

God of Creation
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Background

During the fall of 1901 at the urging of W. W. Prescott, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists planned a health emphasis throughout the church, to start January 1902. Dr. John Harvey Kellogg would prepare the study material, consisting of 26 lessons, which later would be put into a book called *The Living Temple*. Prescott wrote in the *Review*: "The time has come for a genuine revival ... in that phase of gospel truth which relates to the body as the temple of the Living God." (RH12/31/01, page 846).

In the new year's issue of the *Review* Ellen White wrote: "... You want a clear mind to think after God's order. We should now come into line with health reform principles. There is a work to be done, and we want to unite with Dr. Kellogg in doing this work. He knows what he is talking about; and we want to take the light from the word of God, and form ourselves into companies to work for others. God will help us do this work." (RH01/07/02, paragraph 7)

Six weeks later on February 18 the Battle Creek Sanitarium burned to the ground. The General Conference proposed to assist in its rebuilding by letting the sale of the upcoming book be used to help to finance the project. Having heard some people remark the Dr. Kellogg was in his talks "grazing about very close to Pantheism," the General Conference President A. G. Daniells cautioned Dr. Kellogg not to include anything susceptible to "just criticism." The middle of 1902 Prescott responded to his first chance to look over the manuscript, and informed Elder Daniells and Dr. Kellogg of those sections that he felt would be misunderstood, wording such as "God himself enters into our bodies in the taking of food" and "There is a tree-maker in the tree, a flower-maker in the flower." By the summer Elder Daniells and Dr. Kellogg had entered into major conflict on administrative issues (Kellogg's desire to borrow money to build health institutions; who would control, the General Conference or the Benevolent Association).

In the 1902 fall council, the rift worsened. Prescott opposed the *Review* and *Herald* board extending credit to the sanitarium, and refused to publish advertisements in the *Review* for sanitarium bonds. Nationwide newspapers shortly carried headlines that Kellogg was being "driven out of the denomination." Kellogg showed willingness to make changes to *The Living Temple*, and a committee of four were appointed to review the book, Prescott, Kellogg, A. T. Jones, and David Paulson. After a week of work, Kellogg, Jones, and Paulson came to a conclusion that the manuscript was acceptable. Prescott submitted a minority report showing in greater detail his objections as a result of a more in depth review than he previously had made. The GC Committee accepted Prescott's conclusion and stopped plans to support the book. Kellogg placed a personal order for 5000 copies from the *Review* and *Herald*. Before the book could be printed, the publishing house burned to the ground in December. Kellogg placed his order elsewhere, and in five months the book was being sold.

Autumn Council 1903, Washington, DC, with Daniells, Paulson, Jones, Kellogg, and E. J. Waggoner

The Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee opened in Washington, D.C., according to plan on October 7, with meetings in the newly acquired M Street church. The brethren entered into their work with dedication and earnestness. In the early days of the

Council, Dr. E.J. Waggoner, Elder A. T. Jones, and Dr. David Paulson arrived in Washington. Dr. Kellogg came Sabbath morning, October 17. As the men from Battle Creek presented themselves, it was evident to Elder Daniells and his associates that they would again be confronted with *The Living Temple* and the teaching of pantheism.

Although these elements were not included on the agenda for the Council, the regular work was laid aside and a day was given to the consideration of the pantheistic philosophy. The representatives from the field were confused. All day they wrestled with the matter. Some wavered and waffled. At about nine o'clock in the evening Elder Daniells considered it time to adjourn the meeting, but he did not dare call for a vote. People were too confused and uncertain, and he did not wish to take a step that would solidify any conclusions. So he dismissed the meeting, and the people started to their lodging places. (5Bio296.3&4)

Two letters came that "saved the day." (Letter 211 & 216, 1903; SpM320-323; 12MR 64-71) Daniells wrote to Ellen White telling her of how her counsel was providentially timely. She responded:

Shortly before I sent the testimonies that you said arrived just in time, I had read an incident about a ship in a fog meeting an iceberg. For several nights I slept but little. I seemed to be bowed down as a cart beneath sheaves. One night a scene was clearly presented before me. A vessel was upon the waters, in a heavy fog. Suddenly the lookout cried, "Iceberg just ahead!" There, towering high above the ship, was a gigantic iceberg. An authoritative voice cried out, "Meet it!" There was not a moment's hesitation. It was a time for instant action. The engineer put on full steam, and the man at the wheel steered the ship straight into the iceberg. With a crash she struck the ice. There was a fearful shock, and the iceberg broke into many pieces, falling with a noise like thunder upon the deck. The passengers were violently shaken by the force of the collision, but no lives were lost. The vessel was injured, but not beyond repair. She rebounded from the contact, trembling from stem to stern, like a living creature. Then she moved forward on her way.

Well I knew the meaning of this representation. I had my orders. I had heard the words, like a living voice from our Captain, "Meet it!" I knew what my duty was, and that there was not a moment to lose. The time for decided action had come. I must without delay obey the command, "Meet it!"

This is why you received the testimonies when you did. That night I was up at one o'clock, writing as fast as my hand could pass over the paper.

We have all stood at our posts like faithful sentinels, working early and late to send to the council instruction that we thought would help you.--Letter 238, 1903. (5Bio301.2-5)

Testimonies for the Church, Volume 8, "The Essential Knowledge"

The next year, as the issue remained significant, she wrote:

I am instructed to speak plainly. "Meet it," is the word spoken to me. "Meet it firmly, and without delay." But it is not to be met by our taking our working forces from the field to investigate doctrines and points of difference. We have no such investigation to make. In the book *Living Temple* there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given.--*Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 2, p. 50 (1SM, p. 200). (5Bio305.5)

To sound a warning to the church throughout the land, Ellen White hurried the production of *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 8, with its section on "The Essential Knowledge," dealing with God and nature and a personal God. She dwelt at length on the danger of speculative knowledge, her message buttressed with abundant scripture evidence of a personal God. The book *The Ministry of Healing* was in preparation at this time; there was included in it also a section entitled "The Essential Knowledge," dealing with speculative knowledge and the false and true in education. Thus Ellen White went on record with warnings that would continue to sound. (5Bio306.2)

Observe that in this testimony, what has been revealed to us through nature and through Scripture about God is clearly outlined. As importantly, what has *not* been revealed is specified. This provides the dividing line between truth and its closest counterfeit.

The Essential Knowledge

"The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6.

God In Nature

Before the entrance of sin not a cloud rested upon the minds of our first parents to obscure their perception of the **character** of God. They were perfectly conformed to the will of God. For a covering a beautiful light, the light of God, surrounded them. This clear and perfect light illuminated everything which they approached.

Nature was their lessonbook. In the Garden of Eden the **existence** of God was demonstrated, His **attributes** were revealed, in the objects of nature that surrounded them. Everything upon which their eyes rested spoke to them. The invisible things of God, "even His everlasting **power** and **divinity**," were clearly seen, being understood by the things that were made.

Results of Sin

But while it is true that in the beginning God could be discerned in nature, it does not follow that after the Fall a perfect knowledge of God was revealed in the natural world to Adam and his posterity. Nature could convey her lessons to man in his innocence. But transgression brought a blight upon the earth and intervened between nature and nature's God. Had Adam and Eve never disobeyed their Creator, had they remained in the path of perfect rectitude, they would have continued to learn of God through His works. But when they listened to the tempter and sinned against God, the light of the garments of heavenly innocence departed from them. Deprived of the heavenly light, they could no longer discern the **character** of God in the works of His hand.

And through man's disobedience a change was wrought in nature itself. Marred by the curse of sin, nature can bear but an imperfect testimony regarding the Creator. It cannot reveal His **character** in its perfection.

A Divine Teacher

We need a divine Teacher. In order that the world might not remain in darkness, in eternal spiritual night, God met us in Jesus Christ. Christ is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1:9. "The **light of the knowledge of the glory**

of God" is revealed "in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6. The light of Christ, illuminating our understanding, and shining upon the face of nature, enables us still to read the lesson of God's **love** in His created works. (8T255.1 - 256.2; emphasis supplied)

The Scriptures clearly indicate the **relation** between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the **personality** and **individuality** of each. (8T268.1; emphasis supplied)

Here again is brought to view the **personality** of the Father and the Son, showing the **unity** that exists between them. (8T269.1; emphasis supplied)

The revelation of Himself that God has given in His word is for our study. This we may seek to understand. But beyond this we are not to penetrate. The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out in conjectures regarding the **nature** of God; but the effort will be fruitless. This problem has not been given us to solve. No human mind can comprehend God. Let not finite man attempt to interpret Him. Let none indulge in speculation regarding His **nature**. Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion.

...We are as ignorant of God as little children, but as little children we may love and obey Him. Instead of speculating in regard to His **nature** or His **prerogatives**, let us give heed to the word He has spoken: "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10. (8T279.1&3; emphasis supplied)

Important Observations in Connection with and Applications of "The Essential Knowledge"

1. The law describes how He designed creation to function. As such, the law reflects His character, which was incorporated into what He created.
2. The image of God was well-nigh obliterated from humanity by sin, and likewise His attributes reflected in the natural world were hidden.
3. In Jesus Christ, God stands revealed in a fallen creation.
4. In the light of Christ, God is reflected again in His creation.
5. We see revealed in the created world His character, His relation, His personality, His individuality, His unity and oneness, His position. These attributes are shown to us. They are essential truth.
6. We do **not** see the nature of His being revealed. We do not see Him as such in His creation. In His very nature He is ever above and outside the created things, unrevealed, veiled in secrecy. Examples of failure to grasp this fact:
 - a. Seeing the attributes of God revealed in creation, and thinking this is He, in His very nature or essence. This is pantheism or panentheism.
 - b. Considering that name "the only begotten of the Father" describes the very nature of God the Son (rather than only His character, His relation, His personality, His individuality, His unity and oneness, His position, all in relation to God the Father). This is arianism or semi-arianism.

Reflections on the Attributes Revealed to Us. "My ways are not your ways."

1. How does God view His creatures? How connected is He? *God desires intimate fellowship with each.*
 - a. In order to make that possible, He sustains each. "In Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)
 - b. In describing His character and relation to each, this is essential truth.
 - c. Only in applying it to His nature does this become pantheistic.
 - d. This truth is the basis of universal justification of life. God justifies the temporal existence of sinners. The passing over of unrepented sins is possible only because of the mercy-seat Jesus Christ, the expression of the faith of God as seen in Jesus Christ. Thus it rests upon that same basis as the eternal salvation of repentant sinners.
2. How must God want to wrap up this time with sin! He gave prophets lines of prophecy leading to its wrap up—Daniel's multiple lines; Revelations multiple series. *God hurts with the hurt.*
 - a. God is not the cause of suffering and death.
 - b. The law does not lead to death. It was ordained to life. It is sin that leads to death. And sin is traced back to Lucifer, not God.
 - c. God's intimate connection with all His creation means He suffers when any suffers. This corporate oneness, in speaking of His relation to His creation, and not His very nature, is essential truth, and not pantheism.
 - d. He will eventually wipe away all hurt and tears, and His will be included.
3. God wants all to be saved from sin. He is not willing that any should perish. "Why will you die?" (Ezek. 18:31). "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." (Rev. 22:17). *God has room in His heart for each sinner.*
 - a. His faith has been given to each as a measure of life. (Rom. 12:3).
 - b. He sees all as they can be, and this vision is the very substance and evidence of the reality of the plan.
 - c. His conception of what each can be is not merely a mental image, a spiritualistic phantom, but a concrete physical reality, evidenced in the very person of Jesus the Son of man.
 - d. For this plan to be thwarted by any gives Him inexpressible grief.
4. How does God feel about sin? We are shown His anger and wrath. *God is indignant with sin beyond human comprehension.*
 - a. He alone sees the breath of the consequences of sin, as well as the length and depth.
 - b. He in the very person of Jesus Christ revealed His abhorrence of all of sin. In one act, the Godhead unmasked sin, exhausted its penalty, expressed Their hatred of sin, and poured out Their love and life for the sinner.
 - c. His holy and powerful emotion against sin is present in His giving over the unrepentant sinner to what he has chosen.
 - d. The work of wrath begins when the work of mercy closes.
5. How will God save sinners without perpetuating sin? Since human nature is changed at the redemption of the body, but character is not changed, how does He transform character before an individual's probation closes? *God is continually giving Himself, revealing Himself, to transform all who behold.*

- a. This transformation takes place when human faith responds to God's faith, when an individual exercises the measure given him of God, and accepts the mercy-seat for him individually. The door placed before each at infinite cost is here opened for one, and fellowship begins with that one, based solely on the faith of Jesus. Human faith does not create, rather merely sees and beholds the reality of God's unchanging character.
 - b. It is by beholding Him that our characters are changed, from the inside out. When one fails to keep the faith of Jesus, the beholding is impossible, and the gift of eternal life in Him is squandered. This can occur before profession of faith or after. In the first case, the lost are pictured crying, "Hide us...." (Rev. 6:16). In the second, "Lord, Lord...." (Matt. 7:21, 22; 25:11).
 - c. Characters are developed in an unchanged nature, the testing ground of "the body of this death." (Rom. 7:24).
 - d. The flesh becomes partaker of the divine nature. This is not pantheism. This is not a spiritualistic phenomenon existing merely in the realm of a disembodied "faith." It is a reality existing in the concrete, physical realm. It is a mystery, the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, Christ in you. (1888, p. 332.1)
6. How does God Himself fit into these pictures with His creatures? Is He inward focused or outward? The Godhead Itself teaches us this orientation. *God is other-centered, not self-centered.*
- a. He desires intimate fellowship with each, *for their sake, more than for His.*
 - b. He longs to end sin, *because His creatures hurt, not because their hurt is hurting Him (which it is).*
 - c. He has a room in His heart for each sinner, *because they need Him, more than He needs them.*
 - d. He wrath is against ungodliness, *because sin devastates all of the others in His creation, not because He as God is personally attacked.*
 - e. He has given Himself to all, to save some, *because He values each more than He values Himself.*