

MISSION UPDATE

MARCH 2016

ABEL STILL SPEAKS

BY JEFFREY ROSARIO

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CAIN and Abel is the first manifestation of the struggle foretold in Genesis 3:15. These brothers embody the controversy between good and evil which will make up the biblical story till the end. In Genesis 4, the focus lies in how humans choose to relate to God. But this is not a story about believers and unbelievers. Both Cain and Abel acknowledge that God merits their worship; *both* bring an offering and *both* approach the altar. Here we have two professed worshipers—very different worshipers.

The text tells us that “Abel brought of the *firstborn* of his flock” (Genesis 4:4). He offered to God his best. This was an act of faith. By giving God his firstborn, he was also consecrating to God his second, third, etc. It was an expression that God deserves the best we have and that He comes first in our priorities. Our decision regarding that which is most valuable to us is what reveals our relation to God.

Regarding Cain, it doesn't say that he brought the first fruits of his crops. That omission is telling. We are only vaguely informed that “in the process of time” Cain gathered enough to bring God an offering. I get the impression that he made sure he had enough for himself before taking God's offering

into consideration. He approached the altar on his own terms and expected God to be happy with whatever he felt like bringing. God was pleased with Abel's offering, but had no regard for Cain's.

The issue of offerings in this story reveals important things about the heart. It demonstrates how an individual thinks of God and the place God holds in a person's life. This point will continually surface throughout the Old Testament narrative. In response to the pathetic leftover offerings that the religious leaders are bringing to Him, the Lord says: “Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” (Malachi 1:8).

He approached the altar on his own terms and expected God to be happy with whatever he felt like bringing.

This is a wakeup call because in every one of our hearts there is a Cain and Abel going to battle. How important is God to us? What place does He hold in our lives? Our offerings come in a wide range of ways. Regarding our time, are we merely bringing to God our leftovers? What about our energy, attention, money, etc.? What do our offerings say about our God? 🔥



AN UNSETTLED STATE OF UNBELIEF

BY FRED BISCHOFF

DO YOU REMEMBER THE parable Jesus told about prolonged injustice, and the need “always to pray, and not to faint?” Have you thought much of Jesus’ seemingly rhetorical question at the end?

“Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:1-8).

More and more I believe we can summarize the problems we face in every sphere as due to a lack of faith, unfaithfulness and infidelity.

This is particularly troubling in those who have the most evidences on which to base a robust faith. From the earliest days of the Advent movement, the testimony of Jesus shone a bright light on Scripture, challenged us with the breadth of our mission, rebuked us when we veered into self-exaltation and selfishness, and encouraged us with an unflinching picture of the loveliness of His character.

In 1890 Ellen White was impressed with the acute need for faith in the aftermath of the Minneapolis session with its message of righteousness by faith in relation to the law. She addressed this crisis to the General Conference President O.A. Olsen. God’s own people were stumbling on “the dark mountains of unbelief.” Those who should have been “faithful watchmen” were instead “quenching the faith of God’s people in the messages He has sent to them in reproof and warnings.” There were leaders whose influence was “to unsettle the faith of the people of God.”

What was the solution? She pointed to one of her colleagues. “Elder Loughborough has stood firmly for the testimonies, and should not he who dares to be true be especially cared for? Should not he be placed in a position where he can do the most good? . . .

“The influence of Elder Loughborough is valuable in our churches. Just such a man is needed, one who has stood unwaveringly for the light that God has given to His people, while many have been changing their attitude toward this work of God. I say let Elder Loughborough do a work that is suffering to be done in the churches. The Lord would have his voice heard as was John’s, telling the things he has seen, and that which he has heard, which he himself has experienced in the rise and progress of the third angel’s message.

Those who should have been “faithful watchmen” were instead “quenching the faith of God’s people . . .”

“. . . Let Elder Loughborough stand in his right place, as a Caleb, coming to the front and bearing a decided testimony in the face of unbelief and doubts and skepticism. We are well able to go up and possess the goodly land. . . . Something must be brought into our churches to overcome this unsettled state of unbelief in order to make them vigorous and successful. We need to follow Christ with the whole heart. . . .

“What we need now is to cherish Elder Loughborough to make as far as possible his experience serve the cause of God in a wider sphere. . . . Let his experience, with the help that God shall give him, settle the wavering faith of the people. . . .

“. . . Something in line of decided testimony must be heard in vindication of the testimonies of the Spirit of God in our churches” (*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, pp. 715-718).

In response, Loughborough increased his retelling the stories of God’s leading, often in the same gatherings where A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner were presenting righteousness by faith. The Spirit was poured out to confirm “the past message and the fresh message” (*Ibid.*, p. 545). Revival and miracles

occurred. By 1892 Loughborough published *The Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, updated as *The Great Second Advent Movement* in 1905.

In 1992, one hundred years after the first edition, the Adventist Pioneer Library (APL) republished the 1905 edition. In 1997 a friend published a Romanian translation. In 2014 in partnership with APL, Editora dos Pioneiros LTDA in Brazil published a Portuguese edition. Last year in time for the General Conference Session in San Antonio, APL released a Spanish edition.

What has been the effect? Just what Ellen White saw it would be, to meet “the unsettled state of unbelief.” After reading the Portuguese version, a young man in Brazil said, “Now I believe 100% in Ellen White’s ministry.” To see how God led in our history, as an eyewitness like Loughborough alone could recount, builds faith in what God has been doing.

What can you do in “the wider sphere?” Read the book for yourself! Get copies for gifts, especially for the young and new Adventists. Share the other language editions with those who need them. Help APL translate it into yet more languages.

That will assist in providing a positive answer to Jesus’ question. He will find faith when He comes, faith in the testimony He has given, even “the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17; 14:12). 📖



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SPEAKING SCHEDULE

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Bend, OR
www.cascadesda.org / 541.749.9005
James Rafferty

MARCH 12

The Reach Community Mission Group
Willowbrook, IL
646.331.9061
Fred Bischoff

MARCH 24-28

Youth in Mission Congress
Offenburg, Germany
www.youthinmission.info/en/
Ty Gibson & David Asscherick

MARCH 26

Cascade Adventist Church
Bend, OR
www.cascadesda.org / 541.749.9005
James Rafferty

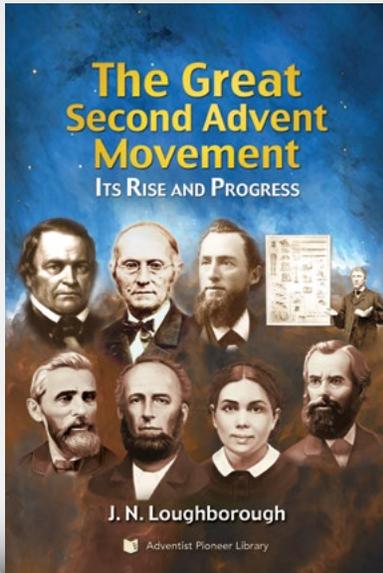
APRIL 1-9

College Place Adventist Church
College Place, WA
villageadventist.org / 509.525.0882
James & Risë Rafferty

APRIL 2

ASI Mid-America
Ramada Plaza North, Denver, CO
asimidamerica.org
Jeffrey Rosario

see more events at lightbearers.org



THE GREAT SECOND ADVENT MOVEMENT

J.N. Loughborough was present with Ellen White over 50 times as she experienced visions. He traveled extensively with the Whites as they preached the gospel of Jesus and is considered one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Having been so intricately involved, Ellen White requested that he write his observations of the pioneering movement.

The Great Second Advent Movement is J.N. Loughborough's exhaustive look into the early Advent movement and the rise and progress of the early Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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