

BOOK REVIEW

By Robert Brinsmead

B O O K R E V I E W

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This book review is written for the benefit of those interested in the teachings of F. T. Wright, as set forth in his recent publication, Living Righteously.

I am conscious that most people will believe what they want to believe. No amount of the clearest evidence is of any avail in dealing with this class of mind. But happily, there are sincere lovers of truth who will candidly examine evidence. This review is written for the benefit of these.

R. D. B.

B O O K R E V I E W

[LIVING RIGHTEOUSLY by F. T. Wright. 257 pages. Published by The Judgment Hour Publishing Company, 309 Chevallum Road, Palmwoods, 4555, Queensland, Australia.]

Brother F. T. Wright was briefly associated with the Awakening about 10 years ago. However, he soon found that his "holiness" orientated theology was not only incompatible with the Seventh-day Adventist Movement in general, but with the sanctuary Awakening message in particular. Consequently, he pronounced the Seventh-day Adventist Church "Babylon" and formed his own church in New Zealand, a church which is duly registered with the government.

THE PUNCH LINE OF THE BOOK

Living Righteously espouses one very cardinal point. The book teaches that the carnal, sinful nature of man is wholly eradicated from the believer in one instantaneous act of conversion. To cite the author's own words:

"He [Paul] did not mean by this that the carnal nature had to die again every day. . . . That which has been destroyed does not spring back to life every day and have to be crucified all over again. Take the thorn bush, so aptly chosen by the Saviour as the illustration of the carnal nature, and destroy it, and that will be the end of it. You will know that you are not going to have to destroy the same tree all over again tomorrow.

"In like manner it is the plan and purpose of God that we should have the carnal nature destroyed right out of us once and for all at the beginning of the Christian experience. . . .

"As He [Christ] died once and liveth unto God, so are we to die once and forever after live unto God. . . .

"God had to die to self-interest completely to do it [save us], so that with Christ and Paul, God too could say, 'I die daily.' But in no case was it a matter of putting to death the carnal

nature, the old man of sin. In the case of the Father and the Son, neither of them ever had that nature, being always and forever pure within, and in the case of Paul, that had died once and for all at the new birth experience. . . .

" . . . the dying of the carnal nature which is intended by God to be a once and for all time experience at the outset of the Christian life."--Living Righteously, pp. 140-150.

Although this doctrine sounds so much like "once saved, always saved" that most of us could not tell the difference, the author hastens to add that he does not believe in "once saved, always saved." He admits that it is possible for a believer to resurrect the old nature again if he chooses to. But he is adamant that no trace of the sinful nature remains, in any sense of the word, in a born-again Christian.

The doctrine of the blotting out of the sinful nature--sometimes called original or inbred sin--is of vital concern to those of us who espouse the Awakening message. We see the final eradication of human sinfulness as taking place in the work of the final atonement in the most holy place. Those who oppose the Awakening take two polar positions. The church administration has taken the position that human sinfulness is not totally eradicated from the saints until Jesus comes. F. T. Wright is way out on the other wing. He teaches that this sinful nature is totally and once-and-for-all eradicated when a man is converted at the beginning of the Christian experience. The Awakening stands dead center between these two extreme positions.

F. T. WRIGHT TAKES AWAY THE DAILY

It is written of those inspired by the teaching of antichrist: "They shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." Dan. 11:31 (See also Dan. 8:11, 12.) About the turn of this century, some of the brethren in the church were engaged in hot debate over the true interpretation of "the daily." One side said it was Paganism. The other side maintained it was the continual ministration of Jesus in the sanctuary. But the prophet stepped in and gave the real experiential interpretation of "the daily." Said the Lord's servant in referring to the controversy: "The Lord calls upon those of us who have had great light to be converted daily."--Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 165 (emphasis in original).

Conversion is nothing more or less than a putting off of the old carnal nature and a putting on of the divine nature. Conversion means a crucifixion of the selfish, sinful heart. Far from being a once-and-for-all experience, as F. T. Wright would have us believe, it is to be a daily experience. Again and again Brother Wright objects to this concept. He uses Paul's illustration of marriage in Romans 7, and taking this illustration way beyond the setting and intent of Romans 7, he points out that when he was

married, he was married once and for all. He argues that he does not have to be married again every day. The argument may sound impressive to those not familiar with gospel teaching, but it simply proves that you cannot prove anything by analogy. The author of Living Righteously tries to prove his extreme views of Christian experience by analogies. This is not proof, and even good Bible illustrations can become ridiculous when they are pressed beyond their purpose and intent.

Does the believer have to be converted afresh every day or not? Since F. T. Wright acknowledges Ellen G. White as an authority, we will now bring some of her clear-cut statements to bear upon this question:

"To follow Jesus requires wholehearted conversion at the start, and a repetition of this conversion every day."--SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1113.

"You need a fresh conversion every day. Die daily to self . . ."
--Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 699.

"Those who believe the truth are to be newly converted every day."--Testimonies to Ministers, p. 248.

"Said Paul: 'I die daily.' He had a new conversion every day, took an advance step toward heaven."--Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 66, 67.

"Every living Christian will advance daily in the divine life. As he advances toward perfection, he experiences a conversion to God every day; and this conversion is not completed until he attains to perfection of Christian character, a full preparation for the finishing touch of immortality."--Ibid., vol. 2, p. 505.

We see from the above statements that Ellen G. White declares that there must be a conversion to God every day. Daily there must be a "repetition" of the first conversion; daily there must be a "fresh" conversion; daily there must be a "new" conversion.

Does this repeated, "fresh," or "new," conversion mean that the believer still has a carnal, corrupt nature to which he must die every day? Or has the sinful nature been wholly eradicated from a believer, as the author of Living Righteously would have us believe? Consider these decisive answers from the Spirit of Prophecy:

"In the human heart there is natural selfishness and corruption, which can only be overcome by most thorough discipline and severe restraint; and even then it will require years of patient effort and earnest resistance."--Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 496.

"A constant battle must be kept up with the selfishness and corruption of the human heart."--Ibid., vol. 5, p. 397.

"Constant war against the carnal mind must be maintained . . ."
--Ibid., vol. 2, p. 479.

"There is wrestling with inbred sin; there is warfare against outward wrong."--Review and Herald, Nov. 29, 1887.

"Are you in Christ? Not if you do not acknowledge yourselves erring, helpless, condemned sinners."--Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 48.

"We must strive daily against outward evil and inward sin . . ."
--Review and Herald, May 30, 1882.

"There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride."--SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1165.

The point is this: According to Bible prophecy, the antichrist takes away "the daily." Human nature loathes the continual conflict of dying daily to the selfishness and corruption of the human heart. Like Cain, it smarts against the sentence: "Cursed is the ground [of the human heart*] for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." Gen. 3:17. So the carnal heart likes to manufacture an easier way to climb up to heaven. It longs for a release from the divine sentence that the evil heart must be resisted all the days of probationary life. So it takes away "the daily"--the daily crucifixion of the old Adam who is in all of us.

It is ironical that the author of Living Righteously should soundly rap Roman Catholics in his book, and verbally proclaim all around the world that even the Seventh-day Adventist Church is antichrist, when his book does not even disguise the fact that he joins Romanism in taking away "the daily." Later on in this review, it will be demonstrated that Living Righteously resurrects the very arguments that the Roman Catholic theologians used against Martin Luther. F. T. Wright has seized the very heart of antichrist's teaching and proclaimed it in his book.

THREE EMBARRASSING STATEMENTS

The author admits that three statements appear to contradict his theology. Let us examine them:

First Statement

"None of the apostles and prophets ever claimed to be without sin. Men who have lived the nearest to God, men who would sacrifice

* In the Scripture, the ground is used as an illustration of the human heart.

life itself rather than knowingly commit a wrong act, men whom God has honored with divine light and power, have confessed the sinfulness of their nature."--Acts of the Apostles, p. 561.

Says Brother Wright: "At first reading it would appear that we are here quoting statements which are the complete denial of the very message propounded in the preceding pages of this book."--Living Righteously, p. 127. But Brother Wright embarks on a long, winding explanation to show that the statement does not mean what it says. After three pages of tedious explanation, he says that this "sinfulness of . . . nature" was only the human body which the apostles possessed. But by no stretch of the imagination does Ellen White mean this or imply this in the context. She is showing how humble the apostles were. They never claimed to be without sin. She holds this humility up for us to emulate, showing that there must be "a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him."--Acts of the Apostles, p. 561. How meaningless to say that the apostles merely confessed that they had a human flesh-and-blood body! As if this would be a wonderful example of humility to acknowledge this! Why, Hitler, Nero and every sinful wretch that ever lived would have enough "humility" to acknowledge that he had a human flesh-and-blood body. But Ellen White's point is that the apostles really confessed that they were sinners by nature. In fact, she proceeds to quote John: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8.

The apostles were men of God because they were humble enough to confess the selfishness and corruption of their human hearts; and anyone who is a man of God will not for one moment hesitate to confess the same thing. Thus righteous Job said, "I am vile." Holy Isaiah confessed, "I am a man of unclean lips."

"Thus when the servant of God is permitted to behold the glory of the God of heaven, as He is unveiled to humanity, and realizes to a slight degree the purity of the Holy One of Israel, he will make startling confessions of the pollution of his soul, rather than proud boasts of his holiness."--SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1140.

Second Statement

"But because this experience [conversion] is his, the Christian is not therefore to fold his hands, content with that which has been accomplished for him. He who has determined to enter the spiritual kingdom will find that all the powers and passions of unregenerate nature, backed by the forces of the kingdom of darkness, are arrayed against him. Each day he must renew his consecration, each day do battle with evil."--Acts of the Apostles, pp. 476, 477.

Brother Wright includes this statement with Acts of the Apostles, page 561, and admits that it "would appear" to be "the complete denial of the very message" which he teaches. It certainly is! But off he goes on his

tangent explanation. "What is unregenerate nature?" he asks on page 128 of his book. The answer should be obvious to anyone even casually acquainted with theological terminology. "Unregenerate nature" means carnal nature, sinful nature, the old man, or old Adam, in us. It means this without any exception in the Spirit of Prophecy and in the writings of any theologian. But Brother Wright affirms that "unregenerate nature" merely means the world of nature and the "flesh and blood body" which has not yet been changed back to its original perfection. Such fantastic fiddling with inspired statements will not commend itself to thoughtful men.

Third Statement

"Paul's sanctification was a constant conflict with self. Said he: 'I die daily.' His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did the will of God, however unpleasant and crucifying to his nature."--Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 299.

The author of Living Righteously confesses: "How totally opposite this appears to be to the above testimony in regard to the experience of a truly converted man. Once again we have what seems to be flat contradiction."--Living Righteously, p. 143. It certainly is a flat contradiction to his theory. Oh, if men would leave us with the plain words of Inspiration instead of being like the scribes and Pharisees, who took all the force out of inspired statements. Again Brother Wright takes off on a long, meandering explanation to show us that the statement does not really teach what it appears to teach. His reasoning becomes so involved that it can only bring to mind the words of counsel given by the Lord's servant:

"Truth is straight, plain, clear, and stands out boldly in its own defense; but it is not so with error. It is so winding and twisting that it needs a multitude of words to explain it in its crooked form."--Early Writings, p. 96.

Brother Wright would have us believe that Paul only had to deny his bodily, non-sinful inclinations. But here is a statement that puts the matter beyond dispute: "Paul was ever on the watch lest evil propensities should get the better of him. He guarded well his appetites and passions and evil propensities."--SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1089. In another place, Ellen White declares that Jesus had no sinful propensities (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1128)--that is, He had no sinful nature. But not so with Paul. He needed to die daily to his evil propensities.

CONTRARY TO THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The teachings of Living Righteously are not only contrary to the clear teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy, but they are contrary to the

foundation principles of the great Protestant Reformation. The author brings forth the same contention as the Catholic theologians did in opposing Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. These theologians maintained that baptism, or regeneration, wholly removed original sin (the sinful nature) from the hearts of God's people. When pressed by the Reformers, the Catholics conceded that some sort of fault remained in the regenerate, but they would not admit that it was sin. They called it weakness, infirmities, liability and other such expressions, but not sin. (Wright does exactly the same thing.) From the Wartburg Castle Luther wrote his now famous Answer to Latomus. In this Luther laid down the basic Protestant premise that the carnal nature is not wholly eradicated from even the best of saints. He showed from the writings of both the Old and New Testament that the fault of nature which remains in the saints is sin--that the Bible calls it sin, that the godly must still confess that they are sinners; yet because of their continual repentance and faith in the merits of Christ, God does not impute this residue of sin to them, neither does He allow it to reign in the lives of believers in Jesus. Listen to Luther's defense of the Protestant faith:

"Sin remains after baptism. . . . All sins are washed away but there is still something left that needs washing. . . .

"Every good work of the saints while pilgrims in this world is sin. . . . these people [the saints] are righteous yet impure at one and the same time. . . .

"If you take mercy away from the faithful they are sinners, and really have genuine sin, but in that they believe and live under the reign of mercy, and sin has been condemned in them and is being continuously put to death in them, it is on those grounds not imputed to them. . . .

"From the foregoing arguments I think that my thesis has now been defended, that is that every good work is sin unless it is forgiven by the mercy of God. . . .

"I merely ask whether the sophists dare admit that there is any man who could say of one single work of his, 'This is without sin,' even in the sense in which they speak of sin. For my part I cannot believe that even they or any other man would have the audacity to say this of his good work."--Answer to Latomus, Library of Christian Classics, vol. xvi, pp. 317-354.

The papal bull which condemned Luther propounded the same error as found in Living Righteously--that there is no sin of a carnal nature in baptized believers. In his defense Luther declared:

"The lives and confessions of these [Paul, Jerome, Cyprian] and all saints prove the saying of St. Paul in Romans vii, 'I delight in the law of God after my spirit, yet find in my members a contrary law of sin,' so that no one can deny that sin

is still present in all the baptized and holy men on earth, and that they must fight against it."--An Argument in Defense of All the Articles of Dr. Martin Luther Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull, Works of Martin Luther, vol. iii, pp. 17-19.

Referring again to his Catholic opponents in his Lectures on Romans, Luther declared:

" . . . the Scholastic theologians did not deal adequately with sin and grace. For they imagine that original sin, just like actual sin, is entirely taken away, as if sins were something that could be moved in the flick of an eyelash, as darkness is by light."--Page 128.

Not only was this Luther's teaching, but all the Reformers of the Protestant Reformation were united on this. It was the cardinal point of Protestant theology. The point is this: The basic theology of the Protestant Reformation and the theology of Living Righteously are incompatible. If the teachings of Living Righteously are correct, then the Reformation was a mistake, and the Roman Catholics had every right to oppose it.

John Wesley may not have been correct on all points, but all will grant that he was a converted saint. He preached the new-birth experience so mightily that the whole of England was stirred by his message. Not only did Wesley's life testify to God's grace, but thousands of people all over England were living testimonies that the power of God was in Wesley's call to enter the regenerate life. Did this great man of God teach as Fred Wright? That is to say, did Wesley teach that the carnal nature is altogether eradicated at conversion? He certainly did not. In fact, he had to meet this very heresy in the teachings of Count Zinzendorf. Zinzendorf taught that the carnal nature is wholly eradicated in conversion. Some of his disciples brought his teaching to England and tried to introduce it in the Methodist Movement. Against this heresy John Wesley preached a series of powerful sermons showing that sin in the form of the carnal nature is not wholly removed from born-again Christians. Here are a few lines from his sermons:

"And as this position, there is no sin in a believer, no carnal mind, no bent to backsliding, is thus contrary to the word of God, so it is to the experience of his children. These continually feel a heart bent to backsliding, a natural tendency to evil, a proneness to depart from God, and cleave to the things of earth. They are daily sensible of sin remaining in the heart, pride, self-will, unbelief; and of sin cleaving to all they speak or do, even their best actions and holiest duties. Yet at the same time they 'know that they are of God'; they cannot doubt it for a moment. They feel his Spirit clearly 'witnessing with their spirit, that they are the children of God.' They 'rejoice in God through Christ Jesus, by whom they have now received the atonement.' So that they are equally assured, that

sin is in them, and that 'Christ is in them the hope of glory.'" --Wesley's Sermons, pp. 12, 13.

"Christ indeed cannot reign where sin reigns; neither will He dwell where any sin is allowed. But He is and dwells in the heart of every believer who is fighting against sin; although it be not yet purified, according to the purification of the sanctuary."--Ibid., p. 13.

"That believers are delivered from the guilt and power of sin we allow; that they are delivered from the being of it we deny." --Ibid., p. 21.

"Repentance frequently means an inward change--a change of mind from sin to holiness. But we now speak of it in a quite different sense, as it is one kind of self-knowledge, the knowing ourselves sinners, yea, guilty, helpless sinners, even though we know we are children of God.

"Indeed, when we first know this, when we first find redemption in the blood of Jesus, when the love of God is first shed abroad in our hearts, and His kingdom set up therein, it is natural to suppose that we are no longer sinners; that all our sins are not only covered, but destroyed. As we do not then feel any evil in our hearts, we readily imagine none is there. Nay, some well-meaning men have imagined this not only at that time, but ever after, having persuaded themselves that when they were justified they were entirely sanctified; yea, they have laid it down as a general rule, in spite of Scripture, reason and experience. These sincerely believe, and earnestly maintain, that all sin is destroyed when we are justified, and that there is no sin in the heart of a believer; that it is altogether clean from that moment. But though we readily acknowledge 'he that believeth is born of God,' and he that is born of God doth not commit sin,' yet we cannot allow that he does not feel it within; it does not reign, but it does remain. And a conviction of the sin which remains in our heart is one great branch of the repentance we are now speaking of."--Ibid., pp. 33, 34.

"Now where is he, even among those that seem strong in faith, who does not find in himself a degree of all these evil tempers? So that even these are but in part 'crucified to the world'; for the evil root still remains in their heart."--Ibid., p. 38.

"We may, therefore, set it down as an undoubted truth, that covetousness, together with pride, and self-will and anger, remain in the hearts even of them that are justified."--Ibid., p. 40.

"And it is most certain, they are thus far right; there does still remain, even in them that are justified, a mind which is in some measure carnal (so the apostle tells even the believers at Corinth,

'Ye are carnal'); a heart bent to backsliding, still ever ready to 'depart from the living God'; a propensity to pride, self-will, anger, revenge, love of the world, yea, and all evil; a root of bitterness, which, if the restraint were taken off for a moment, would instantly spring up; yea, such a depth of corruption, as, without clear light from God, we cannot possibly conceive. And a conviction of all this sin remaining in their hearts, is the repentance which belongs to them that are justified."--Ibid., p. 41.

John Wesley's exposition of this subject is a classic defense of the basic faith of Protestantism. It is the best single refutation of the Wright teaching ever published.*

Concerning the notion that the carnal nature is wholly eradicated in one act of conversion, Wesley observed that this doctrine was "never heard of in the Church of Christ, from the time of His coming into the world, till the time of Count Zinzendorf; and it is attended with the most fatal consequence. It cuts off all watching against our evil nature, against the Delilah which we are told is gone, though she is still lying in our bosom."--Ibid., p. 29.

But the author of Living Righteously not only resurrects the teaching of Zinzendorf, but insists that any man who has any trace of carnal nature remaining in him is not converted and has no hope of salvation while he remains in that state. If that were true, then none of the Reformers were converted men. John Wesley certainly could not pass Fred Wright's test of conversion, for both Wesley's teaching and his experience denied that original sin was wholly removed from born-again believers.

CONTRARY TO THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES

We have seen that Brother Wright's teaching is contrary to the Spirit of Prophecy; and nothing could be more evident than that it is contrary to the teaching and experience of the Reformers. Let us now move back in history and compare his teaching with the doctrine of the apostles of the gospel.

First we call John the beloved to the witness stand. Tell us, John, can we Christians claim to have sin, in the form of the sinful, carnal nature, wholly removed from us? Hear the apostle reply: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8.

It is important that we see the significance of the word "sin" as generally

* John Wesley's entire article is available on request from Present Truth, P. O. Box 511, Snohomish, Washington 98290, U.S.A. Price: \$1.00.

used in the New Testament, and especially in this context. In the next verse John continues: "If we confess our sins . . ." So he speaks of "sin" and "sins." All the scholars of the Greek text are united in understanding that the word "sin" in 1 John 1:8 refers to the principle of sin, the sinful nature, in contrast to verse 10, which speaks of the acts of sin. Thus, Kenneth S. Wuest translates 1 John 1:8: "If we say that we do not have a sinful nature, ourselves we are deceiving." Or: "If we say that (indwelling) sin we are not having, ourselves we are leading astray."--The New Testament, An Expanded Translation, pp. vii, 565.

To put forth the claim that one has no sinful nature is to claim personal sinlessness, for any human being who is without a sinful nature is a sinless being like Jesus Christ. And in chapter four of his book, Brother Wright sets forth the view that born-again believers are altogether like Christ in respect of having no carnal nature.

The author of Living Righteously does not realize that the word "flesh" as used by Paul in Romans 6 to 8 does not mean body, but carnal nature. According to Biblical usage, Luther correctly maintains:

"Everything is and is called spirit and spiritual that proceeds from the Holy Spirit, no matter how corporeal, external and visible it may be. And everything is flesh and carnal that proceeds without Spirit from the natural powers of the flesh, no matter how inward and invisible it may be. Thus St. Paul in Romans viii calls the carnal mind 'flesh' and in Galatians v he reckons among the works of the flesh 'heresy, hatred, envy' etc., which are entirely inward and invisible." (See Commentary on the Epistle of the Galatians, p. 8.)

Most of the best modern translations render the word "flesh" as "sinful nature" or "carnal nature" or "lower nature." (See Phillips, New English Bible, Kenneth S. Wuest, Charles B. Williams, etc.) In fact the word "carnal" simply comes from the Latin carnalis, which means flesh. The expression "carnal mind" in Romans 8:7 is actually "mind of the flesh" in the original Greek. Even the translators of our Authorized Version clearly understood that "flesh" meant carnal nature, for Romans 7:14 literally reads, "I am flesh," but they rendered it, "I am carnal."

Nowhere does Paul suggest that regenerate Christians are without the "flesh," or carnal nature. As Luther points out, the "flesh" causes abundance of trouble and striving against good, even in the best of saints. But according to Paul, believers have crucified and keep crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. This does not mean that they crucify their bodies. Sin does not reside in the fabric of the body. It resides in the "flesh"--the carnal nature, or carnal mind. Christians "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." That is, they do not obey the promptings of their carnal nature, but the promptings of the Holy Spirit. A converted man is not a man who walks around without a carnal nature, but he is a man who does not obey the promptings of sin which spring from the carnal nature. Regeneration breaks the controlling

power of the carnal nature over the thoughts. The new birth eradicates the carnal nature in the sense that it is expelled so far as being a controlling principle in the life. Its reign is eradicated. As John Wesley said: ". . . it does not reign, but it does remain."

Paul says: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Gal. 5:16. Wuest translates this: "Through the instrumentality of the Spirit habitually order your manner of life, and you will in no wise execute the passionate desire of the evil nature." Paul does not suggest that believers will have no evil nature to contend with. He says that those led by the Spirit will not fulfill the promptings of the carnal nature.

Paul continues: "For the flesh [carnal nature] lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh [carnal nature], and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. 5:17. Wuest renders this as follows: "For the evil nature constantly has a strong desire to suppress the Spirit, and the Spirit constantly has a strong desire to suppress the evil nature." According to Ellen G. White, this text is applicable to the experience of true Christians:

"The life of the Christian is not all smooth. He has stern conflicts to meet. Severe temptations assail him. 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.'" --SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1111.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, he addressed them as "sanctified in Christ." 1 Cor. 1:2. Who could say they were not born again? Yet they were very immature in the Christian life. There were faults to be corrected in them. So Paul declared to these "sanctified" believers: "Ye are yet carnal." 1 Cor. 3:3. In that area of experience where they were immature and blameworthy, they were still carnal. Commenting on this passage, Wesley said:

" . . . there does still remain, even in them that are justified, a mind which is in some measure carnal (so the apostle tells even the believers at Corinth, 'Ye are carnal') . . ."--Wesley's Sermons, p. 41.

The author of Living Righteously bases his theory of the total eradication of the carnal nature on his exegesis of Romans 7. This chapter has been the favorite stamping ground of all the "holiness" groups since the time of the extreme elements among the Anabaptists. Wright takes Paul's illustration of marriage and stretches it so far that his exegesis ends up having no relation to the subject at hand. Paul's whole point of discussion is concerning the proper and improper function of law. He is expounding Romans 6:14: "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." Human nature--carnal human nature--is exemplified by the Jews who tried to earn salvation by law--by fulfilling every legal requirement of salvation. Paul shows that salvation comes by being united to Christ and by partaking of His grace.

The freedom illustrated by the new marriage in Romans 7 is a freedom from law--that is, a freedom from legalism, from the terrible attitude of trying to obtain righteousness by fulfilling every legal requirement of the covenant. Paul shows that there is only one way for human nature to escape from this infatuation with law (as a method of salvation). Says he: "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ . . . now we are delivered from the law." Rom. 7:4, 6. This does not mean deliverance and freedom from the obligation to keep the Ten Commandments as the antinomians dream. Neither is it referring to deliverance from the condemnation of the law. It means deliverance from the outlook of trying to be righteous by going certain things and fulfilling all the conditions of salvation. Being "married" to law is a sad and tyrannical way of living. And no one can be "married" to Christ while he is "married" to law. These are the two husbands of Romans 7--law (legalism) and Christ. This is further borne out by verse 5: "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Here law (when used as a method of salvation) is represented as being the sire of "fruit unto death" just as Christ in verse 4 is the progenitor of "fruit unto God."

Paul then anticipates the question: If law is the progenitor of sin, "is the law sin?" Rom. 7:7. His answer is, No. Having shown the improper function of law, he proceeds to show its proper function. Its office is to point out sin, or as he says in Galatians, it is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. The law points out how far short we come of the glory of God. It keeps us ever humble, ever running after the grace of God, ever exercising faith in Christ's merit.

In Romans 7 there is an important change in the tense of the verb when Paul illustrates truth by his personal experience. From verse 7 to verse 13 he uses the past tense, but from verse 14 to verse 25 he uses the present tense. In true context, Romans 7:14-25 is not the confession of an unregenerate sinner, although some of the verses may illustrate the impotence of the "flesh" in an unregenerate man. Paul desires to warn believers against trusting in the flesh even after they have entered the divine life. In his autobiography given in 2 Corinthians 11, Paul says he speaks as a fool--that is, humanly speaking. Speaking from the perspective of human achievement, he is magnificent. He rises above all men in spiritual achievements. But in Romans 7 Paul does not speak as a fool. He speaks as a servant of God enlightened by the spiritual breadth of the law. Comparing his achievements with the glory of God, he is very humble. His best efforts even in grace fall short of his enlightened concept of absolute perfection. He confesses a disparity between his goal and his achievement. He can always visualize himself doing better. He hates sin, but understanding that sin is anything which falls short of the divine perfection, he confesses that sin and imperfection are mingled in his most earnest efforts and holiest duties. Paul confesses the sinfulness of his nature (Acts of the Apostles, p. 561). Indeed, he cries: "O wretched man that I am!" Ah, says Brother Wright, "This is the evidence that the man of Romans 7 is an unconverted Laodicean whom the Lord says is "wretched . . . and naked." Rev. 3:17. But there is a world of difference. The Laodicean does not know he is wretched. He has no

concept of the holiness of God or the sinfulness of the human heart. It is really prophets, apostles and those who live nearest to God who make startling confessions of the sinfulness of human nature, while those who have no ray of light from Jesus are ignorant of the defects and deformity of human character. They stand like the Pharisee, praying within themselves: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men . . ."

These are the earmarks of a genuine experience in the man of Romans 7:

1. Paul uses the personal pronoun. He relates his own experience.
2. He changes from the past tense of the verb to the present tense in verses 14 to 25. He was writing as a holy apostle.
3. He is very humble, and as Luther points out in his Commentary on Romans, he makes such confessions as only a saint would or could make.
4. He testifies to an abhorrence of evil (verses 15-20). The Bible says that an unregenerate man "abhorreth not evil." Ps. 36:4.
5. He positively does not consent to sin. Ellen White is clear that no one can be forced to commit an act of sin. The will must consent before the soul is involved in guilt.
6. He delights in the law of God after the inward man--i.e., his heart (verse 22). No man can delight in God's law unless that law has been written in his heart. (See Ps. 119:72, 113; 1:1-3.) Never, never does the Bible speak of the unregenerate delighting inwardly in the law. He may boast outwardly like the Pharisee, but the unregenerate always frets and chaffs against God's will inwardly.
7. He serves the law of God in his mind, but an unregenerate man cannot keep the law at all.

Paul makes it clear that his experience is not just one of confessing his sinfulness. He rises above his human weakness to rejoice in the liberating grace of Christ. Says he: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1. He does not say, "There is therefore now no carnal nature in them which are in Christ Jesus," for there certainly is a warfare against the "flesh" which is to be carried on. He does not say, "There is therefore now no sin in them which are in Christ Jesus," for if he claimed such, he would be a liar, and the truth would not be in him. He says there is no condemnation. "Flesh" he has, and "flesh" he is (Romans 7:14 literally reads, "I am flesh," instead of, "I am carnal"), but he does not walk after the promptings of the "flesh" (the carnal nature), but after the promptings of the Spirit.

If only Brother Wright had recognized that "flesh" means "carnal" and "carnal" means "flesh," he could never have taken the view that the carnal nature is nonexistent in Christians. Failure to see that the Pauline

word "flesh" does not mean body, but carnal nature, is evidence of serious theological illiteracy.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

If we had time, we could see that holy men of God throughout the Old Testament make confessions of their sinfulness which are just as startling as Paul's in Romans 7:14-25. Job declared: "I am vile." Isaiah confessed: "I am undone." Daniel said: "My comeliness was turned in me into corruption." The man who lives nearest to God is very humble about his spiritual attainments. With Paul, he still regards himself as the chief of sinners.

"The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you.

"No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by the grace of Christ will admire His divine character; but if we do not see our own moral deformity, it is unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ."--Steps to Christ, pp. 64, 65.

CONTRARY TO THE TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Romans 7:14-25 is to be understood in the light of Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." Note the true force of this text. It does not merely say, "There is no man that sinneth not," as it does in 1 Kings 8:46. Neither does it say, "There is not a just man that does not sin." It says, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." As Luther points out in his Wartburg answer to Latomus, the meaning is that even when a righteous man is doing good, he still sins. In other words, there is no such thing as a good work without sin. Wherefore? The word "sin" translated in the Old Testament (with rare exceptions) is derived from the Hebrew word chata, which originally signified "to miss the mark." The corresponding Greek word for sin is hamartano, which also means a "coming short" of the mark. Thus Paul said: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3:23. Therefore, anything which falls short of God's ideal is sin.

When a righteous man prays, he does not pray as fervently as he ought. This is sin. He loves God, but he knows only too well that he does not love God as ardently as he ought. In this he sins. He praises God, but when, like Isaiah, he compares his feeble praise with the fervid praise of the seraphim, his own inward defilement stands out painfully distinct. When the believer compares his acts of obedience with the obedience of Christ, he knows it comes short of the mark. This is sin. Thus, even when the righteous man does good, he sins. And Solomon declares there is no righteous man that does not sin in this way.

This is what Paul is confessing in Romans 7:14-25. The great saint does not claim he has no carnal nature, for that would amount to a claim of perfection, or moral sinlessness. In Philippians 3:11, 12 Paul plainly declares he has not reached sinless perfection. He says he still presses toward the mark--that is, he has not reached the mark. And anything that falls short of the mark is sin. In Philippians 3 Paul also makes another vital point. The apostle speaks of his desire to enter the spiritual experience of death and resurrection with Christ. He does not claim to have fully entered the experience. He declares that he is "being made conformable unto His death . . . Not as though I had already attained." Phil. 3:10, 12. So death to sin is not only one act. It is also represented as a continuous process. The process is not completed until the believer attains to the full stature of a perfect man in Christ. (See Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 505; Ibid., vol. 4, p. 367.)

Returning to the Old Testament witness, Isaiah declares: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6. Literally, "All our righteous deeds are as filthy rags." Please note: Isaiah includes himself, yet he was a holy prophet. He does not say, "All our sinful deeds are like filthy rags." No! No! But, "All our righteous deeds are as filthy rags." This is what the text says, and upon this bold declaration Martin Luther stood against the Catholics, who contended (like Fred Wright) that original sin is not in the righteous.

But says one: Now you are going too far. Do you mean that such righteous deeds as prayers, praise and acts of obedience performed by the saints are filthy rags? To which we reply without hesitation, In themselves they are still as filthy rags. Listen:

"The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ."--Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 344.

While Isaiah declares that righteous deeds are like filthy rags, Ellen White declares they are so defiled that they are in themselves of no value

with God. Brother Wright erroneously imagines that if God gives him the power of imparted righteousness, he can perfectly keep God's law in the sense that his acts of obedience are perfect in themselves. He says nothing about imputed righteousness. He sees no need for it. He fails to grasp the truth that unless Jesus imputed His merit to our prayers, praise and acts of obedience, they would only be a stench in God's nostrils. He sees no need for the salt of Jesus' imputed righteousness to be added to his offering (Mark 9:49; Desire of Ages, p. 439).

"Man's obedience can be made perfect only by the incense of Christ's righteousness, which fills with divine fragrance every act of obedience."--Acts of the Apostles, p. 532.

Cain saw no need of a religion like this. He thought that if he brought good fruit to the Lord, the Lord would surely accept it. He was just like those who think they only need imputed righteousness for past acts of sin. As long as they commit no overt act of sin, they think their "fruit" is very acceptable to God. They do not see that they need the imputed righteousness to make obedience acceptable to God. This matter was not only the bone of contention between Cain and Abel, but between the Catholics and the Reformers. This was the central issue in the Reformers' message on justification by faith.

When Adam and Eve sinned, their natures were changed. God then changed the ground to correspond with the change of the human heart. Said He: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." Gen. 3:17.

Throughout the Bible the ground is used as an object lesson of the human heart. (See Jer. 4:3; Hosea 10:12; Matt. 13:18-23.) After the fall the ground was cursed with the tendency to bring forth thorns and weeds. So man's heart was cursed with a tendency to evil. As man must battle with thistles, weeds and ground which does not readily yield its treasure, so in order to develop a good character, a Christian must bestow hard work on the soil of the heart.

When God said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life," He was not alone referring to the physical ground. The Spirit of Prophecy shows that this statement means that man would continue to experience the evil of his nature all the days of his probationary life. (See Story of Redemption, p. 40; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 59; Education, pp. 26, 29.)

Adam repented after his fall. He was converted. But God's pardoning grace did not revoke the decree: "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." Throughout his life Adam had to battle with the soil of his heart as much as he did with the soil of the earth. God did not wholly remove his carnal nature. He had to "eat of it" all the days of his life. But this curse was to be a blessing: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake."

We do not limit God's power when we say that the carnal nature is not wholly eradicated at conversion. We see that God's wisdom sees what is

best for our good. There are vital lessons we need to learn. We need the blessing that comes from a lifetime conflict with the "flesh"--the carnal nature. It will teach us dependence upon the righteousness in Jesus as nothing else can. As Luther said: ". . . sin is left in the spiritual man for the exercise of grace, for the humiliation of pride, and for the restraint of presumptuousness."--Lectures on Romans, p. 212.

Therefore let not the child of God fret and chafe against the Lord because He leaves us to toil against the evil of our nature. We may pray like Paul to have our thorn in the flesh removed, but God says He leaves this messenger of Satan to buffet us lest we should be exalted above measure. Meanwhile He assures us: "My grace is sufficient for thee." This is the rainbow in the cloud of wrath. God's grace is sufficient. We are accepted "in the Beloved." God receives us and pronounces us righteous, not by virtue of what we are, but by virtue of what Jesus is. Although the evil of a carnal nature remains, God does not impute it to the saints (Rom. 4:6-8). Then let the devil and the carnal nature rage. We are in the lions' den, but the Lord sends His angel and shuts the lions' mouths. Whereas the lions get the mastery of the wicked and break all their bones, they can do us no hurt. In Christ, the carnal nature is turned to a blessing. Flowers appear on the thistles, and roses on the briars. The evil of our nature keeps us in a posture of humiliation, repentance, faith. It keeps us ever running after the Lord's grace. God hears the prayers of the destitute. He takes sweet delight in the broken-hearted suppliant. Blessed, yes, happy and fortunate are the poor in spirit, those who mourn and those who are meek.

Since Brother Wright is so fond of using the analogy of the thorn bush, we will consider this in the light of the cursed ground. The cursed ground, with its tendency to bring forth thorns and weeds, is the most perfect illustration of the carnal nature. This soil is full of the seeds of all manner of noxious weeds. The weeds are like sins. They are the produce from this cursed ground. If we are to produce fruit to the glory of God, we must do diligent work in the garden of the heart and not be like the man spoken of in the Proverbs: "I went by the field of the slothful . . . and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns." We must dig deep with the plowshare of truth. We must break up the fallow ground by repentance and confession. We must sow the good seed of the Word, heeding the injunction: "Sow not among thorns."

In this sense we can agree with Brother Wright that we should pull the thorn bush out. And there are plenty of statements where the Spirit of Prophecy admonishes us to pull out the poisonous plants of sin by the roots. But in this context of illustration, the gardener must continue to pull up weeds which spring from the cursed ground. I can understand how Brother Wright can pull out a thorn bush. And he thinks that just as quickly he can have his carnal nature forever eradicated. It is very easy to see that our brother is not a man of the soil. Speaking of the sin of our nature, Wesley said: "It is the cursed ground, fit to bring forth all manner of noxious weeds." (See Works of John Wesley, vol. ix, pp. 462-464.) Now, Brother Wright, let us see you eradicate the soil's tendency to grow weeds.

THE SANCTUARY

The doctrine of the instantaneous eradication of the carnal nature is contrary to the revelation of the gospel as given through the sanctuary and its service--both as to type and antitype.

The daily service in the outer court and first apartment of the ancient tabernacle illustrated the way of forgiveness, regeneration and sanctification. This is so well known that we shall not tarry here to demonstrate this point. But even after the Hebrew had daily received forgiveness, a further ministry was required at the close of the yearly round of services. On the great Day of Atonement the High Priest went into the most holy place to make a final atonement for repentant, forgiven Israel. The congregation did not present itself as a people who stood in no further need of cleansing. On the contrary, deep humility and repentance was to mark each member of the congregation. They were found confessing their sinfulness before Jehovah. Then the High Priest cleansed God's dwelling place--not just the tent, but the people, His real dwelling place of which the tent was only an illustration. It was written: "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord." Lev. 16:30.

As in the ceremonial type, so in heavenly reality. Justification and the daily experience of sanctification do not wholly remove the evil nature. The early rain does not bring to perfection. But Christ is now in the most holy place, and He wants to make a final atonement for His people (Early Writings, pp. 253, 254). As the trumpet sounds, "The hour of His judgment is come," how are God's people to approach the judgment of the living? And what will Christ do for His saints in the judgment of the living? Let Inspiration answer these vital questions:

"Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing up of the great day of atonement. . . . Their only hope is in the mercy of God; their only defense will be prayer. As Joshua was pleading before the Angel, so the remnant church, with brokenness of heart and earnest faith, will plead for pardon and deliverance through Jesus their Advocate. They are fully conscious of the sinfulness of their lives, they see their weakness and unworthiness, and as they look upon themselves they are ready to despair. The tempter stands by to accuse them, as he stood by to resist Joshua. He points to their filthy garments, their defective characters. . . . As the people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart, the command is given, 'Take away the filthy garments' from them, and the encouraging words are spoken, 'Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, yet faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be

defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb's book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon's roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin. And the remnant are not only pardoned and accepted, but honored. 'A fair miter' is set upon their heads. They are to be as kings and priests unto God. While Satan was urging his accusations and seeking to destroy this company, holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them the seal of the living God."
--Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 472, 473, 475.

This clear passage, describing the experience and final spiritual deliverance of the saints in the judgment of the living, is not only an elucidation of Zechariah 3, but also such glorious texts as:

"For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord." Lev. 16:30.

"But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." Dan. 7:26.

"Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Mal. 3:1-3.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Acts 3:19.

"In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." Isa. 4:2-4.

This is the truth of Adventism. Sin, or the sinful nature (original, inbred sin), is not blotted out at conversion, nor at the second coming of Christ.

These are two polar extremes. Sin is blotted out in the judgment, in the final atonement. It is there that the Lord bestows the perfecting latter rain and seals His people.

Brother Wright's message is a negation of the experience of the cleansing of the sanctuary. It will not, cannot bring a people to afflict their souls before the sanctuary. It could never bring a people to come to the work of final atonement, "pleading for purity of heart," "fully conscious of the sinfulness of their lives."--Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 475, 473. Wright's doctrine is well calculated to short circuit any such experience of repentance. Those who accept his teaching imagine they have no carnal nature. They see no need to afflict their souls. As for pleading for purity of heart, that is completely foreign to their religious experience. To them, repentance is only an occasional repentance for this sin and that sin (if indeed they ever sin). There is no room in their experience for repentance for the sinfulness of their nature, because they claim the carnal nature is nonexistent.

The doctrine of the instantaneous, once-for-all eradication of the carnal nature at the beginning of the Christian life is really the most extreme form of the doctrine of "once saved, always saved" and instantaneous sinlessness. Yet strangely, Fred Wright denies "once saved, always saved" and instantaneous sinlessness. He concedes that a regenerate man could sin again (not realizing, of course, that even all his best deeds are mingled with sin all the time). Just to say it is possible to sin is not any concession at all, for the saints throughout eternity could sin if they chose to sin. So it is evident that although Living Righteously denies "once saved, always saved," it is a twin brother dressed up in a few different frills.

As touching sinlessness, the book really teaches instantaneous sinlessness, for any reasonable person can see that if the carnal nature is the source of all sin, and if a believer has no carnal nature, then he has no sin. Conversely, if a man has no sin, he has no carnal nature. The doctrine of Living Righteously comes under the condemnation of 1 John 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin [or, if we say we have no sinful nature], we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

The author of Living Righteously admits that believers may sometimes sin or be caught off guard and trapped into sin. Most of us would then say, Then that is the proof that the believer has a carnal nature. Not so, argues Brother Wright. He reasons that as Adam, the being with a sinless nature, fell into sin, so born-again Christians sometimes fall into sin. He argues that in such cases the devil does not exploit the carnal nature (which is supposed to have been eradicated), but the good qualities of the good nature, to lead into sin. But the author has dug a theological pit that he must fall into himself. He has made cords to bind his own teachings hand and foot. The favorite argument of his book is the words of Jesus: "Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." He insists that this is an absolute truth. He shows that there is no way in which a corrupt tree can bring forth good fruit. We will not dispute that. But let us quote all the words of Jesus: "A good

tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." Matt. 7:18. Is not this truth just as binding, just as absolute. It is not possible to get bad fruit from a good tree. He cites the fine statement from Mount of Blessing which says that we must be good before we can do good. True! Conversely, man must be made bad before he can do bad. As long as the tree is good, the fruit is good. Therefore any sin of any kind is proof that there exists a carnal nature, and anyone who denies it denies reality.

Therefore it must be plain that Eve was corrupted before she committed a corrupt deed. She became evil before she did evil. She became a slave of Satan before she did the bidding of Satan. Prove it, says one. Here is the proof: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." Gen. 3:6. Notice Eve's state before she put forth her hand and ate the forbidden fruit. She "saw" that the tree was good for food and much to be desired to make her wise. Was that true? Certainly not. The tree was not good for food. It was not a desirable thing to make her wise at all. But Eve saw that it was. She was not seeing reality. She was seeing things that did not exist. In other words, she was hypnotized. Before she committed the act of sin, Satan hypnotized her, and this is plainly stated in the Spirit of Prophecy (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1081). A hypnotized person has surrendered his will to the control of the hypnotist. So Eve had given her will into the control of Satan. Her whole nature was corrupted. She could not help seeing everything in a perverted light. Having become evil, she did evil. Having been made an evil tree, she bore evil fruit.

So we set it down as an undoubted truth, that a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit. Sin springs from the carnal nature and nothing but the carnal nature. Therefore 1 John 1:8 may be read either of the following ways without the slightest change of meaning:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

or

"If we say that we have no carnal nature, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

THE MOST BASIC ERROR

The doctrine of the instantaneous, once-for-all eradication of the carnal nature is not the worst error in Living Righteously. The reader may wonder if anything could be more extreme and dangerous as that. There is.

In chapter six the author sets forth the view that receiving the Biblical wedding garment (which he equates with Christian perfection) is when a man

obtains an experience of being righteous in himself. This point is stressed:

" . . . only a man who has been made righteous within himself by the power and the gift of God, can possibly bring forth righteous deeds."--Living Righteously, p. 58.

" . . . we see plainly that the wedding garment is the righteousness of the saints, which means that they will be in a condition or state of righteousness within themselves . . ."

We will now see that this is not only an error, but that it is the error which is the father of every error. This teaching is the essence of the original sin, and every sin that has ever been committed springs from it. This is the most serious charge that could ever be raised against any man's doctrine. All that could be said against Romanism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, could not exceed this. And let it be made clear to the reader that we are not attacking any personality. This is a life-and-death question of truth and error. It must now be shown that Living Righteously is not merely advocating one of Satan's doctrines, but the very doctrine of the devil in its most essential and basic nature.

The Bible declares:

"God is light." 1 John 1:5.

"God is love." 1 John 4:8.

"He [God] is righteous." 1 John 3:7.

"This is the true God, and eternal life." 1 John 5:20.

This is the truth--God is light, God is love, God is righteous, God is life. (In the New Testament, light, love, righteousness and life are used as synonyms and may be used interchangeably without altering the meaning of the texts.)

Please notice: The Bible does not say that God has light, love, righteousness and life. If He merely has these "things," then we could simply go to Him and get these "things" from Him, as Wright actually teaches. But the Bible says God is light, love, righteousness and life. Light is not a "thing." It is a Person. The only way a creature can enjoy life and righteousness is to enjoy God. A creature does not receive righteousness and love from God as if He passed it out as a rich man gives money to a poor man. Never! God gives Himself to His intelligent creatures. In receiving Him, they receive light, love, righteousness and life. But they do not have it in themselves. They have it only in God. God is their light. God is their righteousness. God is their life.

Lucifer wanted to have these divine attributes in himself. He wanted to be like God. He went out and preached to the angels exactly what Fred Wright is preaching in various places. Satan told the holy angels that

they were holy in themselves. Satan and his angels were prepared to admit that their righteousness and life came from God (and if that is righteousness by faith, then I will confess that Satan and Living Righteously preach righteousness by faith). But Satan refused to submit to the truth that God and God alone was the only righteousness which he possessed or ever could possess. He was not content to have his righteousness in God. He wanted to be righteous in himself. It was this philosophy, this doctrine, that turned the son of the morning into a devil; and it will still make devils out of all who embrace it. This is what it did to Adam and Eve. Satan told Eve that if she ate the forbidden fruit, she would "be as God." Gen. 3:5, R.S.V. He told her that she could do as she pleased and would not die (verse 4). As if to say: You have life in yourself. You have righteousness, love and light in yourself.

"Ye shall be as God." This is the original sin, and every other sin is only an echo of it. Herein is the contest of the ages. Man wants to be like God. God is light, love, righteousness and life. He has these attributes in Himself. But man wants to acquire these attributes from God and have them in himself just as God does.

After the fall it was soon proved that God was the life and righteousness of the human race. Not simply that God had the righteousness and life, but God was the righteousness and life of man.

And now in the gospel, God restores in Jesus Christ that which was lost. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Jesus is the life, the righteousness, the sanctification of the human race.

"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." John 1:4. This could never be said of any other man and never will be said of any other man. Jesus, and Jesus alone, has life and righteousness in Himself. Jesus declares: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And again: "I am the light of the world." He does not say: I have the light of the world. Come and receive light from Me. No! No! He is the light, and the only way to have light is to have it in Christ.

John declares:

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 1 John 5:11, 12.

The life and righteousness of God is in Christ. We must get the force of this oft-repeated New Testament expression--in Christ. "Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him."--Mount of Blessing, p. 18.

We must remember that the human heart's most basic disposition is expressed in the original temptation: "Ye shall be as God." The carnal human heart wants to have righteousness in itself. It perverts the gospel teaching of

in Christ to from Christ. This is the gospel--righteousness, light and life in Christ. This is antichrist--righteousness, light and life from Christ. If we could obtain these things from Christ and have them in ourselves, then Christ would only be a means to an end. It would mean that we could use Him to obtain the desires of the heart in accordance with the spirit of original sin. It would lead us to seek Jesus "from selfish motives."--Desire of Ages, p. 198. It is quite apparent from reading Living Righteously that the author has made the state of being righteous in himself as his aim and philosophy of life. Jesus, and Jesus alone, is not his goal. He tries to show how a man can use Christ as a means of becoming righteous in himself. Words fail to adequately describe the diabolical nature of this doctrine. It is bad enough to try to play God, but what will be said when the human heart sets out to use Christ as a means to this end?

The author of Living Righteously completely avoids the New Testament teaching of righteousness in Christ, although this expression occurs hundreds of times in the Bible. Paul declares that we are chosen in Him and accepted in Him (Eph. 1:4, 6). We are forgiven, justified and sanctified in Him (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:24-26; 1 Cor. 1:30). We are presented to God as perfect in Him (Col. 1:28). The only way for any creature to be righteous here or hereafter is to be righteous in Christ.

" . . . whatever of virtue humanity possesses, it exists only in Jesus Christ, the world's Redeemer."--SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1141.

"Christ is the light, the life, the holiness, the sanctification of all who believe . . ."--Ibid., vol. 5, p. 1085.

Notice: The statement does not say, "Christ has the light, the life, the holiness, the sanctification for all who believe," as if believers could go to Him as one goes to get commodities from a cupboard. Truth declares that Christ is the light, the righteousness, the life of the believer. The believer does not have these attributes in himself, nor will he in eternity. When the child of God is challenged, What righteousness do you have? he declares, Christ. His name is called: "The Lord our righteousness." He is our light, the only light there is. We have light only in Him. He is our goodness, for "there is none good but One, that is, God." Matt. 19:17. He is our holiness, for even the saints in heaven will sing: "Thou only art holy." Rev. 15:4.

The whole problem is that human nature is not satisfied to have Jesus as its righteousness. It wants to use Him to try and become righteous in itself--just like Satan in his original apostasy. When Jesus becomes everything to us, when He becomes our righteousness and life, when we are forever satisfied that He alone is righteous and He is ours, then the work of redemption will have been brought to completion in the human heart. This is the reality of truth. It is so simple, yet no man can see it except the Holy Spirit reveals it to his heart.

Living Righteously presents the idea that the answer to the sin problem is to follow this program of getting righteousness from Christ in order to become righteous in ourselves. O horrible deception! That is not the answer to the sin problem. That is the sin problem. That is the very thing that Lucifer started in his rebellion, and the thing that God is trying to blot out of His universe. The very worst sin is not when wicked men say, Let us do evil. Nor is it when men say, Let us become righteous in ourselves. It is when men say, Let us become righteous in ourselves by getting it from Christ. And to think that this ultimate evil is passed off as "righteousness by faith"!

Where does Wright's doctrine lead? Listen to his own words when he speaks of the judgment: "There is not another soul who can or will stand in my place, no, not even the Saviour Himself."--Living Righteously, pp. 54, 55. What a sad, sad delusion. He plans to come to face the judgment, to use his own words, "righteous within himself"--with no cloud of incense, no atoning blood and no High Priest to stand for him. Why, there is not a man in his right senses who would bring the very best deed he had ever done to the judgment and ask God to judge that work apart from the covering cloud of Jesus' merit. But here comes our brother and his deluded friends to the judgment, asking for no Saviour to stand for them, seeing no need for the High Priest to stand for them, and blasphemously asking God to judge the perfect righteousness which they imagine they will, by that time, have in themselves. Yet Fred Wright says this is the way to enter the judgment with the wedding garment. He thinks that the "wedding garment" is a thing. He utterly fails to see that the wedding garment is the Biblical symbol for a Person--it is even Jesus Himself. Jesus is the righteousness, the wedding garment, of every believer. This "garment" is received at conversion, it is maintained in sanctification, and it is to be retained in the final atonement. The wedding garment is Christ, and if there is no Saviour to stand for us in judgment, then naked we shall be.

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

The author of Living Righteously sees little use for imputed righteousness, the righteousness which justifies us before God. But the Spirit of Prophecy says that this is "the third angel's message in verity."--Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 372. It is not just a part of the truth; it is the whole truth of the gospel.

Living Righteously bases its teaching on a false understanding of Romans 6 and 7. It leaves out the great presentation of imputed righteousness in chapters 3 to 5. Here Paul uplifts Jesus as the righteousness of all who believe. This is the gospel message, which commands us to look and live. The experience outlined in Romans 6 to 8 is the fruit, or outworking, of the true acceptance of Jesus' imputed righteousness.

Imparted righteousness does not mean an infusion of innate or intrinsic righteousness. It means that Christ, the believer's righteousness, comes to make His abode in the heart of a believer, not to teach him how to be righteous in himself, but to teach him more and more of what it means to be righteous in Christ, and in Christ alone.

But says one, Must not the saints finally "reflect the image of Jesus fully"? (Early Writings, p. 71). Yes indeed--reflect. A reflector does not have light in itself. When we speak of the perfecting of the saints, we really mean the perfection of the saints.

SUMMARY

1. The main thrust of the book Living Righteously is to teach the once-for-all eradication of man's carnal nature at the very beginning of the Christian life. It declares that there can be no Christian life unless this first takes place.
2. Without any disguise, it teaches that believers must become righteous in themselves. Christ is presented as the means to reach this state. The book declares that no Saviour will stand for God's people in the judgment, that they must enter as righteous in themselves rather than righteous in Christ.
3. The author's whole concept of Christianity is subjective. The point of ultimate concern is always the believer's experience. (This element of supreme subjectivity has been the common denominator of all the heresies down through the ages.)
4. It is a complete negation of the New Testament message of what a believer is in Christ. It turns around to an egocentric focus on what the believer must become in himself. Thus it is as far removed from New Testament teaching as night is from day.
5. It gives no place to imputed righteousness in Christian experience. There is no insight into the truth that the imputed merit of Christ must be added to a believer's acts of obedience. The author thinks that right here and now he can, by means of God's power, keep the commandments to perfection in himself. He ignores the Bible evidence that sin is mingled in all the good works of the saints.
6. The book shows no insight into what the real problem of sin is--how it began by Lucifer desiring to have life, or light, or righteousness, in himself.
7. There is no presentation of the uplifted cross, the heart-warming revelation of the compassion and love of the dear Saviour. There is nothing but a cold, formal and legal account of how a believer is supposed

to become righteous in himself by following a set of cold directions. The motivation is always egocentric. The presentation is as cold as a "Do It Yourself" manual. The author feels that salvation depends on getting his startling set of rules on how to do it--i.e., how to become righteous in yourself. It has no presentation of the intercession of the dear Saviour which would break the heart hardened in sin.

8. It is devoid of humility--a complete negation of the heart-humbling experience of the cleansing of the sanctuary. There is nothing that savors of a broken and contrite spirit, and certainly no mention that this is what God calls for above everything else in this day of atonement.

9. It takes the word "flesh" in Romans 6, 7 and 8 to mean the human body, whereas it clearly means the carnal nature. This one simple point destroys the whole structure of the book's theology.

10. Its doctrine is contrary to the sanctuary service in type and antitype. It denies any need for Christ to make a final atonement for His people.

11. It tries to prove its doctrine by farfetched analogies.

12. It raps Roman Catholicism for having the doctrine of antichrst, when the book's whole idea of infused righteousness is pure Romanism, a rehearsal of the very teaching that the Reformers so utterly exposed.

It is sad to think of precious souls being caught up in such a subjective, egocentric and contritionless "gospel," especially when the light today is shining so brightly on many of the points under discussion. My great hope is that some who have been caught up in this program of false sanctification will experience an awakening to present truth. Nothing could bring me greater joy. I do not feel that I am any better than these brethren who are groping around in the awful darkness of the Wright doctrine, but I do feel that I am a debtor to them for the measure of the light of the Awakening that God has been pleased to shine on my pathway. If there is one soul freed from the bondage of error, my effort in writing this will be rewarded with an infinite treasure--even a soul for whom Christ died.