

From Author to Reader

How This Portrayal Came to Be Written

PROPOSAL ORIGINATED WITH A. G. DANIELLS.—Back in the spring of 1930 Arthur G. Daniells, for more than twenty years president of our General Conference, told me he believed that, at a later time, I should undertake a thorough survey of the entire plan of redemption—its principles, provisions, and divine Personalities—as they unfolded to our view as a Movement from 1844 onward, with special emphasis upon the developments of “1888,” and its sequel.

He urged that I set forth the results in a comprehensive portrayal—one that would honor God and exalt truth, that would enlighten and uplift the Church, and that by the very sweep of its presentation would constitute not only a survey but a summons to advance.

He expressed the earnest hope that it would be both complete and forthright, and documented for serious worldwide worker study. Also that it would round out in historical sequence what he had begun in 1926 in the comparatively brief recital of his epochal *Christ Our Righteousness*. This had become a conviction with him, which he felt he must pass on to me.

His urge met with a definite response in my heart, for I was keenly interested in such a project. But I was awed by its magnitude and far-reaching character. I thought of it as for someone else, more mature and experienced, to undertake. No, he said, he felt it was for me to do—for I had gotten a vision of it, and had a background and burden for it. And I was a connecting link between past leaders and the present. But, he said, it is to be later—not yet, not yet.

DIFFICULTIES TO BE SURMOUNTED.—Elder Daniells recognized the serious problems involved, and sensed almost prophetically certain difficulties that would confront. He knew that time would be required for certain theological wounds to heal, and for attitudes to modify on the part of some. Possibly it would be necessary to wait until certain individuals had dropped out of action, before the needed portrayal could wisely be brought forth. He likewise envisioned the vast toil

and time involved. He pressed me to lay long-range plans to that end, and never to give up. Such was his solemn charge in 1930.

Accepting the assignment, I first sent out a questionnaire to all delegates to the '88 Conference then still living, obtaining their attestations on various items. These were to be held, pending the time of use. They now form the basis of two chapters, "Highlights and Afterglow of the Minneapolis Conference." The quest was quietly under way.

✓ FAIR AND FAITHFUL PORTRAYAL IMPERATIVE.—Daniells admonished me to be fair and faithful to fact, comprehensive and impartial in treatment, and to present the full picture in balance. "Truth has nothing to fear," he admonished, "and everything to gain." He urged me to spare no effort in digging down to the very foundations of the Movement—to get beneath the familiar surface configurations, and to avoid any superficial type of treatment. I must find and set forth the determining factors and the underlying causes of our vicissitudes and advances in fully adopting these great provisions of redemption in Christ, the Eternal Verities of the Faith of Jesus, culminating in the great message of Righteousness by Faith.

He charged me to take due note of the impediments, as well as the incentives, involved in our advance. A true and trustworthy picture was imperative. Truth, he insisted, is never honored by shading or shielding. And only in candid portrayal can we really see the divine hand of God that has so clearly led us. So he urged me to plumb the depths, to record faithfully, and to evaluate the storms, as well as the calms. He wanted the portrayal to be both comprehensive and trustworthy.

PRICELESS MATERIALS FOR GUIDANCE.—Along with this charge Daniells turned over to me priceless data and notes that bared the burden of his heart. And along with them came his collection of valuable quotations that would be helpful as a starter—likewise a number of important books bearing thereon. Most important of all, he turned over to me his assemblage of Ellen G. White special testimonies and letters—letters to him concerning his own work, and to others concerning theirs.

Copies of vital testimonies to others had been placed with him by Ellen White, for guidance and encouragement in his difficult task of leading the Movement. These constituted a blueprint, as it were, of his commission as president during the critical years from 1901 onward. He had the conviction that I should seek to grasp their main

thrust, and pass their principles on to our younger worker body—when the time should come. This I have here endeavored to do.

YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT AND PREPARATION.—Years passed after that memorable episode of 1930. Pressures of Ministerial Association responsibilities intensified, followed by drafts for special research assignments by General Conference officers—first, in 1933, to answer the Conradi charges, then to produce the four-volume *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* set, brought out under the successive presidencies of C. H. Watson, J. L. McElhany, and W. H. Branson. This formidable task called, in preparing Volume IV, for compassing our own early history in relation to the past history of the Christian church at large, in the field of interpretative prophecy.

All three leaders mentioned urged me to be faithful and forthright in my searchings and presentations. They felt that these elements were basic to any adequate portrayal. On this, Watson was emphatic; and Branson even more so.

ADEQUATE COVERAGE INDISPENSABLE.—Then came assigned participation, as one of a team, in a series of conferences with Evangelical leaders, and a part in connection with *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, under R. R. Figuhr's presidency. This was followed by the two-volume *Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, as an outgrowth of "Question 44"—"Champions of Conditionalism Span the Centuries." Thus once more in preparing *Conditionalist Faith*, I was led across the centuries, reviewing and strengthening the sweep of the historical theology of the Christian Era.

And all the while I was teaching these subjects one quarter a year at our Theological Seminary, at Andrews University, which afforded opportunity not only for continuing research but for releasing my findings in the classroom. All this was invaluable.

SIGNALS TO PROCEED INDICATE THE TIME.—Then the hour came, indicated by a series of unquestionable providences and directives, along with encouragement by Seminary leaders to proceed with this exacting search, and the development of a Seminary course. Charts were produced and source materials assembled. Then came unexpected calls for workers' institutes, local and union ministerial retreats, theological workshops, and presentations to special groups—Bible teacher, professional, university, college, colporteur. The project was definitely under way.

This was followed by the widespread urge from leaders at General, union, local, and institutional levels that I now carry this enterprise

through to completion in written form. These counselors included administrative and educational leaders, together with Andrews University, Ministerial Association, and Research Department leaders, as well as certain editors, Bible teachers, evangelists, and mass-communications men. The time had clearly come to proceed with the writing.

That is how this really huge task, first proposed by Elder Daniells, was held in abeyance until the time was opportune. The book in your hands is the result. But there were other determining factors and personalities that should be noted.

Impelling Influence of Teachers and Later Leaders

Some things can be sensed in retrospect more clearly than can possibly be perceived at the time of occurrence—particularly when they take place in college days. Thoughts are strategically implanted by men we revere. Guiding principles are instilled. Goals are suggested. Ideals and outlooks are pressed home, and encouragement is given, all destined later to bear tangible fruit.

This is often the greatest contribution that a competent, dedicated teacher can make. Such trust, placed in a sincere student, will seldom be without reward. And there were two such teachers who had a definite part in spurring me on in unwitting preparation for this very project—Harry A. Washburn and Asa Oscar Tait. This, of course, was before my intimate association with Daniells, and his specific charge and legacy of 1930.

WASHBURN—IMPLANTED LOVE OF COMPETENT RESEARCH.—Prof. Harry A. Washburn, one of our great *church* history teachers, was head of the Department of History at Pacific Union College. In fact, I went to PUC largely to specialize in church history under his tutelage. There I was privileged to assist him, grading papers, learning his famous charting method—and always absorbing, absorbing. In retrospect, I can see that he influenced my life in research principles and techniques more than any other.

He instilled in me profound faith in the *divine* philosophy of history—and the unerring hand of God in molding and directing the affairs of the Church. He implanted a love of competent and comprehensive research, and dedication to major themes. To him superficiality was inexcusable. More than that, he wanted me to attempt what he felt he would not have opportunity to do at his age. That urge I never forgot, and could not escape.

Years later I returned to Pacific Union College to give a series of eighteen lectures on the beginnings of the Advent Movement. These

were at what was temporarily called the Advanced Bible School (forerunner of our Theological Seminary), held that year at PUC. Professor Washburn was present at every session, sitting in the front row. At the close of the series he strongly urged me to expand these special studies into what appears here. He had an amazing insight into the potentialities of this particular area of research.

And Washburn had a remarkably clear perception of the spiritual truths involved. He also had an astonishing knowledge of certain basic facts that he knew I would find. These he even outlined—and these I found. Such were priceless guidelines from Professor Washburn.

TAIT—SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, RIGHTEOUSNESS, DEITY OF CHRIST.—A. O. Tait was head of the Bible department of PUC at the same time, then editor of the *Signs of the Times*. His sound and balanced grasp of the true place of the Spirit of Prophecy in this Movement was remarkable. This clear concept was of inestimable and abiding value to me. Later, when I was called to the *Signs of the Times* as his associate editor, Tait implanted in my mind certain deep convictions concerning the underlying issues of “1888,” and the larger principles involved, though I did not really grasp their full import and soundness at the time.

Still later, when I returned to Mountain View to present a study on our denominational beginnings, Tait again urged me to go forward with the very studies that were then envisioned and that I have here sought to set forth. Tait, it should be noted, had been a young delegate and was personally present at the 1888 Minneapolis Conference. He was one who fully accepted its clear message, and was ever after an undeviating proponent of Righteousness by Faith in Christ as “all the fulness of the Godhead.” This concept he ceaselessly sought to instill into me.

RECIPIENT OF TWO SPECIAL COLLECTIONS.—It was he who first gave me a view of the ineffable glory of the complete Deity of Christ in relation to Righteousness by Faith. More than that, Tait was another of a very few with whom Ellen White placed duplicate copies of certain of her leading personal testimonies to various individuals. They were thus strategically placed where their counsels would serve as guides to leaders in key posts. These messages he treasured but seldom mentioned because of their confidential character. ✓

At that time, along with his urge to let nothing deter me from ultimately carrying this project through to completion—however long it might take—Tait bequeathed to me his priceless collection of E. G.

White special testimonies, and many other documents. So, together with the Daniells' previously mentioned assemblage, I was doubly favored and fortified—and obligated. I could never understand why these men selected me to be the recipient. But their confidence in my fidelity to truth both sobered and stimulated me, and deepened my dedication to this project.

SPALDING AND OLSON ADD THEIR URGINGS.—There are two other revered men, aside from certain individuals living today, who must be mentioned—Historian Arthur W. Spalding and Administrator A. V. Olson. Professor Spalding knew that I was delving deeply into the vital theology of our early history in areas paralleling, but going beyond, his own special searchings, and dealing with aspects that he had not attempted to compass. These intrigued him. He urged me to carry out my commission.

As a lucid historian, Spalding was one of our master craftsmen—a competent investigator and a literary stylist. He sought facts until he found them, and then presented them with finesse. His books, with their authoritative record of our history, are now standard—and rightly so. Spalding likewise urged me, in following through, to answer certain puzzling questions that he had not attempted to compass. And above all to be faithful to fact and unswerving in fidelity to the full truth in bringing my findings into focus and final form.

Last was A. V. Olson. A loyal and sound Adventist leader, fearless and forthright, he would never trim or compromise. He had a rich background of experience, and we constantly conferred together over my researches. He knew precisely what I was doing and much that I had found, and rejoiced over the results. He sensed their value to the Church, for he had made a paralleling search into this particular area. He too charged me straitly not to falter, but to get to the bottom of the facts, to reveal the resultant findings, and to be candid and undeviating in my presentations, correcting misconceptions and false impressions where needed—and providing a sound setting for the final advances.

GODLY MEN SHAPED LONG-RANGE PLAN.—As I look back I can see a whole sequence of molding figures and factors impelling me onward in a work doubtless committed to me because of unique, intimate association with past leaders and teachers, who counseled me and charged me to complete this specific task and fulfill this mission.

These things I pondered constantly in my heart, as I toiled away, but about them I said little for many years. Nevertheless, those were years of never-ceasing search—though largely of silence until I had

something vital to report. I determined, should my life be spared, not to disappoint these men. Above all, I must not be unfaithful to God and to the Church, and the burden that had been placed upon me. That is how this portrayal came to be written.

LEROY EDWIN FROMM

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