In January 2018, I received a copy of the book, *God’s Character and the Last Generation*.¹ The book contains 14 chapters, each relating to different aspects of “Last Generation Theology” (LGT). The book is not intended to be a polemic against LGT, but rather a constructive approach to issues that are of importance to all Seventh-day Adventists. The authors, almost exclusively past and present teachers at the Seminary, desire that the reader would have a clearer understanding both of the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White. This is especially important for Christians who live before the return of Jesus Christ.² The authors want this book to help those who are preparing for Christ’s reappearance. They have demonstrated a lifelong dedication to teaching and the preparation needed for such an important work. It is in the spirit of constructive dialogue that I am writing this review, which at significant points disagrees with conclusions in the book. I look forward to feedback and correction from any who might read it.

Before engaging with substantive issues within the book, I want to recognize that several of the authors share their own, as well as that of others, personal spiritual journey. Frequently, that journey has been marred by a legalistic approach that had the effect of negating the joy of salvation.³ This experience is all too common, and almost every pastor I know can attest to relating to this situation either personally or knows of church members that struggle with it. This dilemma is paired with its opposite --- Christians who feel that the lifestyle has no bearing on their spiritual experience. Both of these deceptions can only be avoided by an expansive view of the multifaceted implications of Christ’s incarnation, death, and heavenly ministry. I appreciate the desire of the authors to mitigate the damaging effects of legalism and liberalism, both of which turn the sacrifice of Christ into a travesty.

The first chapter outlines the fundamental issues that the authors have with LGT. These interests are interrelated. They can be summarized as teaching that the last generation must be “absolutely sinless” to “provide the grounds to vindicate God’s character”, and that “an additional phase of atonement is necessary, beyond the ministry of Christ” to bring this to fruition. Additionally, the book understands the final generation’s overcoming, as being accomplished by the “force of one’s will.” This type of overcoming is related to perfectionism and suggests “that one might reach a point” when the believer no longer needs the “imputed righteousness of Christ.”⁴ Connected with these fundamental concepts are two related ideas. The first is that justification is not merely forensic, but in some sense involves making the believer righteous.⁵ The second is that in the incarnation, Christ assumed a nature that has been impacted by heredity, as has the rest of humanity. The writers stress that the LGT teaches that

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² *God’s Character*, 13.
³ See for example, pp. 105, 122-23, 140-41, 236-37.
⁵ Peckham, “Great Controversy”, 17.
Christ must be “just like us” or “exactly like us” so that the last generation may “achieve a state of perfect sinlessness.”

The book identifies this theology with seven influential writers. These are E. J. Waggoner, M. L. Andreasen, Herbert Douglass, C. Mervyn Maxwell, Dennis Priebe, Kevin Paulson, and Larry Kirkpatrick. These writers, it is claimed, call for “sinless perfection from the last generation” which will vindicate “God’s demands for perfect obedience to His law.” If this doesn’t occur, God “loses out in the great controversy.” One of the fundamental contentions of the book, is that Christ’s life and death has already settled “the question as to whether perfect obedience...is possible” and thus an additional vindication is unnecessary.

In sum, these are the major critiques of LGT:
1.) LGT undermines Christ work by claiming the final generation vindicates God
2.) This vindication is accomplished by the believer’s overcoming sin
3.) This overcoming sin is accomplished by will power and thus is meritorious
4.) Christ assumed a nature impacted by heredity in the incarnation
5.) Justification has a broader effect than only a forensic declaration

In the remainder of this review, I will examine these five principle claims in light of the writings of Waggoner, Andreasen, Douglass, and Maxwell. I am not that familiar with the works of Kirkpatrick, Paulson, and Priebe. I find it unfortunate that God’s Character largely treats LGT advocates as a group. I think it would be more helpful to interact with those writings that clearly portray the aberrant teachings that God’s Character is concerned about. When I refer to LGT, or proponents of LGT, I am referring to the writings of Waggoner, Andreasen, Douglass, and Maxwell.

However, before doing so, it is important to share two guiding principles. The first is that biblical truth can be best illustrated by an ellipse. An ellipse has two foci, whereas a circle has one. Frequently our disagreements on biblical truth arise because we are placing emphasis on one of the two foci, and someone else stresses the other. For example, it is clear that scripture emphasizes the sovereignty of God. At the same time, it underscores our free will. These two

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7 To identify my biases in this conversation Mervyn Maxwell was one of my professors whom I greatly appreciated, he encouraged my study at Yale University. Herbert Douglass was a friend and associate. I have appreciated M. L. Andreasen’s books, although I recognize he overstated his case in contending against QOD. I also recognize EGW’s strong support for Waggoner particularly in the 1888-1896 years. Kirkpatrick and Paulson I’ve never read or had any interaction with. I consider Dennis Priebe a friend. While I may not agree with everything he has taught, I specifically spoke to him about the aberrant aspects of LGT as portrayed in this book, and he emphatically disavowed point 3 and the secondary conclusion of points 1 and 5.
10 Denis Fortin, “Sanctification and Perfection are the Work of a Lifetime” God’s Character and the Last Generation, eds. Jiri and Peckham, (Idaho: Pacific Press 2018) 104-105. Fortin states that LGT has a Pelagian view of sin, and that there is something the human agent must do to be saved.
11 It strikes me as unfortunate, that the critiques raised against these four men are in many ways the same as those brought against them by Dr. Ford and his associates during the 1970’s period of theological crisis. See Arthur Leroy Moore, Theology in Crisis, (Corpus Christi: Life Seminars 1980) 6-8, 37-47.
truths need to be held in tension, like the two foci of an ellipse. If they get too far apart, the ellipse flattens out, too close and they merge into one.\textsuperscript{12}

The second principle is that we need one another to help clarify biblical truth. “We differ so widely in disposition, habits, education, that our ways of looking at things vary. We judge differently. Our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life, are not in all respects the same...So frail, so ignorant, so liable to misconception is human nature, that each should be careful in the estimate he places upon another.”\textsuperscript{13} When we disagree on important topics, we should extend to others the grace we would like extended to ourselves as we seek to come together in an understanding of truth.

\textit{LGT undermines Christ’s work, by claiming that the final generation vindicates God}

It is unquestionable that Waggoner, Andreasen, Douglass, and Maxwell argued that the final generation has a role in vindicating God’s character in the great controversy. This part of the critique is undeniably accurate.\textsuperscript{14} This is one part of the ellipse of truth. However, as is frequently noted in \textit{God’s Character}, these writers also recognized the other ellipse, which is Christ vindicated God in his death.\textsuperscript{15} Yet the authors of \textit{God’s Character} feel that if the last generation has any part in vindicating God, this will undermine the cross and God’s sovereignty. This is frequently repeated and is of great concern to the authors. This conclusion is demonstrably unjustified.

While both the bible and E.G. White are referred to in support of that conclusion, other information is absent from the book,\textsuperscript{16} which would demonstrate the balance between these two foci—God was vindicated through Christ and the last generation participates in that vindication. For example, in Rev. 12.10-12 is a hymnic section. This hymn celebrates Christ’s

\textsuperscript{12} Herbert Douglass, \textit{A Fork in the Road}, (Clearwater MI: Remnant Pub 2008), 121.
\textsuperscript{13} Ellen G. White, \textit{Ministry of Healing}, 483.
\textsuperscript{14} Ellet Joseph Waggoner, “Witnesses for God,” Present Truth, December 14, 1893, 577-578. In this article Waggoner stresses both foci of the ellipse. He states, “The character of God and the justice of his dealings with his creatures are on trial before the universe...Jesus Christ came into the world to demonstrate...that God is love.” He continues “Our lives are a constant testimony either for the principles maintained by God, or for the assertions maintained by Satan.” See also M. L. Andreasen, \textit{The Sanctuary Service} (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1969) 299-321. Andreasen emphasizes both elements as does Waggoner. Andreasen recognizes Christ defeated Satan (305), yet Satan was not then destroyed. Satan’s final defeat occurs when God shows “what He can do with humanity” (302.) See also Herbert E. Douglass, \textit{The End: Unique Voice of Adventists About the Return of Jesus}, (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1979) 132-140.
\textsuperscript{15} See Whidden, “Last Generation” 26-30, 36. Unfortunately, Whidden neglects to show where Andreasen also taught that Christ defeated Satan, as Douglass and Waggoner did. Whidden feels this is a contradiction or paradox (29). However, there are many such tensions that are well recognized in Scripture. Why is it so difficult for \textit{God’s Character} to recognize the tension here?
\textsuperscript{16} Jiri Moskala, “The Significance, Meaning and Role of Christ’s Atonement” in \textit{God’s Character and the Last Generation}, eds. Jiri and Peckham, (Idaho: Pacific Press 2018) 192-192. Moskala provides an overview of the atonement, which includes Christ’s finished sacrifice as well as the on-going application of that sacrifice through His priestly ministry. He then continues stating that LGT proponents deny Satan was defeated, and their view undermines the atonement, 195-203. However, he does not demonstrate that they did in fact deny Satan was defeated. Moskala recognizes that LGT proponents use EGW’s writings, but unfortunately he does not interact with quotes that might indicate she recognized there is an aspect of vindication that is related to the final generation.
victory over the dragon, which is paired with the victory God’s people have over him. Certainly, their victory is based on Christ’s, but they also overcome, and in this way defeat Satan. John moves seamlessly from the victory of Christ to the victory of his followers. This is one of the main themes of Revelation, to help Christ’s followers overcome Satan even as Christ has. This secondary overcoming contributes to God’s vindication in the great controversy. There are numerous quotes from White that support this as well. Among these are:

“The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan’s charges by showing the results of obedience to right principles.”

“If there was ever a people in need of constantly increasing light from heaven, it is the people that, in this time of peril, God has called to be the depositaries of His holy law, and to vindicate His character before the world. Those to whom has been committed a trust so sacred must be spiritualized, elevated, vitalized, by the truths they profess to believe.”

“God will have a people upon the earth who will vindicate His honor by having respect to all of His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous, not a yoke of bondage.”

“God has a distinct people, a church on earth...to vindicate the law of God...Let all unite with these chosen agents, and be found at last among those who have the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus.”

“The honor of Christ must stand complete in the perfection of the character of his chosen people.”

“It becomes every child of God to vindicate his character. You can magnify the Lord; you can show the power of sustaining grace.”

“The honor of God, the honor of Christ is involved in the perfection of the character of his people.”

The church will “carry to glorious perfection the work which he [Christ] has commenced.”

More quotes could be added, but this should be sufficient to demonstrate that arguing the final generation has a role in vindicating God’s government does not necessarily undermine God’s sovereignty. There is a primary revelation of God’s character through Christ, and a secondary one through His followers. Thus, while the authors of God’s Character correctly recognize that LGT promotes the idea that the final generation contributes to God’s vindication, the critique that this undermines God’s sovereignty and diminishes Christ’s death on the cross

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17 Νικάω is used three times in the aorist indicative—Rev 3.21, 5.6, 12.11. The overcoming of the saints is based on and mirrors Christ’s sacrificial overcoming. They “love not their lives to the death” demonstrates their oneness who Christ who is preeminently the slain Lamb in Revelation.

18 E. G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, 296.

19 E. G. White, Testimonies to the Church Vol. 5, 746.

20 E.G. White, Faith and Works, 42.

21 E. G. White, Testimonies to Ministers, 58


23 E.G. White, “Praise Ye the Lord” (Bible Echo, 1/1/1888) par. 10.

24 E. G. White, Desire of Ages, 671.

25 E. G. White, Sons and Daughters of God, 296.
is unwarranted. To argue Christ’s death is the only source of God’s vindication misses the larger flow of the great controversy, which culminates with the final vindication at the end of the millennium. “The working out of Satan’s rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. Satan’s own works have condemned him. God’s wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated. It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds that He has created.”

This vindication is accomplished by the believer’s overcoming sin

This critique is undeniable—Waggoner, Andreasen, Douglass, and Maxwell all promoted the idea that believers can be victorious over sin, and this contributes to God’s vindication by demonstrating the law can be kept. Unfortunately, God’s Character connects this belief with perfectionism. Frequently expressions such as “absolute perfection”, “absolute sinlessness” are used to describe the position of LGT. However, none of the proponents are quoted to this effect. Rather, while they stress the necessity of overcoming sin, they do so as a result of Christ’s power and grace. It is easy to accuse someone of perfectionism, but God’s Character does not demonstrate that this is indeed part of LGT as taught by Waggoner, Andreasen, Douglass, or Maxwell.

Here are some representative thoughts from Waggoner. “The keeping of the commandments of God can only be found in the life of Christ. He alone, of all those who trod the earth, fully kept the law of God. But He gave Himself for us, so that we also may have the perfect keeping of the law in ourselves.”

“We are not therefore, to look to ascertain whether we are morally perfect, or ever to see moral perfection anywhere else but in Christ.”

“Men have secret faults of which they are utterly unconscious. Not only so, but no man knows the depth of any sin which is brought to his attention...He can simply know that he is a sinner, and the righteousness of God is given to him.”

Andreasen identifies three aspects of Christ’s ministry. These are: His earthly life, in which He completely conquers sin; His experience in Gethsemane and Golgotha in which He suffers and dies for humanity; and His heavenly ministry in which “Christ demonstrates that man can do what He did.” When the last generation overcomes, this only happens because “Christ has at last completed His work and stands glorified in His saints.” This is not perfectionism, but a demonstration of God’s grace.

Douglass openly refutes the idea that overcoming is perfectionism. He clarifies his use of perfection by saying it refers to the “life pattern of those who increasingly reflect the life of Jesus.” This life pattern is biblically described as maturity, or “the stature of the fullness of Christ.” The LGT view of perfection, “does not refer to a state in which a person is beyond

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28 E. J. Waggoner, “Attaining Moral Perfection” (Present Truth, 10/18/1894), 663.
30 M.L. Andreasen, The Book of Hebrews, (Teach Services, 2014) 32-33. In his Sanctuary Service, Andreasen emphasizes both that Christ was the victor in His death, and that God makes the demonstration “with the last generation on the earth” (310).
temptation or the possibility of sin...” It does not mean the Christian will be in a state in which there is no illness or “mental mistakes.”31 Douglass’s description of perfection is in harmony with much that is mentioned in God’s Character.32 It is unfortunate that overall God’s Character does not acknowledge that its view of perfection and that of these LGT writers, is actually one and the same, or at least, very close.

It needs to be acknowledged that Ellen G. White’s statements are formative for understanding the final generation will overcome known sin and would rather die than transgress God’s law. God’s Character approvingly refers to the dissertation of Paul Evans, “A Historical-Contextual Analysis of the Final-Generation Theology of M.L. Andreasen.”33 Evans has an entire section demonstrating White’s repeated calls for perfection of character.34 Evans recognized Satan’s charges are refuted “independently of, and also in connection with, the end-time generation of believers.”35 He writes that “character perfection by fallen humans is” an issue that Ellen White addressed clearly.36 A few of White’s statements that support overcoming sin are as follows.

“He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that he can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God.”37

“Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself: “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.” John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father’s commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.”38

“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.”39

“In like manner we have fixed our minds upon the exceeding great and precious reward; and, in order to obtain it, we must have a perfect character. The angels of God are watching the development of character. Angels of God are weighing moral worth; and

31 Douglass, Fork, 143.
35 Evans, Analysis, 145.
36 Evans, Analysis, 133.
37 Ellen G. White, “Laborers Together with God”, Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, 3/10/1904,
we are to obtain a fitness here to join the society of sinless angels. Do you expect that when Christ comes he will give you that fitness? Not at all. You must be found of him without spot, without blemish, or wrinkle, or anything like it...Enoch represents those who shall remain upon the earth and be translated to Heaven without seeing death. He represents that company that are to live amid the perils of the last days, and withstand all the corruption, vileness, sin, and iniquity, and yet be unsullied by it all. We can stand as did Enoch. There has been provision made for us."\(^{40}\)

Such quotations can be multiplied, but this demonstrates the call for perfection of character and overcoming sin is not equivalent to perfectionism.

**This vindication is accomplished by will power and is meritorious**

This critique is repeated at several points in *God’s Character*.\(^{41}\) At the same time, it is noted that Andreasen never considered the final generation’s experience to be meritorious.\(^{42}\) Neither is any evidence presented that Waggoner, Douglass, or Maxwell held this view. There is a discussion regarding Kirkpatrick’s stance, which relies on the author reading into Kirkpatrick’s arguments “subtleties” that lead the author to conclude that LGT is Pelagian.\(^{43}\) I was unable to find in *God’s Character* any sustained interaction with the actual writings of LGT advocates to support this charge. Neither have I yet encountered it in the writings of those advocates with whom I am more familiar. With all due respect, for a group of scholars to make this charge without clear evidence and substantive quotations, is disquieting.

**Christ assumed a nature impacted by heredity in the incarnation**

The proponents of LGT also hold that Jesus assumed a nature that has been impacted by heredity. Whether we call this a fallen nature, sinful flesh, or by some other term, this is a fundamental truth that these writers held and is well documented. This does not mean, as *God’s Character* frequently argues, that LGT holds Jesus was “exactly like us.”\(^{44}\) Unequivocally LGT writers recognize fundamental differences between us and Christ—He was God in human form, He never sinned, and He never responded to temptation the way we do. The real issue under discussion is, Was His humanity impacted by heredity the way ours is?\(^{45}\) *God’s Character* implies that the answer to that question is ‘no’. Christ was “holy by nature from the moment of conception.”\(^{46}\)

It is true that Christ’s birth is unique in that He is the God-Man. He is called the holy child. He is the only one who chose to be born, and perhaps we could say that He entered the human experience with a sanctified will. If that is what the writer intends, LGT advocates would largely agree. If, however, the writer is trying to make a break between Christ’s heredity and

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\(^{40}\) Ellen G. White, “Practical Remarks (Concluded)” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 4/19/1870, 138-139.


\(^{42}\) Whidden, “Last Generation” 35.

\(^{43}\) Fortin, “Sanctification” 104.


\(^{46}\) Jankiewicz, “Savior and Example” 157.
humanity’s that would be a point of disagreement. To argue against the idea that Jesus was “exactly like us” because He is divine, He never sinned, and His character is superior to ours, strikes me as a straw man argument.47 Waggoner, Andreasen, Douglass, and Maxwell would all agree with the distinction being made between Christ and us in these regards. However, they would argue that He assumed a nature like ours, impacted by heredity.

God’s Character implies that the understanding that Christ assumed fallen humanity was largely due to the influence of Jones and Waggoner, followed by Andreasen and others.48 This idea was “adopted by some within the” SDA church.49 These representations leave an impression this was a minority view. Such a portrayal ignores the widespread recognition that until the 1950’s, this view was Adventism’s majority, not minority view. This is ably demonstrated by Adventist theologians J.R. Zurcher and Ralph S. Larson.50 Unquestionably, we need to be exceedingly careful in our discussion of Christ’s humanity. I appreciate the large space given to many E.G. White’s statements on this topic.51 At the same time, the suggestion LGT has an aberrant view of the nature of Christ52 is unwarranted given the large place this understanding held in Adventist theology, and continues to be held without associative theological errors.53 This must be so, as a number of well respected, non-Adventist theologians with no connection to LGT, also hold that Christ assumed fallen humanity.54

It is important to recognize, that the church does not have a stance on whether Christ assumed a nature impacted by heredity or one that isn’t. It is unfortunate when those who teach the former are considered to be causing dissension, when the dissension is frequently a reaction to a truth that was held in common within Adventism for over 100 years. It is agreed that this topic needs to be approached with humility and ideas should be carefully expressed. At the same time it is important to realize the multi-faceted reasons Christ became man, and how they are enhanced by Him assuming a nature impacted by heredity.55 As has been

47 Jankiewicz, “Savior and Example” 166.
49 Jankiewicz, “Savior and Example” 165. To be more specific, Jankiewicz suggest that the understanding of Christ’s humanity that came into Adventism, is related to that of Edward Irving. However, Whidden has concluded that this connection cannot be definitively made. See Whidden, “Last Generation” 26.
51 Jankiewicz, “Savior and Example” 162-165.
52 It must be reemphasized that LGT recognizes that Christ was sinless, spotless, and was without fault. That is not the discussion. For an examination of the Baker letter (Jankiewicz, “Savior and Example” 166) and its use against the larger body of EGW’s writings, see Moore, Theology in Crisis, 258-269.
53 Jankiewicz, “Savior and Example” 167 has an extended treatment on sin, and how this works against the idea that Christ assumed a humanity impacted by heredity. This is an important topic that demands further conversation and discussion. See Harry Johnson, The Humanity of the Saviour, (London: Epworth Press 1962) 21-35.
54 Johnson, Humanity, 167-178.
55 See Douglass, Fork, 123-32 for a multifaceted view on the incarnation in relation to EGW. Aslo see Johnson, Humanity, 205-221 for an exploration of how the ‘fallen nature’ view enhances a variety of understandings of the atonement. White stresses that “Satan declared that it was impossible for the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God.” In the incarnation Jesus disproved this claim by clothing divinity with humanity “that he might stand as the head and representative of the human family, and by both precept and example condemn sin in the
suggested, both perspectives on the humanity of Christ, need to admit that a heavenly mystery is being considered. Given this reality, it is to be expected that this discussion should not include the implication that the ‘fallen humanity’ view is aberrant or divisive.

**Justification has a broader effect than only a forensic declaration**

The chapter on justification has much helpful material, and discusses a range of important topics beyond that of LGT. The author identifies essential differences between the Protestant (as identified by the Reformers) view of justification with that of Roman Catholicism (linked with the Council of Trent). Salient to this review, is the emphasis that justification is declarative, not transformative; is separate from sanctification; is always based on Christ’s righteousness which does not belong to the believer; and it comes through faith. This is contrasted with the Catholic view, that stresses justification is not merely declarative, but includes being made righteous and that this inherent righteousness provides the grounds for justification.

The author notes several alternatives within Adventism to the Reformation view but does not name the advocates behind them. He does this to focus on issues, rather than personalities or camps, although God’s Character earlier identifies the concept that justification is not only declarative with LGT. Since the author does not intend to address specific writers, he may not have in mind, Waggoner, Andreasen, Douglass, or Maxwell. Nevertheless, the discussion on whether justification is only declarative or transformative is an important one, especially as some LGT writers have addressed it. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore whether the LGT view on justification is actually a return to Rome, or something different. To accomplish that I will interact with the writings of Waggoner and White.

To begin, it is important to note aspects of justification in relation to Trent, which make it distinct from those of LGT advocates. To compare a Reformation concept of justification with a Tridentine one, only focusing on “declaring righteous” versus “making righteous” is a simplification of the issue. First, the Tridentine statement on justification, is that justification is a process, not an instantaneous act. Second, according to Trent, faith is not decisive, but part of the process by which a person is justified. That process includes the will in preparing for

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flesh and give the lie to Satan’s charges.” See Ellen G. White, “Sin Condemned in the Flesh”, Signs of the Times 1/16/1896.


58 Davidson, “Justification” 60-63.

59 Davidson, “Justification” 60-61, 91 note 60.

60 Peckham, “Great Controversy”, 16.

justification. Faith is not sufficient to unite us to Christ. If anyone argues for faith alone, “and that it is not necessary to prepare himself by means of his own will” he is cursed (Trent VI 9). In other words, meritorious works are part of the preparation for justification. Third, Trent involves the sinner becoming righteous in himself. This is part of the preparation for justification. “This disposition or preparation, is followed by Justification itself...” (Trent VII). A Tridentine view of justification demands that the believer attain and maintain a level of sanctification. It is perhaps an oversimplification, but “Rome teaches that renovation of the person precedes remission.” Thus justification occurs after the preparation, in which Christ’s righteousness is infused into the believer and then is inherent within. In other words, Trent teaches justification is based on something in the person who is justified, while Protestantism teaches that the verdict of justification is based on something not present in the person justified, but which must be provided from without. None of the LGT advocates considered in this review hold Tridentine views of justification.

They do however, argue that justification is more than a declarative statement, it is a transformative one. They do not argue this in the sense of Trent. Here are some of Waggoner’s comments on justification. First, Waggoner is very clear that there is nothing in humanity that recommends us to God. For a person to say they can do God’s righteous works is nothing less than the “very ‘mystery of iniquity’ itself.” Humanity is totally unworthy and our problem is that we “do not feel half unworthy enough.” Waggoner argues that the final generation will not need a mediator because they have overcome known sin, but they “shall need a Saviour every moment” due to their dependence on God. Humanity is totally dependent on Christ’s righteousness throughout the Christian life.

Second, in addition to recognizing this dependence, Waggoner does see a forensic aspect of justification. He argues that there are two inseparable parts of justification, the declarative and transformative. He openly acknowledges the declarative part of justification. There is a legal acquittal as well as the change of life. Frequently Waggoner states that a man is “counted as though he had been obedient” or “counted as though he never sinned.”

Third, based on his understanding that God’s word has creative power, he saw that when God declares something, it comes into existence (Rom. 4.17). Thus, in addition to being declared or counted righteous, God makes the believer righteous through the act of declaring him so. “To justify means to make righteous. God supplies just what the sinner lacks.” Waggoner could not think of God declaring something, and it not coming into existence.

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63 Alistair McGrath, “Justification-Making Just” 45-47.
69 E.J. Waggoner, “Studies in Romans” Present Truth United Kingdom, 8/30/1894, 549.
“When God calls those things that be not, as though they were, it is evident that he makes them be.” It is God’s word that can “create righteousness in a person destitute of it.”

Fourth, Waggoner understood that no matter how long a person lived, or how sanctified they became, they would always need justification. “Some people have the idea that there is a much higher condition for the Christian to occupy than to be justified. That is to say, that there is a higher condition for one to occupy than to be clothed within and without with the righteousness of God. That cannot be.”

“No man can ever get so good and strong that his own deeds can justify him.” Justification must be embraced throughout the life, as “sanctification is but continued justification.” There is no diminishing dependence on justification as in Trent. In sum, this perspective on justification is very different than Trent, despite the superficial similarity of the concept of justification including being ‘made righteous.’ Any concept of a subjective element of His righteousness in the believer is said to adopt the doctrine of Trent. This view misses the essential elements of the Council of Trent, as well as ignoring the experiential aspect of the gospel (Gal. 2.20; Titus 3.5-7; John 3.3-5). To confuse the relational aspect of justification with the infused righteousness of Trent is misguided.

It is arguable that Luther, while clearly recognizing the declarative aspect of justification, noted that there was a relational one as well. “For Luther, justification is not a naked imputation nor a simple declaration that the sinner is accounted righteous. Rather, a man is justified through, and because of a union with Christ that cometh of faith. Christ and the believer are united as Bridegroom and bride becoming ‘one flesh’.”

The same point can be made regarding the writings of Ellen White. “Justification and enabling power are, in White’s thinking, received simultaneously on the simple condition of a commitment of will to turn from sin to righteousness by surrender at the cross to a divine-human union.” This observation is supported by the following insights.

First, there are times when she distinguishes between imputed and imparted righteousness. “The grace of Christ is freely to justify the sinner without merit or claim on his part. Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin. The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, the moment he begins to live, he is justified.”

71 E.J. Waggoner, “For Our Sake Also” Signs of the Times, 10/13/1890, 513. This is similar to Roy Gane, “Legalism and ‘Righteousness by Faith’” Ministry Magazine, March 2008, https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2008/03/legalism-and-righteousness-by-faith.html
72 The repeated idea in God’s Character that LGT proponents suggest that there will be a time when justification is needed clearly does not apply to our four main witnesses.
73 Waggoner, “Studies in Romans”, 549.
76 Waggoner’s writings seem particularly important in this conversation, given EGW’s strong affirmation of his presentations in this time period. (See Testimonies to Ministers 92-96). This does mean Waggoner is infallible and every expression is worthy of emulation. However, if the main points of his consistent presentations over several years, are ignored or rejected this surely should alert the reader to potential bias.
77 Moore, Theology in Crisis, 161.
78 Robin Leaver, Luther on Justification, (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. 1975) 62.
79 Moore, Theology in Crisis, 178.
that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God's forgiving grace.”\textsuperscript{80} The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven.”\textsuperscript{81}

At the same time, she has no difficulty speaking of the experiential aspect of justification. “God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart.\textsuperscript{82}” “Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just and treats us as just.”\textsuperscript{83} “To be pardoned in the way that Christ pardons is not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. The Lord says, 'A new heart will I give unto thee.' The image of Christ is to be stamped upon the very mind, heart, and soul.”\textsuperscript{84} Given this dual aspect of justification, declarative and transformative, perhaps a more nuanced conversation should be had, exploring the parameters of this important topic.

There are many other aspects of God’s Character\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{85}} that could be discussed, both positive and negative. I have tried to outline several essential areas, in with the book correctly identifies, but then misinterprets the theology of Waggoner, Andreasen, Douglass and Maxwell. As a church we already face many divisive issues. Every member should see how to draw close to another, in the bonds of true Christian fellowship. Unquestionably, clarifying our teaching regarding the experience of those who will live to see Jesus come should be done in an atmosphere of mutual respect and a desire to fulfill Jesus’s prayer in John 17. I trust that this review will be received in the spirit with which it is written—as an effort to continue the constructive conversation begun by the book. I look forward to hearing back from any who might read it.

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\textsuperscript{80} E.G. White, 6BC 1071
\textsuperscript{81} E.G. White, “Qualifications for the Worker” Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, 6/4/1895 par. 7.
\textsuperscript{82} E.G. White, Mount of Blessing, 114.
\textsuperscript{83} E.G. White, 1 Selected Messages, 394.
\textsuperscript{84} E.G. White, “The Righteousness of Christ”, Advent Review and Sabbath Herald 8/19/1890 par. 7.