 6.

54. Ellet J. Waggoner, *Senior Sabbath School Quarterly for January 4 to March 29, 1890*, (Oakland, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1889), pp. 8, 9; Jones, "God's Everlasting Covenant," pp. 11, 12.

55. Smith, *The Two Covenants*, p. 18.

56. Ibid., pp. 18, 19.

57. Ibid., pp. 19, 20.

58. Ellet J. Waggoner, *The Everlasting Covenant*, (International Tract Society, 1900), pp. 321, 322.

59. C.H. Jones to Uriah Smith, 18 February, 1890, Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Washington, D.C.

60. Dan Jones to M. Larson, 2 January, 1890, Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Washington, D.C.

61. Dan Jones to R.A. Underwood, 20 January, 1890, Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Washington, D.C.; Dan Jones to E.W. Farnsworth, 10 February, 1890, Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Washington, D.C.

62. Smith, Editor's note, *Review and Herald*, January 28, 1890.

63. W.W. Sharp to O.A. Olsen, 22 January, 1890, Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Washington, D.C.

64. Ellen White, Letter 59, 1890, quoted by Crosby, "Ellen White and the Law in Galatians," p. 24.

65. Dan Jones to R.A. Underwood, 14 March, 1890, Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Washington, D.C.

66. Dan Jones to R.M. Kilgore, 16 March, 1890, Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Washington, D.C.

67. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 93.

68. White, *Selected Messages*, pp. 234, 235.

69. Robert Wieland has compiled a large group of statements of Ellen White concerning the messages of Waggoner and Jones. The reader is directed to *An Introduction to the 1888 Message Itself*,

(Baker, Oregon: Adventist Forum Association, n.d.), pp. 111-126.

70. Ellen G. White, letter S-24, 1892, quoted by Wieland, *An Introduction to the 1888 Message Itself*, p. 114.

71. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 94.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

73. White, letter 59, 1890, quoted by Crosby, "Ellen White and the Law in Galatians," p. 24.

74. Ellen White, letter 51-a, 1895, quoted by Wieland, *An Introduction to the 1888 Message Itself*, p. 116.

75. Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1951), p. 46.

76. Ellen White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), p. 79.

77. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91-92.

78. Crosby, "Ellen White and the Law in Galatians," p. 17.

79. Dan Jones to R.A. Underwood, 18 February, 1890, Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Washington, D.C.; Dan Jones to E.W. Farnsworth, 10 February, 1890, describes U. Smith's opposition to Waggoner's statement: R.A. Underwood, "The Law and the Covenants," (n.p., 1908), pp. 35, 36.

80. Butler, "The Law in Galatians," p. 10; Smith, *The Two Covenants*, p. 18; Underwood, "The Law and the Covenants," p. 36.

81. Waggoner, *Sabbath School Quarterly*, lesson no. 16, p. 11.

82. Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), p. 30.

83. Ellen White, letter 83, 13 March, 1890, quoted by Crosby, "Ellen White and the Law in Galatians," p. 25.

84. *Ibid.*

85. Ellen White, Manuscript 55, 1890, quoted by Crosby, "Ellen White and the Law in Galatians," p. 27.

86. Waggoner, *Sabbath School Quarterly*, lessons 17-18, pp. 12-21.

87. Ibid.
88. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 94, 95.
89. Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), p. 371.
90. This idea of a "wall of separation" between the Jews and the rest of the world was held by Butler, "The Law in Galatians," p. 8; By Smith, *The Two Covenants*, pp. 22, 23. There was a great difference of opinion on the interpretation of Ephesians 2:13-15. Both Jones and Waggoner believed that the "wall" first included the enmity of sin in the heart of man then the division between the Jews and the Gentiles. Alonzo T. Jones wrote a clear description of their views in, "The Three Angel's Messages," lessons given in the *General Conference Bulletin* of 1895, reprint, (Angwin, Calif.: Pacific Union College Press, 1977), pp. 192-194.
91. Robert Wieland clarifies this problem in his book, *The 1888 Message: An Introduction*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), pp. 76-77.
92. Waggoner, "The Gospel in the Book of Galatians," p. 62.
93. Jones, "God's Everlasting Covenant," p. 19.
94. Ibid., pp. 25, 26.
95. A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner, *Lessons on Faith: A Selection of Articles and Sermons*, compiled by John O. Ford, (Angwin, Calif.: Pacific Union College Press, n.d.).
96. A.V. Olson, *Through Crisis to Victory, 1888-1901*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), p. 313.
97. Ellet J. Waggoner, *Glad Tidings*, (International Tract Society, 1900).
98. David P. McMahon, *Ellet Joseph Waggoner: The Myth and the Man*, (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1979), pp. 175-178.
99. Waggoner, *The Everlasting Covenant*, p. 397.
100. Ibid., pp. 302, 303.
101. Ibid., p. 332.

102. Ibid., p. 253.
103. Ibid., p. 254.
104. Ellen White used this metaphor in *Desire of Ages*, p. 389.
105. E.J. Waggoner, *Living by Faith: Christian Growth*, Bible Student's Library, no. 75, (n.p.: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1890), pp. 8, 9.
106. Olson, *Through Crisis to Victory*, pp. 313, 314.
107. De Jong, *The Covenant Idea*, p. 195.
108. Ibid., p. i.
109. McMahon, *Ellet Joseph Waggoner*, pp. 185, 186.
110. E.H. Sequeira, "How Can We Know The Truth Of Righteousness By Faith?", *The Gold Mine of Bible Truth*, no. 3, (n.p.: 1981), pp. 5-8.
111. De Jong, *The Covenant Idea*, pp. 211, 212.
112. Jones, "National Reformed Presbyterianism," pp. 10-27.
113. De Jong, *The Covenant Idea*, p. iv.
114. Ibid., pp. 49-62.
115. Harold Grimm, *The Reformation Era: 1500-1650*, 2nd ed., (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973), p. 223.
116. Gerald R. Cragg, *The Church & the Age of Reason 1648-1798*, *The Pelican History of the Church*, vol. 4, (London: Hazell Watson & Viney, Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 184, 185.
117. Grimm, *The Reformation Era*, p. 219.
118. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 359-364.
119. Robert Wieland, *The 1888 Message: An Introduction*, pp. 65-72. He cites several statements of Ellen White to the effect that their message was not inherently faulty and if the two men might give up such would not prove their message wrong.

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