

10-28-2017
New Light

For the past several weeks we have been having a Wednesday night study on the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The 1880's were tumultuous time for our intrepid pioneers. Prophetic signs of the times appeared to popping up all around. There was increased agitation towards creating and enforcing Sunday sacredness laws. Adventist pastors found themselves thrown in jail or being levied heavy fines for "desecrating" (i.e. working) on Sunday. There was even a bill presented before the U.S. senate that would establish a national Sunday law. It seemed that the last crisis was right at the door.

Of course, when you are facing the greatest crisis to ever come upon the church it is a bad time to fiddle with your theology. That would be like changing horses mid-stream, which I assume is a bad idea (having never attempted the feat on my own I can't be absolutely certain). At any rate, you don't go knocking down theological pillars when you are bracing for a persecution storm that is brewing on the horizon.

This is probably a big reason why two young preachers from California met with such harsh resistance from the "old guard." These youngsters were proposing the radical idea that law keeping can't save us and that we must rely fully on the merits of Christ (A.T Jones also taught that the 10th horn of Daniel 7 represented the Alemanni and not the Huns. Heresy!). It doesn't seem like this teaching should be all that controversial, but it was. Big time.

One of the main concerns presented by the "old guard" was that these young'uns were tearing apart the church's theological foundations. They were questioning some old interpretations and challenging firmly held beliefs. Always a bad idea, reasoned the "old guard," especially when the Sunday laws are about to be passed and Adventists are about to face persecution.

Around this time Ellen White wrote a number of statements that addressed how we should relate to "new light" and how it might compare to long established views. Below is a brief sampling of what she had to say.

"It is a fact that we have the truth, and we must hold with tenacity to the positions that cannot be shaken; but we must not look with suspicion upon any new light which God may send, and say, Really, we cannot see that we need any more light than the old truth which we have hitherto received, and in which we are settled." *Review and Herald 1894.*

"We must not think, 'Well, we have all the truth, we understand the main pillars of our faith, and we may rest on this knowledge.' The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light." *Review and Herald 1890.*

"A spirit of pharisaism has been coming in upon the people who claim to believe the truth for these last days. They are self-satisfied. They have said, 'We have the truth. There is no more light for the people of God.' But we are not safe when we take a position that we will not accept anything else than that upon which we have settled as truth. We should take the Bible, and investigate it closely for ourselves. We should dig in the mine of God's word for truth." *Review and Herald 1889.*

"New light will ever be revealed on the word of God to him who is in living connection with the Sun of Righteousness. Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God." *Counsels on Sabbath School Work 1892.*

"There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. We are living in perilous times, and it does not become us to accept everything claimed to be truth without examining it thoroughly; neither can we afford to reject anything that bears the fruits of the Spirit of God; but we should be teachable, meek and lowly of heart." *Review and Herald 1892.*

I'll let these quotes stand on their own without exposition. But I invite you to join the discussion by checking our Facebook page. The Pastor's Corner will be posted and I'd love to hear your thoughts on this topic.

Happy Sabbath!
Pastor Tyler