

An analysis of

Larry Kirkpatrick's

Cleanse and Close

***Last Generation Theology
in 14 Points***

by Daniel McFeeters

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For much of my life, I have heard the concepts of last generation theology (or LGT) preached from pulpits, integrated into Bible studies, and heralded at conservative campmeetings and conventions around the country. I have at times studied into various issues touched upon by LGT, but only recently did I become aware of the terminology and make a determined study into the history and teachings of LGT itself. In doing so, I have closely examined many of my own beliefs in light of the Scripture, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I have come to realize just how much *more* I have to learn about the great issues surrounding the nature of Christ, the atonement, and the final events of Bible prophecy.

LGT draws support from several passages in the writings of Ellen G. White, such as the following:

“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, page 69)

“Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14.” (Great Controversy, page 425)

One of the main tenants of last generation theology is the teaching of the necessity of overcoming *all* sin in the last days. LGT teaches that the last generation must reach an absolute standard of maturity or perfection, unlike any other generation in history. God then uses this “character maturity” of His last-generation followers as an example to the universe that His law can be kept. This ultimately defeats Satan in the great controversy and allows events on earth to come to a close. In support of this belief, LGT emphasizes teachings such as *the fallen nature of Christ*, *the unfinished atonement*, and *the nature of sin*. The strong emphasis on character perfection leads to an emphasis on sanctification as necessary and prerequisite to salvation, and a corresponding deemphasis of the teaching of justification by faith.

As I have studied the teachings of LGT, I have found it to be a clarion call for reform. However, I have also found it to be based on principles for which I have not found support in either the Bible or the writings of Ellen G. White. It concerns me that the core principles of LGT, while being so very close to the truth which I hold dear, seem to come dangerously close to replacing the grace of Christ with a gospel of salvation by works.

Because of these concerns, I have undertaken a study of Pastor Larry Kirkpatrick's 14 points of LGT, as presented on his website www.lastgenerationtheology.org and in his recent book, *Cleanse and Close*. While Kirkpatrick is by no means the sole authority on LGT, his 14 points seem to be representative of the views generally held by those who teach LGT.

In some cases, I have taken the liberty to interpret “code words” based on the context. These interpretations are based on the published teachings of key supporters of LGT: Larry Kirkpatrick, Dennis Priebe, Kevin Paulson, Herbert Douglass, and M. L. Andreasen.

This document should not be interpreted as a personal attack on Kirkpatrick or any of the individuals mentioned. Rather, it is questioning a system of belief that has affected a great number of Seventh-day Adventists. Although last generation theology has received much discussion, it has perhaps not been critically analyzed enough by recent followers. I do not present this as a final “refutation” or “rebuttal” to Kirkpatrick's LGT 14, but as a way of asking for further clarification and study into the issues raised. I think the discussion should continue, in a Christian manner, to the end that we may “come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” Ephesians 4:13

Unlike many critics of LGT, I do *not* believe that Christian perfection is a false idea. There is much evidence in the Bible and the writings of Mrs. White on the necessity of gaining victory over sin. Also, those living at the close of time *will* live in the sight of God without a mediator. Even the concept that the timing of Christ's coming is affected by the actions of His church, is not without biblical and Spirit of Prophecy support. For this reason, it is not my design to refute these beliefs, but to look at the system of last generation theology as a whole.

In the following paragraphs, you will find Larry Kirkpatrick's *Last Generation Theology in 14 points*¹ quoted in *red, italicized type*, with my comments in normal type. Throughout the remainder of this document, and in the appendices, I will follow the convention of quoting Kirkpatrick and LGT supporters in *red type* while quoting other authors in normal or *italicized* black type.

The following 14 points outline a positive view of the gospel in the context of the great controversy war and Heaven's plan to draw it to a close via divine-human cooperation. Jesus' design

1 Downloaded from <http://web.archive.org/web/20140303230550/http://lastgenerationtheology.org/lgt/ori/ori-lgt14.php>

for the plan of redemption takes us all the way to the joyous call to spiritual battle enfolded in the Bible's last chapter: "The Spirit and the bride say 'Come!'"

This introduction mentions a "divine-human cooperation." This is expanded in the teachings of LGT, which place the overcoming or perfected saints as playing a pivotal role in the final battle of the great controversy. It claims that those who overcome will vindicate God's law and His justice before the universe, defeat Satan, and answer questions that remained unanswered after the cross.²

Mrs. White does refer to a divine-human cooperation, but only in reference to the gospel commission, or the experience of sanctification in the individual believer's life.³ In what way is the *great controversy* drawn to a close via "divine-human cooperation?"

Also, I do not understand how the reference to Revelation 22:17 is a call to "spiritual battle." Revelation 22 pictures the final conclusion of the great controversy, where those who "come" are invited to "take the water of life freely." Perhaps this is a reference to the close of probation (v. 11) and the necessity of keeping the commandments as a prerequisite to having access to the tree of life (v. 22)?

Anthropology

1. Born With Weaknesses and Tendencies to Evil

Man was designed to live, not to die; wired to succeed, not to fail. But at the Fall, his nature was dramatically disordered, so that he is born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. There is now in the fallen human organism little inclination to cause him to seek God or His righteousness.

2 See Appendix B, cf Appendix G.

3 See Appendix C.

These statements seem to be given as points of belief, although Kirkpatrick is clear that they should not stand as an addition to the 28 fundamental beliefs. This statement parallels Seventh-day Adventist belief #7 on the nature of man,⁴ but with an interesting approach. While admitting to the fallen nature of man, this statement paints a glowing picture of the unfallen nature of Adam and Eve. Reading Genesis, I find that even in Eden, Adam and Eve were entirely dependent on God. Rather than being inherently “designed to live” and “wired to succeed,” they depended on a source outside of themselves for life: specifically the tree of life. When cut off from this source of life, they reaped the results of their own choice: “dying you shall die.” (Genesis 2:17, 3:22-24)

2. *Lost Because of Personal Choices*

Men and women will be lost because of personal choices, not because of being born with disordered natures.

This statement is vital to LGT, because of the strong stance on Christ's fallen nature. Christ took man's fallen or “disordered” nature. This, according to points 7 and 8 below, included inherited tendencies to evil, which caused Him to be tempted “from within” Himself. Thus, it is necessary for LGT to teach a narrow definition of sin: one which includes only conscious “choices” and specifically excludes “disordered natures.” Otherwise, would not Christ Himself have been guilty of sin, by taking man's sinful nature?

Although it is true to say that all are lost because of personal choices, is this perhaps an oversimplification of the definition of sin? Does the teaching of LGT, perhaps, under-emphasize the impossibility of right-doing in the disordered nature? What did Jesus mean when He said, “You must be born again”? (John 3) This statement implicitly defines sin as a series of actions (choices).

4 Refer to the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, #7, the Nature of Man

In my understanding, sin (bad choices) and law keeping (good choices) are seen in one's actions, but are inherently matters of the heart: the fruit of one's relationship to God. While one may be lost because of making wrong choices, the inverse is not necessarily true. One cannot be saved simply by ceasing to make wrong choices, and instead making right choices. The past must be forgiven, and the “disordered nature” must be transformed by the renewing grace of Christ, before it is even possible for man to make right choices out of right motives.⁵

Merit

3. *God Takes the Initiative*

Repentance is a gift from God, who has taken the initiative to bring it within man's reach. His grace is sent out in search of us even before we realize our need.

God does not *just* place repentance and salvation “within man's reach.” His Spirit is drawing everyone to Himself, and only a *choice to resist* His drawing will prevent man from being led to the cross. How else could anyone be saved, for how would the carnal mind desire the things of God?

“The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.' Psalm 40:8”⁶

5 Refer to the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, #10, the Experience of Salvation, see also Appendix D

6 *Desire of Ages*, page 175

4. *No Merit for Our Deeds*

Nothing we do in the Christian walk earns us even the slightest merit toward our salvation.

In his book *Cleanse and Close*, Kirkpatrick here speaks of the necessity of perfect obedience, even though obedience does not earn “merit” toward salvation.

“Perfection of character is attained and maintained throughout our Christian lives if we persist in character surrender. ... the only condition for salvation, really, is character surrender. We live up to all the light granted us... Thus we may be perfect at every stage of growth.”⁷

Kirkpatrick contrasts this “character surrender” with “perfectionism,” which *“emphasizes an absolute point beyond which there can be no further development.”* Kirkpatrick rightly points out the errors of perfectionism, but then goes on to speak of “character maturity.” He argues that “character maturity” is not an issue of salvation but of vindicating God's character. He says, *“It is the matured character that vindicates [God].”⁸*

How does one establish, from the Bible, this distinction between “perfectionism” and “character maturity”? Since this is such a fundamental key to LGT, does one Bible text (Revelation 14:12) give enough foundation on which to build such an important doctrine? Jesus and the apostles emphasized the importance of perfection for *all* Christians throughout all time. Where does the Bible teach that a matured character is necessary to vindicate God in the last generation, even though it's not necessary for salvation?

7 Larry Kirkpatrick, *Cleanse and Close*, page 45

8 See Appendix F

Cooperation

5. *Christ's Character Reproduced in Us*

Justification is God's way of simultaneously counting men right and making them so. In declaring a man just, God writes no fiction. The disciple's walk continues, and through the process of sanctification, the character of Christ is perfectly reproduced in us. Both justification and sanctification are the work of God, and are necessary and causative for salvation.

This seems to be a subtle re-definition of justification and sanctification. Adventist teaching pictures justification as Christ's forgiveness, while sanctification is a transformation of the sinful human nature into a sanctified nature, capable of choosing God.⁹ I do not see, in the Bible, how *sanctification* is causative for *salvation*. By contrast, I see that *salvation* is causative for *sanctification*.

Sanctification is an experience that every believer can have in the present, by choosing God and allowing His grace to transform the life and take control of every choice. This sanctification experience continues daily as a growth in grace.

LGT emphasis on the term “*perfectly reproduced*,” as stated here and in other LGT writings, seems to be given a different or more fundamental meaning than the meaning implied by Mrs. White.

M. L. Andreasen, like Kirkpatrick, taught that a second level of “completed sanctification,” “sinless perfection,” or “character maturity” is required of those living in the last generation. They teach that this maturity is not something that was generally attained by believers through history, but is a goal and requirement of those living at the close of probation.¹⁰

9 See *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*,
<http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/27/27-10.htm>

10 See Appendix F

My question is: Is this doctrine thoroughly grounded in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen White? While the Bible speaks much of perfection, hasn't perfection *always* been a requirement of those who are saved, from Enoch and Job all the way down to our day? Of course, by this we understand that Christ's grace covers areas of ignorance. For example, neither Martin Luther or William Miller every accepted the Sabbath, but Mrs. White makes clear that, prior to 1844, the Sabbath truth was not the test that it has been since then.¹¹

Truth is progressive. Clearly, the experiences of the “latter rain,” the “shaking,” and the “sealing” bring about a collective maturity within God's people that is, perhaps, without precedent. But I have not yet found Biblical support for the claim that this “completed sanctification” is something that was not generally attainable in past generations. Nor do I find that a “better” sanctification is necessary at the end of time, in order to vindicate God's character.

Doesn't this teaching tend toward dispensationalism? Does the belief that Christians must go through the close of probation, hold end-time Christians to a different standard than ever before? Doesn't this imply that God saved past generations *in* their sins? Do we suppose that God only enables full victory in the final generation, and saves others even though they were “imperfect?”

How far can one take the *unqualified* “maturity” or “perfection” described by LGT? That we must reproduce the character of Christ is true, but is this an unqualified, xerox-copy reproduction of the maturity and attributes of Jesus? Even in “perfect” obedience or “maturity” through Christ's strength, can we hope to do for God even what He required of Adam? At the close of human probation, will we have become perfectly mature in love and obedience, in the sense of approaching to the perfection of God?

11 Early Writings, page 42-43

Mrs. White speaks this way of character perfection: *“None need fail of attaining, **in his sphere**, to perfection of Christian character. By the sacrifice of Christ, provision has been made for the believer to receive all things that pertain to life and godliness. God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us the example of Christ’s character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through co-operation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character. This is God’s assurance to us that we, too, may obtain complete victory.”*¹²

Again, in commenting on 1 John 3:3 and 1 John 2:6, she makes the statement: *“As God is holy in His sphere, so fallen man, through faith in Christ, is to be holy **in his sphere**.”*¹³

Notice how, in each case, she prefaces the statement with the qualifier, *“in his sphere,”* that is to say, within the ability and understanding of the human being, aided by Divine grace. Is it true, then, that the final generation must attain to an absolute, unqualified perfection? Or is it possible that the “perfection” of the final generation is merely an extension or continuation of the perfection that is required of every believer?

Undoubtedly, the final events of this earth’s history necessitate a time when the redeemed pass through the close of probation, and stand in God’s sight “without a mediator.” After this time, there’s no more changing sides, no more rebellion, and no more hidden sin to confess. The court is finished, and every case is decided for good or for evil. For the righteous, every sin is blotted from the record books of heaven. There is no need for a mediator, for God’s work of investigative judgment has closed. The righteous living will soon be glorified, but during their remaining days on earth, would not God continue to accept and sustain his weak, humble, and penitent children?

12 Acts of the Apostles, page 531

13 Acts of the Apostles, page 559

6. *Obedience a Condition of Salvation*

Obedience is both a condition for salvation and an ongoing requirement of salvation.

No one will enter the heavenly kingdom without demonstrating in his life the fruit of obedience. However, the Bible plainly teaches that we are not saved by our works. In my reading of inspiration, our works (i.e. obedience) are the fruit of the salvation that is wrought by Christ in our lives.¹⁴

How can obedience be considered a prerequisite to salvation? “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”¹⁵ Is it not the work of grace which enables man to live a holy life? Would it not be more fitting to say, “*Salvation* is both a condition and an ongoing requirement that enables *obedience*?” As stated here, this affirmation is paradoxical with #4. If by our own obedience we enable ourselves to be saved, how can it be maintained that salvation is entirely a *gift*, and not *earned* partly through our own merits by obedience?

In his book, Kirkpatrick discusses this “sequence dilemma.” Which comes first, obedience, or salvation? Kirkpatrick maintains that obedience is *not* merely a fruit of salvation, though he correctly states that we cannot obey in our own strength. He resolves this dilemma in arguing that, at the *same moment* we repent, we receive power to obey. He argues that obedience is *necessary* but not *sufficient* for salvation. He maintains that only Christ's sacrifice *combined* with our obedience is *sufficient* for salvation; and that although we earn no *merit* for obedience, it remains as a *condition* for salvation.¹⁶

I would ask, are these fine distinctions between *necessary* and *meritorious* obedience supported by the teachings of the Scripture? Or does this lead dangerously close to teaching that there is *something* that I

14 See *Steps to Christ*, chapter 7, pp 57 – 65, Matthew 7:20

15 Romans 5:8

16 Larry Kirkpatrick, *Cleanse and Close*, pp. 63-66

must do to earn salvation? If obedience is *not* merely the fruit of salvation; if it is a necessary prerequisite or condition of salvation, yet it is impossible without salvation, then how can salvation be a gift?

Incarnation

7. *Jesus Emptied Himself and Took Our Fallen Flesh*

During His earthly sojourn, Jesus, God from eternity and still God, laid aside out of His possession certain of His powers of deity and lived as a man in fallen flesh among men in fallen flesh. He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God's Holy Law. He could have recovered those powers at any time, but for our sakes chose to live as we do.

The term “fallen flesh” makes a strong statement about that nature of Christ. Is this, perhaps, a more direct and specific definition of Christ's nature than what is warranted by the Scripture and the writings of Mrs. White?¹⁷ Consider the following quotation, from a letter written to elder W. L. H. Baker in 1895:

“Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden. ...

17 See SDA Bible Commentary Volume 7A, Appendix 2, pp. 443 – 456

“Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet He is called that holy thing. It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves: for it cannot be. The exact time when humanity blended with divinity, it is not necessary for us to know. We are to keep our feet on the rock, Christ Jesus, as God revealed in humanity.”¹⁸

8. *Jesus Tempted From Without and From Within*

That which Jesus has not assumed He has not healed. He took our disordered humanity and was tempted both from without and within. Capable of choosing to sin, constantly He chose not to sin. In this sense, His entire earthly life was lived as we will live once we are sealed. Even after probation has closed, His power and presence continue with His followers. Today He grants them an experience of present and complete victory over sin.

The quotation originated from Gregory of Nazianzus, a 4th century theologian: *“For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole.”¹⁹*

18 Idib, p 447, also *Manuscript Releases, volume 13* pages 18-19

19 *Gregory of Nazianzus, Critique of Apollinarius and Apollinarianism*

It is clear from the Scripture that Jesus was tempted by Satan. Doesn't the claim that Jesus was tempted "from within" imply that He had tendencies to evil within himself? Can we *fully* comprehend the mystery of Christ's incarnation? To say that Christ was tempted *from within* would imply that Christ Himself was sinful and also in need of a Savior.

Christ took Adam's fallen nature, but He did not have tendencies to sin. Christ overcame the power of appetite by resisting the temptation in the wilderness. Even though Christ didn't go through the experience of a recovering drug addict, can we not agree that the magnitude and nature of His temptation was such that He can empathize with every fallen child of Adam?²⁰

Atonement

9. Jesus is Currently Making the Final Atonement

Jesus' atonement was promised in Eden. With His incarnation and then death as our Substitute on the cross, His atoning work was begun. He rose from the dead and went to heaven in A.D. 31 to represent us before the Father, who received His sacrifice for us. Through that sacrifice we can be right with God as soon as we accept His gift of forgiveness and heart cleansing. In A.D. 1844 He entered the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, commencing the closing phase of His atonement. Today, Jesus is making the final atonement.

The teaching of the investigative judgment is a firmly held teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This statement highlights a long-standing battle over the meaning of the word "atonement." As early as the 1860's, J. H. Waggoner published articles in the *Review*, applying the

20 See <http://www.andrews.edu/~fortind/EGWNatureofChrist.htm>
<http://sdanet.org/atissue/books/wwhc/hoc02.htm>
<http://sdanet.org/atissue/books/wwhc/hoc-aa.htm>

SDA Bible Commentary Volume 7A, Appendix 2, pp. 443 - 456

word “atonement” only to Christ's ministry in heaven.²¹ Mrs. White, by contrast, used the word “atonement” more broadly, referencing both Christ's sacrificial death and His heavenly ministry.

This difference in semantics was highlighted in the controversy surrounding the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* in 1957. The evangelicals saw the word “atonement” as only applying to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Adventist understood Jesus priestly ministry in the sanctuary as the antitypical “day of atonement.” Which is it: the cross, or the sanctuary in heaven? In sanctuary terms, did Jesus first take the role of sacrifice, and then assume His role as priest, to finish the atonement? Or did Christ hold both roles, Priest and Sacrifice, at His death on the cross?²²

The Bible and Ellen White teach that Christ's *provision* for the forgiveness of sin and His ultimate defeat of Satan, occurred at the Cross. During the investigative judgment, does Christ's ministry add to or “complete” a work that He left unfinished on the cross? Was His death insufficient? Or is His present work simply another *phase* of His work, in which He *applies* the merits of His sacrifice? Jesus is now applying the merits of His shed blood, forever blotting sin from the book of remembrance in Heaven, for all who have truly repented and accepted Christ.²³

Even if we follow the argument that Christ's atonement remained unfinished at the cross, we should be fair in applying the interpretation of the Biblical “day of atonement.” Just as the process remained incomplete until the release of the scapegoat into the wilderness by the hand of a fit

21 Denis Fortin, *The Cross of Christ, Theological Differences Between Joseph H. Waggoner and Ellen G. White*, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (14:2), Autumn 2003, pp. 131-140

<http://www.andrews.edu/~fortind/Waggoner&White.htm>

22 See *Desire of Ages* page 25; quoted in Appendix E

23 See *Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889, quoted in Appendix E

man, would not the “final atonement” remain incomplete until the destruction of sin and Satan at the close of the millennium? Even following this reasoning, how is the “final atonement” completed by the “final generation”?

Some proponents of LGT solve this problem by re-interpreting the Bible, applying the “fit man” to the last generation prior to Christ's second coming.²⁴ Is not this even more problematic, given Mrs. White's clear application of this type to Satan's incarceration and final destruction?²⁵

10. ***Cleansing in Heaven Connected to Cleansing on earth***

Neither Luther nor the Millerite Adventists living in 1844 finished the Reformation or understood the angel messages of Revelation 14 and 18. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is connected to the cleansing and purifying of lives on earth. The sanctuary is cleansed when God has a people who have become so settled into the truth that they will never again be moved to doubt Him or to disobey known duty. The torrent of sin that has needed forgiveness is dried up. Christ's presence remains with those who have chosen Him. The Holy Spirit empowers obedience even after the ministry of forgiveness is closed.

Ellen White teaches that while Christ is ministering in the Most Holy Place, His followers are to purify their lives. She also says that, after the close of probation, the remnant will stand in the sight of God without a mediator.²⁶ However, is not the sanctuary that is cleansed *in heaven*? Is judgment primarily about judging or vindicating *God* by the cleansing of those *on earth*? Or is judgment about God's public review of the books kept *in heaven*; a granting of disclosure to the universe in *His* judgment of the *lives of those on earth*? Is it perhaps stretching the evidence to say that the cleansing of God's people *on earth* is integrally connected to Christ's cleansing of the sanctuary?

24 Dennis Priebe, *Will the Great Controversy End Soon*, quoted in Appendix G

25 See *Great Controversy*, pp. 422, 485, quoted in Appendix E.

26 *The Great Controversy*, p. 425 (quoted at the beginning of this article)

In his book, Kirkpatrick states:

“The Reformation is left unfinished. Not even Seventh-day Adventists have finished the work of God. We have been slow to grasp 'present truth,' but the message of Daniel and Revelation are now coming to fruition. At last we are learning our place in Bible history. Mighty truths are unfolding before our very eyes.

“God has set His people on the pathway to an entirely different religious experience. He wants us to complete the Reformation. There will be a final generation. One day the gospel light shines undiminished as it did in the first century under apostolic preaching. The people who permit that light to fill them will be used of God to end evil once and for all. This is the purpose of the gospel!”

Has God's last-day church really been this blind to the truth all along? Does the author imply that it will take a *remnant* of the remnant to finish the work? Is the “light” of this gospel, this “reformation” of the final generation, consistent with our understanding of the gospel that was passed down from the apostles and prophets? Is *this* “the purpose of the gospel,” that *humans* will end evil once and for all?

Delay and Hastening

11. Delaying the Second Coming Through a Half-Gospel

Jesus' Second Coming could have occurred within the generation that proclaimed the 1844 messages, but the same sins that kept ancient Israel out of the promised land have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. Unbelief, worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.

Is this statement perhaps a subtle attack on the Seventh-day Adventist Church, by implying that the church is teaching a “half-gospel”? Perhaps this is a reference to the theology taught by Ford and Brinsmead during the 1960's and 1970's. Though there has been much discussion of the topic of Righteousness by Faith in the Adventist church ever since 1888, has the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a whole been guilty of teaching a “half gospel” all these years? If the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are so fundamentally flawed, how can this even be God's last-day people?

Mrs. White wrote, “*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.*”²⁷

Kirkpatrick's statement that we have delayed the second coming isn't entirely false, but he fails to state a primary cause which is brought out by Mrs. White. What is this primary cause? Proclaiming the message of the third angel to the world! Even Christ himself declared, “*This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*” (Matthew 24:14)

12. ***Hastening the Second Coming and Embracing the Harvest Principle***

Heaven has put it in our power by consecrated, Christ-reflecting lives to hasten Jesus' return. God will wait for the maturing of Christian character in a significant number of people as the chief condition determining those events, such as the latter rain, loud cry, sealing, and Sunday law, which affect the time when probation for the world shall close, and thus the time of the Second Coming.

27 1 Selected Messages, page 68, see also Counsels for the Church, page 275

This is a direct reference to Ellen White's statement: "*When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*' Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."²⁸

The key element here is reproducing "the character of Christ." This seems to be an odd contradiction of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:14, about the preaching of the *gospel* determining the end. Or is it?

Mrs. White clarifies in the very next paragraph: "*It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.*"

So it is related, after all! Mrs. White here re-states the gospel commission. Could we not also say that Christ has not returned, because the gospel has not yet been preached to all the world? True, this problem *has* resulted from a lack of Christian maturity, which is the point Mrs. White brings out here. When Christ's people follow Him, and *do* what He commanded them to do in Matthew 28:19-20, will not His work shortly be finished?

The idea that Christ waits for the harvest until the harvest is ripe, is a biblical idea. In the parable of Matthew 13, Jesus says, "*the field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.*" Would it not seem that the harvest involves more than the maturing of the *church*, but that of the whole *world*? Therefore, would not the timing of the harvest depend upon the world *and* the church, having become decidedly settled either for or against Christ?

28 *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 69

The outpouring of the “latter rain” and going forth of the “loud cry” are coincident with this full maturing. Would not these events also coincide with the “sealing,” at the conclusion of which comes the close of probation? Would not the righteous who are sealed, be those who have finally and fully committed themselves to Christ?

God knows which ones have finally made their last decision in the great controversy—those who will not turn back. On these, does He not pour out the latter rain? Hence, would not probation close on an *individual* basis for those who receive the seal, even while others are joining the ranks of the Lord *during* the outpouring of the latter rain? At the conclusion of this, would not Christ simply be recognizing the final decision of every individual by standing up and giving the proclamation of Revelation 22:11?

Great Controversy and Decision Time

13. Character Witnesses to the Great Healer

More than forensic declarations only, the gospel is primarily concerned with telling the truth about God as our Best Friend. He is more concerned with our healing than with legal pronouncements. In the great controversy, His character witnesses tell the story of their deliverance.

The Gospel, or Good News, is summed up in John 3:16-17, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

Kirkpatrick claims that the gospel is about God's character and our healing, and downplays the *legal* or *justification* aspect of the gospel. Why do the Bible writers use so many legal terms in reference to the

gospel, such as *law, condemnation, pardon, redemption*, etc? The book of Romans pictures man as condemned to death, and the gospel as the only means of salvation.

Why did Jesus have to die? Could not God have been our friend, and healed our pain, without requiring such sacrifice? Did Jesus die merely to prove a point, or did He die because that was the only way He could provide salvation? Do not the demands of the law require the penalty to be paid for sin, so that God can be both “just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”? (Romans 3:26)

Kirkpatrick here coins the term “character witnesses.” What is the role of the “character witnesses” in the great controversy? In his book, Kirkpatrick states:

“We want our character to testify to the goodness of His character. The question of who will be saved and of whether or not God's character will at last be vindicated, are two completely separate topics. Continual character surrender is what it takes to be saved; full character maturity is what it takes to vindicate God's character.”

“Perfection does not save man, but it does contribute to the vindication of God's character. Whether or not I am saved is a much less important question than whether or not God is found to be just when He is judged. ... Upon [this] question hinges the ultimate security of God's government and fulfillment at last of the promised Second Coming. By telling the truth about God to the world, we vote for His character. ...

“We will be part of the eternal answer to Satan's lies. We will be part of the reason that guarantees that the whole universe will finally and eternally be secure from all rebellion.

“Being part of that answer is the most practical thing a human being can do. We are sought for by God's kingdom as witnesses for His character. Nothing is more meaningful than this aspect of LGT.”²⁹

This is the most meaningful aspect of LGT. And very humbling indeed, to think that God needs us to witness to His character! However, is this the gospel of the Bible? What if God can't find enough “character witnesses”? Is Satan not a defeated foe? Does he still have a chance of gaining the upper hand in the great controversy?

Didn't Christ, by His sinless life on this earth, vindicate the character of God and the holiness of His law once and for all? Didn't Christ fully refute Satan's claims as to the unreasonableness of God's requirements?³⁰ Christ's followers in every age, by overcoming sin, attest to this in their own lives. But does God stand in need of man's help, to finally overthrow Satan and vindicate His law? The “character witnesses” (Revelation 14:12) are another testimony to God's power, but are man's works the final vindication of God's righteousness?

14. *Decision Time for Planet Earth*

In spite of past insubordination, we believe God stands ready to work through a repentant people. He is using Seventh-day Adventists to prepare the willing for translation. No added Fundamental Belief statement is needed to teach LGT. When Adventists embrace the truths they now have they will become the five wise bridesmaids. Adventist truths enflamed by the transforming Spirit will produce the light that will say to the world, “Behold your God!” The character of God will be demonstrated more clearly and winsomely by the followers of Christ than ever before on Planet Earth. It will be decision time for all, everywhere.

29 Larry Kirkpatrick, *Cleanse and Close*, pp 130-132. See also Appendix F for further quotations.

30 *Desire of Ages*, pages 761-762

Again, doesn't this statement implicate the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church of “insubordination” and failing to “embrace the truths”? More importantly, does last generation theology lie dormant in the fundamental teachings and history of Adventism, as an obscure teaching that must be re-discovered and proclaimed in order to transform the church? Or is this perhaps a “new gospel,” built upon subtle re-interpretations of history, and the writings of some of the pioneers of the the 1888 message?

Is our focus to prepare ourselves for translation? Are we hoping that as the world beholds our perfection, they will want to join us? Is it not, rather, as we accept Christ's grace and *do* the work He has commanded us to do (“Go and teach”), that our characters will become more and more like His, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit? Ultimately, is the primary outworking of the gospel, as taught by Christ and as characterized by the early church, an outworking of perfectionism or of evangelism?

Conclusion

While last generation theology lies very close to the truth, the principles of LGT open up major questions in the areas of christology, soteriology, and eschatology. LGT insists that Christ's fallen nature included tendencies to evil; that He was tempted from within. I have not found biblical support for this position.

LGT pays lip-service to the principles of righteousness by faith. However, the emphasis on absolute perfection and maturity, and the definition of sanctification as an absolute and future attainment, seems to question the power of Christ to save. It tends toward dispensationalism and a view of “faith+works” salvation. The teaching of Christ's unfinished atonement on the cross tends to minimize the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, requiring a specific view of what is meant by “atonement.”

LGT emphasizes that the investigative judgment (“final atonement”) is paralleled by a cleansing of the lives of those living on earth. It teaches that the perfecting of the final generation is integrally connected with Christ's ministration of the “final atonement.” I cannot see how this position is supported in the Bible.

Finally, the idea that the last generation must attain “complete sanctification” or “character maturity” in order to vindicate God and defeat Satan in the great controversy, seems to place man in the position of being the savior of God. It denies the power of God and the ultimate victory of Christ's perfect life and vicarious death on the cross.

I encourage anyone who is studying these topics, to prayerfully study the footnotes and passages referenced under “Further Study” in Appendix A, as well as the quotations in the other appendices.

As I stated in the beginning of this article, I am looking for answers to the questions posed in this article. Please do not take this as a criticism or attack on any individual, but please study this with me. If you have thoughts or insights, please feel free to contact me by email.

Daniel McFeeters
Email: fiforms@gmail.com
Blog: www.fiforms.net

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Titus 2:13-14

Appendix A – Further Reading

The following references may shed light on the teachings of Scripture that are dealt with in this article.

- Matthew 5:43-48
- Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20
- John 3:1-21
- Romans 6-8
- 1 Corinthians 10:12-13
- James 1:12-15
- 2 Peter 3:11-12
- Revelation 14:1-12
- Revelation 22

Additionally, these chapters deal more broadly with the topics of Salvation, the nature of Christ, and the mission of the last generation.

- *Steps to Christ*, Chapter 7, pp 57-65
- *Desire of Ages*, Chapter 79, pp 758-764
- *Desire of Ages*, Chapter 87, especially page 834
- *Christ's Object Lessons*, Chapter 3, pp 62-69
- *The Great Controversy*, Chapter 24, pp 423-431
- *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 5, Chapter 23, pp 207 – 216

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Appendix B – Perfection and Victory over Sin

Is the overcoming of sin possible? Is it necessary? Is human perfection at the center of the last battle of the Great Controversy? The following quotations from the pages of inspiration may shed light on this question:

But it was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to the earth to suffer and to die. He came to “magnify the law” and to “make it honorable.” Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God’s law is unchangeable. Could its claims have been set aside, then the Son of God need not have yielded up His life to atone for its transgression. The death of Christ proves it immutable. And the sacrifice to which infinite love impelled the Father and the Son, that sinners might be redeemed, demonstrates to all the universe—what nothing less than this plan of atonement could have sufficed to do—that justice and mercy are the foundation of the law and government of God.{GC 503.1}

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.” John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. {PP 68.2}

By the facts unfolded in the progress of the great controversy, God will demonstrate the principles of His rules of government, which have been falsified by Satan and by all whom he has deceived. His justice will finally be acknowledged by the whole world, though the acknowledgment will be made too late to save the rebellious. God carries with Him the sympathy and approval of the whole universe as step by step His great plan advances to its complete fulfillment. He will carry it with Him in the final eradication of rebellion. It will be seen that all who have forsaken the divine precepts have placed themselves on the side of Satan, in warfare against Christ. When the prince of this world shall be judged, and all who have united with him shall share his fate, the whole universe as witnesses to the sentence will declare, "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." Revelation 15:3.{PP 79.1}

The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan—the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out—is the lesson book of the universe. Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings. God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation. {PP 154.3}

After the fall God saw that man had no power within himself to keep from sin, and provision was made whereby he could have help. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." One wonderful in counsel was our Helper. The Son of God left the heavenly courts and gave His life as the propitiation for sin. He came to declare that altho the agencies of evil had created rebellion in heaven, and sin had entered the universe of God, yet Christ and the Father would redeem the fallen race. Laying aside His kingly crown and royal robe, He

gave Himself to the human family, to pass through test and trial and thus demonstrate to every son and daughter of Adam that it is possible through faith in Him to resist the devices of Satan. Tempted in all points as man is tempted, Christ overcame through the power of divinity. He seeks to teach men and women that they may overcome through the same power.{ST February 17, 1909, par. 9}

Mighty issues for the world were at stake in the conflict between the Prince of Light and the leader of the kingdom of darkness. After tempting man to sin, Satan claimed the earth as his, and styled himself the prince of this world. Having conformed to his own nature the father and mother of our race, he thought to establish here his empire. He declared that men had chosen him as their sovereign. Through his control of men, he held dominion over the world. Christ had come to disprove Satan's claim. As the Son of Man, Christ would stand loyal to God. Thus it would be shown that Satan had not gained complete control of the human race, and that his claim to the world was false. All who desired deliverance from his power would be set free.{ST February 17, 1909, par. 10}

Ever since the time that man aspired to be as God, and fell through Satan's deceiving power, there has been a controversy between man and his Maker—a determination on the part of man to gain an independence wholly opposed to the life and lessons of Christ. Christians are to lay this struggle for independence on God's altar. Until we do this, God can not imbue us with His Spirit. All self-sufficiency is to be given up. The will is to be wholly yielded to God's will. He who is truly seeking for help from on high will welcome the assistance and counsel that God sends, whatever means He may employ to give His directions.{ST February 17, 1909, par. 11}

In giving His only-begotten Son to live in our world and to be subject to temptation, the Father has made ample provision that we should not be taken captive by the enemy. Meeting the foe, Christ overcame in behalf of humanity. By a study of His experience we are to learn to discern the temptations of Satan, and in the strength of God's grace, to overcome. Through the

imparted merits of Christ, he who was once a sinful human being may be refined and purified, and stand before his fellow men as a laborer together with God. To the earnest seeker after God the divine nature will surely be imparted. The compassion of Christ will certainly be vouchsafed.{ST February 17, 1909, par. 12

In heaven Satan had declared that the sin of Adam revealed that human beings could not keep the law of God, and he sought to carry the universe with him in this belief. Satan's words appeared to be true, but Christ came to unmask the deceiver. He came that through trial and dispute of the claims of Satan in the great conflict, He might demonstrate that a ransom had been found. The Majesty of heaven would undertake the cause of man, and with the same facilities that man may obtain, stand the test and proving of God as man must stand it.{16MR 115.1}

Good and evil are set before us. Which are we choosing? Are we serving and glorifying self, losing sight of the light of the world, or are we denying self and following the Redeemer? Christ is the propitiation for our sins. Laying aside His royal robe and kingly crown, He stepped from His high command, and clothed His divinity with humanity. For our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. (See 2 Corinthians 8:9).{1SAT 320.3}

To us has been given the privilege of laying up treasure in heaven. This we may do by following Christ. He came to our world to demonstrate to the universe that man, his eyes fixed upon God, can be an overcomer. Thus was fulfilled the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Christ humiliated Himself to stand at the head of humanity, that we might be heirs to an immortal inheritance in the kingdom of glory.{1SAT 320.4}

The Lord abhors indifference and disloyalty in a time of crisis in His work. The whole universe is watching with inexpressible interest the closing scenes of the great controversy between good and evil. The people of God are nearing the borders of the eternal world; what can be of more importance to them than that

they be loyal to the God of heaven? All through the ages, God has had moral heroes, and He has them now—those who, like Joseph and Elijah and Daniel, are not ashamed to acknowledge themselves His peculiar people. His special blessing accompanies the labors of men of action, men who will not be swerved from the straight line of duty, but who with divine energy will inquire, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” (Exodus 32:26), men who will not stop merely with the inquiry, but who will demand that those who choose to identify themselves with the people of God shall step forward and reveal unmistakably their allegiance to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Such men make their wills and plans subordinate to the law of God. For love of Him they count not their lives dear unto themselves. Their work is to catch the light from the Word and let it shine forth to the world in clear, steady rays. Fidelity to God is their motto.{PK 148.1}

Appendix C – God's Last Day Church

What role does God's church play in the last days? How does Mrs. White use the phrase “divine-human cooperation”?

The controversy was to wage between Christ and Satan throughout all time. The costly ransom that was provided reveals the value that God set upon man. Christ volunteered to become man's surety and substitute, and took upon himself the penalty of transgression, in order that a way might be provided whereby every son and daughter of Adam may, through faith in their Redeemer, cooperate with heavenly intelligences, and oppose the workings of Satan, and thus bring in everlasting righteousness. The Lord Jesus would take man into partnership with himself. Human intelligences have been endowed by their Creator with capabilities and powers, which, if surrendered to God, will promote his glory in building up his kingdom in the earth. Human beings can reach human beings through the imparted gift of the Spirit of God. Through faith man accepts the world's Redeemer as his Captain, and when standing under his blood-stained banner, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature, and in cooperation with God is to act an important part in revealing the glory of God to a world in the darkness of transgression. Unless man shall fully cooperate with Christ in the work of rescuing souls from evil, the plan of salvation can never be carried out. But through the scheme of redemption, notwithstanding the opposition of Satan's united agencies, the Lord will bring good out of the evil that Satan designed should exist. The counsels of God will stand before unfallen worlds, before heavenly intelligences, before the fallen world, and he will accomplish all the good pleasure of his will. {ST October 8, 1894, par. 8}

Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard. The world is a workshop in which,

through the cooperation of human and divine agencies, Jesus is making experiments by His grace and divine mercy upon human hearts.428{CCh 240.3}

The people of God on earth are the human agents that are to cooperate with divine agencies for the salvation of men. To the souls that have joined themselves to Him, Christ says, “You are one with Me, ‘labourers together with God’” (1 Corinthians 3:9). God is the great and unperceived actor; man is the humble and seen agent, and it is only in cooperation with the heavenly agencies that he can do anything good. It is only as the mind is enlightened by the Holy Spirit that men discern the divine agency. And hence Satan is constantly seeking to divert minds from the divine to the human, that man may not cooperate with Heaven. He directs the attention to human inventions, leading men to trust in man, to make flesh their arm, so that their faith does not take hold upon God.{2SM 123.1}

In this text the two agencies in the work of salvation are revealed—the divine influence, and the strong, living faith of those who follow Christ. It is through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth that we become laborers together with God. Christ waits for the cooperation of His church.... The blood of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the divine Word, are ours. The object of all this provision of heaven is before us—the salvation of the souls for whom Christ died; and it depends upon us to lay hold on the promises God has given, and become laborers together with Him. Divine and human agencies must cooperate in the work....{AG 208.2}

While God was working in Daniel and his companions “to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13), they were working out their own salvation. Herein is revealed the outworking of the divine principle of cooperation, without which no true success can be attained. Human effort avails nothing without divine power; and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail. To make God’s grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort.{LHU 193.4}

As the Lord cooperated with Daniel and his fellows, so He will cooperate with all who strive to do His will. And by the impartation of His Spirit He will strengthen every true purpose, every noble resolution. Those who walk in the path of obedience will encounter many hindrances. Strong, subtle influences may bind them to the world; but the Lord is able to render futile every agency that works for the defeat of His chosen ones; in His strength they may overcome every temptation, conquer every difficulty (Prophets and Kings, 486, 487).{LHU 193.5}

Man can accomplish nothing without God, and God has arranged His plans so far as to accomplish nothing in the restoration of the human race without the cooperation of the human with the divine. The part man is required to sustain is immeasurably small, yet in the plan of God it is just that part that is needed to make the work a success.{4MR 113.3}

We are laborers together with God. This is the Lord's own wise arrangement. The cooperation of the human will and endeavor with divine energy is the link that binds men up with one another and with God.—Manuscript 113, 1898, 1, 2. (“Present Your Bodies a Living Sacrifice,” typed September 8, 1898.){4MR 114.1}

Appendix D - What is Sin?

It is true that men sometimes become ashamed of their sinful ways, and give up some of their evil habits, before they are conscious that they are being drawn to Christ. But whenever they make an effort to reform, from a sincere desire to do right, it is the power of Christ that is drawing them. An influence of which they are unconscious works upon the soul, and the conscience is quickened, and the outward life is amended. And as Christ draws them to look upon His cross, to behold Him whom their sins have pierced, the commandment comes home to the conscience. The wickedness of their life, the deep-seated sin of the soul, is revealed to them. They begin to comprehend something of the righteousness of Christ, and exclaim, "What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim? Was all this love, all this suffering, all this humiliation, demanded, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life?"{SC 27.1}

The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son.{SC 27.2}

When the Jews rejected Christ they rejected the foundation of their faith. And, on the other hand, the Christian world of today who claim faith in Christ, but reject the law of God are making a mistake similar to that of the deceived Jews. Those who profess to cling to Christ, centering their hopes on Him, while they pour contempt upon the moral law, and the prophecies, are in no safer position than were the unbelieving Jews. They cannot understandingly call sinners to repentance, for they are unable to properly explain what they are to repent of. The sinner, upon being exhorted to forsake his sins, has a right to ask, What is sin? Those who respect the law of God can answer, Sin is the transgression of the law. In confirmation of this the apostle Paul says, I had not known sin but by the law.{1SM 229.1}

Those only who acknowledge the binding claim of the moral law can explain the nature of the atonement. Christ came to mediate between God and man, to make man one with God by bringing him into allegiance to His law. There was no power in the law to pardon its transgressor. Jesus alone could pay the sinner's debt. But the fact that Jesus has paid the indebtedness of the repentant sinner does not give him license to continue in transgression of the law of God; but he must henceforth live in obedience to that law. {1SM 229.2}

Christ the Only Remedy—When the mind is drawn to the cross of Calvary, Christ by imperfect sight is discerned on the shameful cross. Why did He die? In consequence of sin. What is sin? The transgression of the law. Then the eyes are open to see the character of sin. The law is broken but cannot pardon the transgressor. It is our schoolmaster, condemning to punishment. Where is the remedy? The law drives us to Christ, who was hanged upon the cross that He might be able to impart His righteousness to fallen, sinful man and thus present men to His Father in His righteous character (Manuscript 50, 1900).{6BC 1110.8}

Appendix E – Christ and the Atonement

Christ on the Cross. Jesus on the cross held both the role of the sacrifice and of the priest:

In stooping to take upon Himself humanity, Christ revealed a character the opposite of the character of Satan. But He stepped still lower in the path of humiliation. “Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:8. As the high priest laid aside his gorgeous pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of the common priest, so Christ took the form of a servant, and offered sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” Isaiah 53:5.

Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. “With His stripes we are healed.”

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.” John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of

peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder." God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the "Son of man" who shares the throne of the universe. It is the "Son of man" whose name shall be called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love.

Desire of Ages, page 25

Jesus fully defeated Satan in His death on the cross:

The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ? The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would

be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God. The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Our only hope is perfect trust in the blood of Him who can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is our only hope in this world, and it will be our theme in the world to come.

Oh, we do not comprehend the value of the atonement! If we did, we would talk more about it. The gift of God in His beloved Son was the expression of an incomprehensible love. It was the utmost that God could do to preserve the honor of His law, and still save the transgressor. Why should man not study the theme of redemption? It is the greatest subject that can engage the human mind. If men would contemplate the love of Christ, displayed in the cross, their faith would be strengthened to appropriate the merits of His shed blood, and they would be cleansed and saved from sin. There are many who will be lost, because they depend on legal religion, or mere repentance for sin. But repentance for sin alone cannot work the salvation of any soul. Man cannot be saved by his own works. Without Christ it is impossible for him to render perfect obedience to the law of God; and heaven can never be gained by an imperfect obedience; for this would place all heaven in jeopardy, and make possible a second rebellion.

God saves man through the blood of Christ alone, and man's belief in, and allegiance to, Christ is salvation. It is no marvel to angels that the infinite sacrifice made by the Son of God was ample enough to bring salvation to a fallen race, but that this atoning sacrifice should have been made is a wonder to the universe. It is a mystery which angels desire to look into. The angels are amazed at the indifference and coldness manifested by those for whom so great a salvation has been provided. They look with grief and holy indignation upon those who do not seek to appreciate the unspeakable gift of God. Instead of offering adoration to God, finite men think themselves capable, without divine unction, of determining what is worthy of praise or blame in their fellow-men. But to be glorified by man is no glory. We should learn to value the praise of man at what it is worth.

Signs of the Times, December 30, 1889

Also reference this discussion of Mrs. White's view of the "atonement" as discussed in the context of the writings of Joseph Waggoner: <http://www.andrews.edu/~fortind/Waggoner&White.htm>

In Mrs. White's description of the day of atonement, she clearly references the eradication of sin and equates this with the destruction of Satan. Nowhere does she imply that Satan's final defeat depends upon human action:

As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. But before this can be

accomplished, there must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement. The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation—a work of judgment. This work must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people; for when He comes, His reward is with Him to give to every man according to his works. Revelation 22:12. {GC 421.3}

Thus those who followed in the light of the prophetic word saw that, instead of coming to the earth at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844, Christ then entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to perform the closing work of atonement preparatory to His coming.{GC 422.1}

It was seen, also, that while the sin offering pointed to Christ as a sacrifice, and the high priest represented Christ as a mediator, the scapegoat typified Satan, the author of sin, upon whom the sins of the truly penitent will finally be placed. When the high priest, by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, removed the sins from the sanctuary, he placed them upon the scapegoat. When Christ, by virtue of His own blood, removes the sins of His people from the heavenly sanctuary at the close of His ministration, He will place them upon Satan, who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty. The scapegoat was sent away into a land not inhabited, never to come again into the congregation of Israel. So will Satan be forever banished from the presence of God and His people, and he will be blotted from existence in the final destruction of sin and sinners.{GC 422.2}

Again, in a later chapter:

The work of the investigative judgment and the blotting out of sins is to be accomplished before the second advent of the Lord. Since the dead are to be judged out of the things written in the books, it is impossible that the sins of men should be blotted out until after the judgment at which their cases are to be investigated. But the apostle Peter distinctly states that the sins of believers will be blotted out “when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ.” Acts 3:19, 20. When the investigative judgment closes, Christ will come, and His reward will be with Him to give to every man as his work shall be.{GC 485.2}

In the typical service the high priest, having made the atonement for Israel, came forth and blessed the congregation. So Christ, at the close of His work as mediator, will appear, “without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28), to bless His waiting people with eternal life. As the priest, in removing the sins from the sanctuary, confessed them upon the head of the scapegoat, so Christ will place all these sins upon Satan, the originator and instigator of sin. The scapegoat, bearing the sins of Israel, was sent away “unto a land not inhabited” (Leviticus 16:22); so Satan, bearing the guilt of all the sins which he has caused God’s people to commit, will be for a thousand years confined to the earth, which will then be desolate, without inhabitant, and he will at last suffer the full penalty of sin in the fires that shall destroy all the wicked. Thus the great plan of redemption will reach its accomplishment in the final eradication of sin and the deliverance of all who have been willing to renounce evil. {GC 485.3}

At the time appointed for the judgment—the close of the 2300 days, in 1844—began the work of investigation and blotting out of sins. All who have ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ must pass its searching scrutiny. Both the living and the dead are to be judged “out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”{GC 486.1}

Appendix F – Completed Sanctification

That LGT teaches two “levels” of sanctification, is evident from the writings of M. L. Andreasen and Larry Kirkpatrick.

From M. L. Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 1947, Chapter 21 “The Last Generation”

*In the Bible both the **process** and the **finished work** are spoken of as sanctification.' For this reason the “brethren” are spoken of as holy and sanctified, though they have not attained to perfection. (1 Corinthians 1: 2; 2 Corinthians 1: 1; Hebrews 3:1) A glance through the Epistles to the Corinthians will soon convince one that the saints there mentioned had their faults. Despite this, they are said to be “sanctified” and “called to be saints.” The reason is that **complete sanctification** is not the work of a day or of a year but of a lifetime. It begins the moment a person is converted, and continues through life. Every victory hastens the process. There are few Christians who have not gained the mastery over some sin that formerly greatly annoyed them and overcame them. Many a man who has been a slave to the tobacco habit has gained the victory over the habit and rejoices in his victory. Tobacco has ceased to be a temptation. It attracts him no more. He has the victory. On that point he is sanctified. As he has been victorious over one besetment, so he is to become victorious over every sin. When the work is completed, when he has gained the victory over pride, ambition, love of the world-over all evil-he is ready for translation. He has been tried in all points. The evil one has come to him and found nothing. Satan has no more temptations for him. He has over come them all. He stands without fault before the throne of God. Christ places His seal upon him. He is safe, and he is sound. **God has finished His work in him.** The demonstration of what God can do with humanity is complete.*

Thus it shall be with the last generation of men living on the earth. Through them God's final demonstration of what He can do with humanity will be given. He will take the weakest of the weak, those bearing the sins of their forefathers, and in them show the power of God. They will be subjected to every temptation, but they will not yield. They will demonstrate that it is possible to live without sin—the very demonstration for which the world has been looking and for which God has been preparing. It will become evident to all that the gospel really can save to the uttermost. God is found true in His sayings.

From Larry Kirkpatrick, *Cleanse and Close*, pages 45-48:

We want to keep clear in our minds two different kinds of perfection: character surrender and character maturity. Perfection of character is attained and maintained throughout our Christian lives if we persist in character surrender. Whatever light heaven is shining on us at a given time, we want to be wholehearted in our response. The only condition for salvation, really, is character surrender. We live up to all the light granted us; we turn to God at every occasion of testing; we surrender to Him every idol just as He reveals it to us. Thus we may be perfect at every stage of growth....

As an LGT Christian, I am not interested in my own salvation or even the salvation of others first; I am committed to the vindication of God's character. That is where we speak of character maturity. It is the matured character that vindicates Him. ...

Character surrender permeates the Christian experience. Character maturity is the goal of this experience. It is the matured Christian character that provides the best evidence testifying to God's righteousness and unselfishness. The Christian may speak of character perfection but must avoid the ditch of perfectionism. The power of God unto salvation is the gospel.

Appendix G – Final Vindication of God

The Central Role of the Last Generation in the Great Controversy, and in completing the “final atonement.”

Excerpted from Larry Kirkpatrick. Price Seventh-day Adventist Church. 1 January 2000, under the heading “*Character Witnesses:*”

Consider this:

Unselfishness, the principle of God’s kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God’s principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan’s claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name. Ed 154.

Thus we see that it is a real part of heaven’s mission for us that we join Jesus in disproving the idea that God is selfish. This is just as much part and parcel of our work as the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). In fact, this is “built-in” to the great commission! And thus when the watchers, be they humans or angels or whomever, turn their gaze upon us, it is exceedingly legitimate for them to expect to see people who are different from the picture that Satan has presented to the universe. He has put forth the claim that “God is selfish and His people are selfish too. But no one, not even God operates unselfishly. This is a lie. Actual unselfishness is a fiction that does not exist.” Our adversary is gambling that even God will be unable to produce witnesses to unselfishness.

When we live in a way that harmonizes morally with God's government, it makes a difference to the universe, because it shows all who are watching that God is telling the truth about sin and Satan is lying about it.

Why hasn't Jesus ended sin in this universe and returned? Very simply, because if God ended the conflict right now, He would not have conclusively demonstrated that unselfishness is the best way for the universe to be operated. To us goes the mission-filled with hope and wonder—to become more fully than any other generation ever has—His ambassadors of unselfishness. When the universe sees Jesus in us, then the end will come. This creation groans in pain, awaiting the manifestation of the sons and daughters of God. (Romans 8:19). When He comes, “we will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is“ (1 John 3:2).

<https://sdayouthfree.wordpress.com/2009/03/06/why-2-k/>

The following is excerpted from M. L. Andreasen's book, *The Sanctuary Service*, Chapter 21:

In the last generation God gives the final demonstration that men can keep the law of God and that they can live without sinning. God leaves nothing undone to make the demonstration complete. The only limitation put upon Satan is that he may not kill the saints of God.. He may tempt them, he may harass and threaten them; and he does his best. But he fails. He cannot make them sin. They stand the test, and God puts His seal upon them.

Through the last generation of saints God stands finally vindicated. Through them He defeats Satan and wins His case.. They form a vital part of the plan of God. They go through terrific struggles; they battle with unseen powers in high places. But they have put their trust in the Most High, and they will not be ashamed. They have suffered hunger and thirst, but now “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them,

nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Revelation 7:16, 17.

The following is excerpted from Dennis Priebe, “*Will the Great Controversy End Soon?*”

Satan still challenges God. He says to God, "All right, Jesus defeated me. Jesus lived the law of God. But where are the people who can do that? Yes, you have had people who have accepted Calvary and their sins have been forgiven. You cover them with the garments of your righteousness, and every now and then they commit sin again. Where are the people who will keep the law of God perfectly as Jesus did? You are in the sanctuary covering up the mistakes of your people. I have not been defeated yet." Then God says to Satan, "I will produce these people, through my grace, in the most degenerate age of earth's history. I will separate them from all sin completely. They will reflect the image of Jesus fully. I will step out of the sanctuary and they will live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor."

Such a people will be produced that will be the wonder of the whole universe. Through them Satan will be forever defeated, and every question that could be raised against the law of God-can humanity really keep it?-will be forever answered in that special people which Scripture calls the 144,000....

But the fit man will be able through the strength of Jesus to hold Satan fast. He will stand tall. It is in the 144,000 that Jesus finally wins the great controversy. It is a desperate struggle between Jesus and Satan. In the Incarnation it was a struggle between Jesus and Satan personally, and during the time of the plagues it is again a struggle between Jesus and Satan, but this time between Satan and Jesus lived out in the experience of the 144,000. By the mere fact that they do not fall into sin, but keep the law of God perfectly, Satan is defeated. His cause is lost, and he is held fast.

God has to give the angels in heaven some assurance that the plan of salvation is completely successful. What assurance do the angels have that the redeemed who have died down through the ages will not go back into sin again? Some of them accepted Jesus on their deathbeds. What assurance do the angels have that they will never sin again?

When God blots out the sins of the living saints, He allows Satan to test them to the uttermost. Satan puts them through every trial that he can devise, under the most discouraging circumstances, but they prove that the plan of salvation is a success. But if the scapegoat could escape, all Israel would lose their lives, not just the 144,000. God is waiting for a people upon whom He is going to stake His throne. God is going to risk all on the 144,000. If the scapegoat should escape, Israel would be lost. The plan of salvation would be proven a failure.

There is only one thing this group will fear during the time of Jacob's trouble. They realize that everything depends on them. They realize that they could disgrace God's throne. This is why this company is going to taste more fully than any other people the experience of Jesus.

<http://www.dennispriebe.com/new/node/45>

Also from Dennis Priebe, Righteousness by Faith, Lesson 16, "Why is it so important?"

Thus the perfect character developed by God's people is crucially important in the final resolution of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. This is the real reason for stressing the concept of perfection in God's end-time people. God claims that total obedience is possible. Satan claims that a sinful nature and character make obedience impossible. Who is telling the truth? Only God's final generation can prove that Satan is a liar.