

LIGHT IN THE SHADOWS

An Overview of the Doctrine of the Sanctuary

&

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

**An Overview of the Doctrine of
Salvation in Christ**

Frank B. Holbrook



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LIGHT IN THE SHADOWS*

An Overview of the Doctrine of the Sanctuary

I. Sanctuaries of Salvation

Buildings have always been of major interest to man, whether these structures are mud huts or towering skyscrapers. The first recorded group venture after the Flood was a project to build “a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven” (Gen. 11:4).

Men have made buildings for various purposes—for residences, offices, and manufacturing, education, entertainment, or worship. Among the notable man-made buildings are: the ancient Egyptian temple of Amon in Thebes, the largest temple known to have ever existed; the Merchandise Mart in Chicago, with a floor area of more than the Sears Building in Chicago, piercing skyward 1,454 feet.

One of the most beautiful buildings in the world today is the Taj Mahal in northern India, built in the seventeenth century by the Indian ruler Shah Jahan in memory of his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal. The Persian name Taj Mahal means “crown of palaces.” Twenty thousand workers labored about 20 years to fashion its exquisite white marble domes and towers, jeweled inlays, and carved-stone screen of alabaster. This vision of Oriental beauty and grandeur stands in a garden setting, with its loveliness mirrored by a long reflecting pool.

Centuries ago God said to Moses, Israel’s leader, “Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them: (Ex. 25:8). At first Israel’s desert sanctuary consisted of a carefully crafted tent-tabernacle. A little more than 400 years later this was replaced by a permanent temple erected in Jerusalem. This temple, built by Solomon—Israel’s third king—was “garnished with precious stones, surrounded by spacious courts with magnificent approaches, and lined with carved cedar and burnished gold.”¹

However, about 400 years after its dedication the temple was razed by the Babylonian invaders under Nebuchadnezzar. The returning exiles under Zerubbabel built another temple. Though the second temple was less magnificent than the original, it was still standing in 20 B.C., when Herod the Great began to rebuild and embellish it.

The sanctuaries of Israel were unique among early edifices. They were not built as residences for a priestly cast or for commerce and trade. They were not conceived to bring renown to the architects or the skilled craftsmen who erected them. Nor were they built to perpetuate the memory of some wealthy magnate. Lovely as the Taj Mahal is, it is but a tomb, a sad witness in stone to the fragile nature of human existence.

But Israel’s sanctuaries were sanctuaries of *salvation*. By means of these sacred structures and their accompanying rituals, the God of love—man’s Creator—determined to disclose to the world the good news of His way out of the darkness and despair of the human predicament.

“Mine house,” He declared, “shall be called an house of prayer for all people” (Isa. 56:7). He intended that the nations of earth would seek saving truth at His temple, and that they would say to one another, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths” (Isa. 2:3).

II. Sanctuary Foundations

Fully one-third of the book of Exodus is devoted to the organization and construction of the Israelite sanctuary. But Israel’s national worship is not to be thought of as being an entirely new and different system. Rather, *it was a flowering or an elaboration of the ancient religion of the patriarchs.*

* *Journal of Adventist Education* (Vol. 46, nos. 1, 2, October-November; December-January), 1983, 1984. Used by permission of The Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1917), p. 36.

Two observations confirm this view:

1. Israel at Sinai entered into a covenant relationship with the same God who had made a covenant with their immediate forefathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 17:7-8; Ex. 6:2-8; 19:3-6), and who was earlier worshiped by their ancestors, such as Shem, his father Noah, and the preceding godly line who traced their lineage back to Adam (Gen. 5, 11).

2. The Israelite sanctuary *preserved the basic sacrifice of the patriarchal worship*. It is significant that the only sacrifice discussed in detail in the book of Exodus (other than the rituals dealing with the consecration of the priests) is the morning and evening sacrifice, more commonly known as “the continual burnt offering.” (See Ex. 29:38-42.) This offering was the foundational sacrifice in the Israelite sanctuary system, and the large altar located in the court apparently derived its name from it (Ex. 30:28). The burnt offering was the common sacrifice of the patriarchs. Noah made a burnt offering from every type of clean bird and animal after his release from the ark (Gen. 8:20). Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, but eventually was able to offer a ram for “a burnt offering in the stead of his son” (Gen. 22:2-13). Job offered burnt offerings in behalf of his family; his friends also offered burnt offerings for themselves (Job 1:5; 42:8).

Thus, one important aspect of the morning and evening sacrifice—the “continual burnt offering”—made by the priests in the ancient sanctuaries of Israel was that it locked their tabernacle-temple system of worship into the religious life of Israel’s forebears. The basic sacrifice of the patriarchs became the central sacrifice of the Israelite ritual.

In view of these links between patriarchal and Israelite worship, the latter may be viewed as an example of unfolding revelation. In the sanctuary we find a progression in the worship forms that in turn disclosed more fully the purpose and plan of God for the salvation of sinners.

We may infer, therefore, that God saw it was time for His people to be given further insights into the nature of the Deity, the sin problem, and the means by which He would effect reconciliation with man. New light does not nullify old light. The es-

entials of sacrifice and mediation seen in the patriarchal age in the form of victim and father-priest would now be elaborated upon in a new context—the tabernacle-temple sanctuary, the dwelling place of God (Ex. 25:8, 29:45-46).

Although the two apartments (holy and Most Holy) of Solomon’s temple were twice the size of those in the Mosaic tabernacle, and although there were ten lamp-stands and ten tables, organized groups of Levitical musicians, and a total organization of all personnel related to the sanctuary, there appears to have been no change in the basic ritual as set forth in the Mosaic directives (1 Kings 5-8; 2 Chron. 2-7; cf. 1 Chron. 22-26, 28-29). The same seems to have been true of the subsequent temple built by Zerubbabel and rebuilt and embellished by Herod. After the revelations at Sinai, there was no further elaboration by God of the sanctuary forms and rites.

It is significant then, that the New Testament book of Hebrews does not view the sanctuary in Jerusalem in apostolic times as presenting the quintessence of the Hebrew faith. Such would have been the case if the worship conducted in Herod’s temple had been considered the end-product of an evolutionary development in Israel’s religion.

Instead, for spiritual meaning and understanding, the book of Hebrews centers on the tabernacle constructed in the wilderness. This is to be expected, since the bulk of the data pertaining to the Israelite sanctuary is found in the books of Moses. But it also implies that the Bible writer saw no basic change in the spiritual teaching of the Old Testament religion, whether in patriarchal, tabernacle, or later temple phases. In fact, he asserts that the same God who spoke in Old Testament times to “the fathers” now speaks “unto us by his Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). *The religion of the Old and New Testaments is essentially one.*

III. The Sanctuary and its Vertical Dimensions

Biblical records do not present Moses as the originator of the tabernacle and its rituals. In five different references the plan is described as hav-

ing been divinely revealed to him on Mount Sinai (Ex. 25:9,40; 26:30; 27:8; Num. 8:4). “And let them make me a sanctuary, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” “And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount” (Ex. 25:8-9, 40).

The Hebrew verb *ra'āh*, “to see,” appears in all five references, and is conjugated in the causative verbal forms of the Hebrew language so that the passages just cited could be rendered, “According to all that I cause you to see” and “which you were caused to see in the mountain.”

The causative form suggests that Moses was taken into a state of vision. It was normal for God to speak face to face with Moses (Num. 12:6-8), but on this occasion God apparently revealed the data concerning the building of the tabernacle and the organization of the priesthood by a vision.

This view is strengthened by the language of Numbers 8:4. This passage says in part, “according unto the *pattern* which the Lord *had shewed Moses*, so made he the candlestick.” The Hebrew word that is here translated “pattern” is *mar eh*, which competent lexicographers suggest should be translated in this instance as “vision.” The statement would thus read, “according unto the *vision* which the Lord had shewed Moses. . . .”

The Hebrew word, however, that receives the major emphasis in the divine instructions is *tabnīth*. God’s initial command in Exodus 25:9,40 reads literally, “According to all which I am causing you to see—the *pattern (tabnīth)* of the tabernacle, and the *pattern (tabnīth)* of all its articles, and thus you shall do.” “And see and make by their *pattern (tabnīth)* which you were caused to see in the mountain.”

Tabnīth, a feminine noun deriving from the verb *bānāh*, “to build,” occurs 20 times in the Hebrew Bible. The term can carry the meaning of a three-dimensional model, shape, or form. For example, the “great altar” that certain of the tribes of Israel built on the banks of the Jordan is referred to as “*the pattern (tabnīth)* of the altar of the Lord, which our fathers made” which stood in the courtyard of the tabernacle. (See Joshua 22:10, 28-

29.) Obviously the *tabnīth*-altar erected on the banks of the Jordan was a three-dimensional model. The golden calf worshiped at Sinai is designated in a similar manner. (Ps. 106:20; “similitude” = *tabnīth*.)

The word *tabnīth* can also mean a set of written instructions or specifications. For example, David entrusted to Solomon

the pattern [*tabnīth*] of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, and the pattern [*tabnīth*] of all that he had by the spirit of the courts of the house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things (1 Chron. 28:11-12).

It is evident that David’s plans were *written* specifications, rather than three-dimensional models, for he says, “All this. . . the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern” (vs. 19).

In his vision Moses received verbal specifications for the tabernacle, which he recorded (Ex. 25ff.). However, it may be inferred from the usage of *tabnīth* that he was also shown some kind of three-dimensional model of the proposed sanctuary. Ellen White confirms this in a very early statement. “He [God] presented before Moses a miniature model of the heavenly sanctuary.”²

The important question, however, is not whether Moses was shown a three-dimensional model or simply architectural plans. The basic question is whether the term *tabnīth* signifies only a concept or idea in the mind of God, or whether it represents a *higher reality with objective existence*, namely, a heavenly sanctuary, the primary dwelling place of the Deity.

The fact that Moses was put into a state of vision suggests that he saw more than a model. A vision would not have been necessary to simply transmit verbal instructions or display a model. For example, Moses was not taken into vision in order to receive the copy of the Decalogue on tables of

2 Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 4 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1945): 5.

stone—a law which he had heard with his normal hearing when God proclaimed it from the heights of Sinai. But if Moses was to be shown the heavenly dwelling place of God, he could only see it through a vision in such manner as God chose to represent it to his mind.

Twentieth-century archeological research has shed new light on Near Eastern thought patterns concerning heavenly-earthly relationships. The ancients saw a mythical analogical relation between the two worlds. To their thinking, Earth was simply a microcosm of the heavenly realm. Lands, rivers, and especially temples were believed to have heavenly counterparts. Although some modern scholars reject the concept that the *tabnîth* model shown to Moses reflected a heavenly reality, that is, a heavenly sanctuary, there is general recognition that it did, since this concept was so common in the prevailing culture. The earthly sanctuary was thus understood to be the counterpart of the heavenly dwelling place of God.

The biblical evidence fully supports the view that the people of Israel were aware of the vertical dimension or link between God's heavenly abode and His earthly dwelling in the tabernacle/temple sanctuary. Some of the evidence supporting this is as follows:

1. God is often depicted as descending to earth from heaven (His permanent dwelling place) for various purposes (Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Ex. 19:11, 18, 20). When God commands the making of a sanctuary so that He could "dwell among them"—(Heb. *shākan*, literally, "to tent"), the picture (in human terminology) is of God coming from His permanent home "to encamp" in a somewhat temporary manner with His people in a second dwelling.

2. While they were still on their journey from Egypt, God instructed the Israelites regarding proper worship when they would be settled in Canaan. At certain times of the year they were to assemble at the place the Lord would choose for the location of His sanctuary (Deut. 26:2). At those times they were to offer their sacrifices and rejoice before the Lord. The Lord even suggests the nature of their prayers. One line of that prayer says,

"Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel" (vs. 15). There was no confusion to the Hebrew mind. God was in His heavenly sanctuary dwelling and His presence was also revealed by the Shekinah glory in its counterpart, the earthly sanctuary.

3. At the building of the temple, God promised Solomon, "I will dwell (Heb. *shākan*) among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel" (1 Kings 6:13). Later Solomon would pray, "I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever" (1 Kings 8:13).

Nevertheless, in his dedicatory prayer the king freely acknowledges the heavenly dwelling place of the Deity. "When they shall pray toward this place. . . hear thou *in heaven thy dwelling place*: and when thou hearest, forgive" (1 Kings 8:30; see also vss. 39, 43, 49).

In one Psalm David can pray, "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple" (Ps. 5:7). In another Psalm he affirms, "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven" (Ps. 11:4).

4. The cherubim, depicted as three-dimensional figures on the ark and as two-dimensional figures worked into the fabric of the tabernacle's inner curtains and the veil of the Most Holy Place, reflect artistically in the earthly sanctuary the holy beings—the angels—who surround the throne of God in the heavenly courts.

5. The vertical linkage between God's heavenly sanctuary and His earthly sanctuary is definitely affirmed by the book of Hebrews. The earthly sanctuary is described as "the patterns" or copies of the heavenly reality, and its holy places were characterized as "figures of the true" (Heb. 9:23-24). It is asserted that the priests in the Israelite sanctuary served "the example [copy] and shadow" of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:4-5). Thus the earthly sanctuary is viewed in connection with the heavenly dwelling in a relationship of copy to original, of shadow to substance.

In support of this vertical line between the earthly and heavenly dwelling places of God and

the typical significance of the former, the writer of Hebrews cites Exodus 25:40. (See Heb. 8:5.) He thus indicates that in his inspired understanding the *tabnîth* model shown to Moses in the mount reflected a higher reality, the heavenly dwelling place of God.

This argumentation of the book of Hebrews is confirmed by the apostle John's visions of the heavenly sanctuary. In one passage, as he speaks of the heavenly temple or sanctuary, he employs the descriptive phraseology of the ancient sanctuary. "And after that I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened" (Rev. 15:5). In that heavenly temple he saw represented to him "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne" (Rev. 4:5), probably to be understood as analogous to the seven-branched candlestick or lamp-stand. On two other occasions he sees "the golden altar [of incense] which was before the throne" (Rev. 8:3), and "the ark of his testament" (Rev. 11:19).

The biblical evidence regarding the vertical link between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries may now be summarized: (1) Moses made the original earthly sanctuary according to a model and specifications given by God. (2) Israel understood that the sanctuary in their midst was a counterpart of the heavenly dwelling place of God—the heavenly temple. (3) The book of Hebrews affirms that the earthly sanctuary was a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary. (4) The apostle John testifies that he saw in vision "the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven."³

Excursus: What Is the Nature of the Heavenly Sanctuary?

Over the years there has been a good deal of useless debate among some Seventh-day Adventists over the nature of the heavenly sanctuary. Mrs. White predicted that:

In the future, deception of every kind is to arise, and we want solid ground for our feet. We want solid pillars for the building. Not one pin is to be removed from that which the Lord has established. The enemy will bring in false

theories, such as the doctrine that there is no sanctuary. This is one of the points on which there will be a departing from the faith. Where shall we find safety unless it be in the truths that the Lord has been giving for the last fifty years?⁴

What meaning did Mrs. White intend to convey by her statement that one of the false theories proposed in the end-time to distract God's people from the truth would be "the doctrine that there is no sanctuary?" Did she mean an open denial of a literal building in heaven? Or did she mean a denial of the great truths of salvation—truths that pertained to Christ's atoning death and priestly ministry in heaven?

The key to her meaning is found in the context of what was happening in the Adventist Church when this statement was published in the *Review and Herald*, May 25, 1905. At that time the pantheistic teachings of Dr. John H. Kellogg were being promulgated. Elder William Spicer, later to become a president of the General Conference, records an interview he had with Dr. Kellogg in 1902.

"Where is God?" I was asked [by Kellogg]. I would naturally say, He is in heaven; there the Bible pictures the throne of God, all the heavenly beings at His command as messengers between heaven and earth. But I was told that God was in the grass and plants and in the trees. . .

"Where is heaven?" I was asked. I had my idea of the center of the universe, with heaven and the throne of God in the midst, but disclaimed any attempt to fix the center of the universe astronomically. But I was urged to understand that heaven is where God is, and God is everywhere—in the grass, in the trees, in all creation. There was no place in this scheme of things for angels going between heaven and earth, for heaven was here and everywhere. *The cleansing of the sanctuary that we taught about was not something in a faraway heaven. "The sin is here. . . [Dr. Kellogg said, pointing to his heart], and here is the sanctuary to be cleansed.*"⁵

3 Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), 415.

4 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1946) 224, italics supplied.

5 W.A. Spicer, "How the Spirit of Prophecy Met a Crisis," Copy A, pp. 19-20, cited by Arthur L. White in *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years* 5 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1981): 289-290, italics supplied.

Dr. Kellogg's statement plainly indicates what Ellen White had in mind when she said there would be those who would teach that "there is no sanctuary." Ellen White was not only speaking about whether there was such a thing as a literal building in heaven, but about the bold denial of Christ's actual priestly mediatorial ministry in heaven before God in which He pleads the merits of His sinless life and atoning death in behalf of penitent sinners.

By teaching that the individual was the sanctuary, Dr. Kellogg—and others who later espoused similar ideologies—turned the important truth of Christ's priesthood on its head, shifting the focus away from the Saviour to the human being. The atoning sacrifice of Christ on earth and His priestly mediation in heaven are *the central features* of the salvation process. By denying the Saviour's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, Dr. Kellogg struck at foundational matters; hence, the seriousness of his denial of the sanctuary doctrine.

However, in seeking a correct understanding of the nature of Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, we must be careful lest we press the matter of literal language too far. We can hardly expect a one-to-one correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. According to Genesis 1:26-27, humankind was made "in the image of God," but obviously man is not exactly like God, although he reflects his Creator in some aspects. In like manner the earthly sanctuaries only faintly reflect the glories of the celestial abode of Deity.

The matchless splendor of the earthly tabernacle reflected to human vision the glories of that heavenly temple where Christ our forerunner ministers for us before the throne of God. The abiding-place of the King of kings, where thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him (Daniel 7:10); that temple, filled with the glory of the eternal throne, where seraphim, its shining guardians, veil their faces in adoration, could find, in the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands, but a faint reflection of its vastness and glory. Yet impor-

tant truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man's redemption, were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.⁶

We must remember that when we speak about heaven and the heavenly sanctuary, we are describing celestial realities that are far beyond human comprehension. Hence, in order to communicate to us about heavenly things, God must do so through representations of those realities in human terms. The heavenly sanctuary and its activities are thus represented to the prophets in the forms of earthly types. For example, Jesus is depicted as "a Lamb as it had been slain" standing in the midst of the throne (Rev. 5:6). The Holy Spirit in His multiple roles is represented by "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne" (Rev. 4:5). The intercession of the Saviour is represented by an angel at the golden altar of incense mingling the smoke of the incense with the prayers of God's people as they pray to Him (Rev. 8:3-4).

It is clear from just these few examples that the importance of the celestial reality we call the heavenly sanctuary was not vested in its structures, but in what these things represent in the ongoing reality of the plan of salvation. Note further the significance Ellen White saw in the ark, the piece of furniture in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary.

In the temple of heaven, the dwelling-place of God, His throne is established in righteousness and judgment. In the most holy place is His law, the great rule of right by which all mankind are tested. The ark that enshrines the tables of the law is covered with the mercy-seat, before which Christ pleads His blood in the sinner's behalf. *Thus is represented the union of justice and mercy in the plan of human redemption. . . .* The cherubim of the earthly sanctuary, looking reverently down upon the mercy-seat, represent the interest with which the heavenly host contemplate the work of redemption. This is the mystery of mercy into which angels desire to look—that God can be just while He justifies the repenting sinner, and renews His intercourse with the fallen race.⁷

⁶ White, *The Great Controversy*, 414.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 415, italics supplied.

Mercy and *justice* are abstract terms. The plan of salvation is a statement, we might say, of abstract truths. The earthly sanctuaries of Israel were constructed and provided with certain furnishings and rituals that portrayed in a visible, concrete manner the various facets and aspects of the plan. They give us a *pictorial representation* of salvation realities.

The altar depicted the great atoning, substitutionary death of our Lord. The two apartments with their rituals were not designed to teach us that the heavenly reality has two rooms or areas (though it might), but to teach us about the two great phases of Christ's priestly ministry in behalf of penitent sinners. The "structure" of either the earthly or the heavenly sanctuary reality is not the real essence of the sanctuary doctrine as taught by Seventh-day Adventists. It is what the structures represent or teach about the great moral controversy between Christ and Satan and the plan of salvation that really counts. The structures were designed to teach us spiritual truths. Let us not miss the truths for the medium!

IV. Principles of Interpretation (General and Specific)

General Approach

The chief problem in the study of the Israelite sanctuary is the sparseness of available data to interpret its meaning. Old Testament writers made no attempt to spell out its symbolism, apparently assuming that it was understood. There are, however, various emphases within the Old Testament accounts that give insights into the significance of the sanctuary to ancient Israel. One of these is provided by the movement and sequence of events within the book of Exodus.

The first cluster of events pertains to the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery by the mighty acts of God, climaxing in Moses' song of triumph (chaps. 1-15). The second cluster of events involves God's gracious leading and care of Israel in the wilderness, leading at last to Sinai

and the establishment of the people as a nation in covenant relationship with Him (chaps. 16-24). The third and final emphasis in the book relates to the building of the tabernacle as a suitable dwelling place for God in the midst of Israel (chaps. 25-31, 35-40).

When Moses ascended the mountain to receive the tables of the law and the instructions to build the tabernacle, the watching Israelites observed that a great cloud of fiery glory covered the mountain. "The glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, . . . And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel" (Ex. 24:16-17). After the erection and dedication of the tabernacle the same cloud moved off the heights of Sinai and "covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:34).

This visible action indicated that the covenant-keeping God had entered into habitation with His people.

The movement of the book of Exodus, like a grand orchestral symphony, comes to its finale with God dwelling in visible union with His redeemed people. The migration from Egypt has moved toward this end. God Himself states this as the reason for the divine mission to rescue Israel from slavery: "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God" (Ex. 29:45-46).

The significance of the divine purpose is further heightened when we recall that the sin of Adam and Eve had fractured the relationship between God and man. The assertion of their independence had resulted in their banishment from Eden, estrangement from God, and the dissolving of their former intimate fellowship with Him.

Here the Lord is promising to dwell among His people again:

I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. I am the Lord your God, which

brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bond-men; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright (Lev. 26:11-13).

Thus we see that first there was the miraculous deliverance from slavery, then the establishment of an intimate fellowship between God and His redeemed ones. The visible sanctuary system thus served to call Israel's attention to God's endeavors to effect a reconciliation with human beings.

The Scriptures make it clear that God intended ancient Israel to catch the spiritual overtones that accompanied His physical acts of mercy. For example, God's gracious act in supplying manna was designed to teach Israel more than the simple fact of His care. Moses interpreted the spiritual meaning in this manner: "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. 8:3).

For this reason the great events of the exodus from Egypt—God's marvelous deliverance from slavery—were commemorated in the Israelite sanctuary rituals by the festivals of the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Ex. 12:24-28,34,39; Deut. 16:3; Lev. 23 :40-43).

Exodus history was transformed into human experience again and again as generations of Israelites relived the events through which their fathers passed and contemplated their significance. Some no doubt caught the deeper import of the Exodus—spiritual deliverance from the slavery of sin through union with God and the freedom that resulted from living in harmony with His will. The historical Exodus experience became the pattern for the saving acts of God. Ultimately the redeemed—home at last—will cause the vaults of heaven to ring with the triumphant notes of "the song of Moses,. . . and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3).

The Israelite sanctuary was intended to emphasize visibly a thrilling truth—the presence of the living God was among His people in a unique and intimate way!

Israel's religious debacle at Sinai (Ex. 32-34) was partly a result of the nation's desire to have a constant visual token of the presence of the God whom they worshiped. The sanctuaries of Israel served to give them that assurance. Although God cannot be comprehended by man or confined to man-made sanctuaries, He may be said to dwell within such buildings by means of the revelations of Himself that He gives either to the senses or the inner spirit of the worshiper, or both. In the tabernacle with its cloud of glory, God revealed Himself to the worshiping Israelites both sensibly (they could see the cloud) and spiritually (as the Spirit impressed their hearts).

And yet there was a certain incompleteness and inadequacy. Although God was present, no face-to-face communion with Israel could take place. There was still a barrier. God could be approached by animal blood and incense—but only through the mediation of a special person, the priest. Hangings and walls excluded the common person from the inner apartments, and even the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place but once a year.

The inadequacy of the sanctuary service to provide free and open union with the Deity must have suggested to the spiritual-minded Israelite that God intended something better to come; indeed, something better would have to come if the presence of God was ever to be realized in a direct and open manner.

Specific Approach

Confusion about the purpose and meaning of the Israelite sanctuary and its significance for Christian experience has resulted from the employment of wrong principles of interpretation. As we have noted earlier, the Old Testament writers make no attempt to explain the sanctuary symbolism. Therefore, the subject has become a fruitful field for fertile imaginations to develop a variety of fanciful concepts.

One person will argue that the sanctuary was obviously intended to teach the incarnation of the Son of God, asserting that the holy place portrays His humanity, and the Most Holy Place, His deity. Another—reflecting Kellogg and A. T. Jones, whom he influenced—will teach that the sanctuary represents the Christian himself: The court stands for his body; the holy place represents his conscious mind; and the Most Holy Place symbolized his subconscious mind. And from this model a whole scenario of end-time events is created. Although the Bible does compare the Christian to a temple, the Scriptures do not attempt to impose the significance of the sanctuary service upon the individual. Rather, this service relates to the priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary in the presence of God.

Other persons assume that the sanctuary represents stages of Christian experience: The court stands for justification; the holy place, for sanctification; and the Most Holy Place, for perfection. These interpretations of the sanctuary symbolism—and other ideas that could be added—have one thing in common: no direct biblical support for their suppositions. It is easy to read into symbols a wide range of ideas. However, in order to be sure of the true import of the sanctuary rituals, we must derive sound principles of interpretation from the Scriptures themselves.

Satan is striving continually to bring in fanciful suppositions in regard to the sanctuary, degrading the wonderful representations of God and the ministry of Christ for our salvation into something that suits the carnal mind. He removes its presiding power from the hearts of believers, and supplies its place with fantastic theories invented to make void the truths of the atonement, and destroy our confidence in the doctrines which we have held sacred since the third angel's message was first given. Thus he would rob us of our faith in the very message that has made us a separate people, and has given character and power to our work.⁸

The Central Subject of the Sanctuary System. We have noted above that the establishment of the sanctuary in Israel emphasized the restoration of the fellowship and communion between God and His people that had been interrupted by the entrance of sin. This is a work of grace in which the sanctuary and its rituals were to have a teaching function.

The writer to the Hebrews is very forthright about this teaching function of the ancient tabernacle-sanctuary. Early in his epistle he warns his Jewish-Christian hearers against following in the footsteps of their unbelieving ancestors in the exodus from Egypt (Heb. 3:7-19). He continues with these words:

Let us [Jewish-Christians] therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us [Jewish-Christians] was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [the Jews in the exodus]: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it (Heb. 4:1-2).

This is an important insight. The gospel—the good news of salvation from sin through a divine Redeemer, or in broader terms, God's plan of salvation—is the same whether before or after the cross. It has the same God, the same moral law (the Ten Commandments) that expresses His will, the same sin problem, and the same Redeemer, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The only difference between the patriarchs' and Israel's religion and biblical Christianity is that the former portrayed the plan of salvation in symbols, whereas the latter teaches the reality of God's saving event in history.

Thus it is clearly evident from this statement in Hebrews that *the overall subject of the Israelite sanctuary ritual is the gospel or plan of salvation*. The substitutionary sacrifices of animals and the mediation of their blood portrayed basic aspects

⁸ White, *Evangelism*, 225.

of God's plan to save sinners. These two points are stressed in the book of Hebrews. The author compared (1) the blood of animal sacrifices with the better blood of Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Heb. 9:11-14), and (2) the Levitical priesthood with Christ's better priesthood (Heb. 8:1-2). Here are pertinent statements from the pen of Ellen White on this point:

The significance of the Jewish economy is not yet fully comprehended. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. *The gospel is the key that unlocks its mysteries. Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the understanding.*⁹

The types of the Jewish economy are made plain by the gospel.¹⁰

The sanctuary in heaven. . . *opens to view the plan of redemption*, bringing us down to the very close of time, and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin.¹¹

From the creation and fall of man to the present time, there has been a continual unfolding of the plan of God for the redemption, through Christ, of the fallen race. The tabernacle and temple of God on earth were patterned after the original in heaven. *Around the sanctuary and its solemn services mystically gathered the grand truths which were to be developed through succeeding generations.*¹²

Two Keys to Guide in Sanctuary Interpretation. The question naturally arises, What relationship do the sanctuary rituals have to this large subject of the plan of salvation? The Bible suggests two keys that can assist us in correctly interpreting sanctuary symbolism.

1. *The Israelite sanctuary is described as a parable.* Speaking of the function of the tabernacle-temple sanctuary in pre-Christian times, the writer to the Hebrews says, "Which was a figure [parable] for the time then present. . . until the time of reformation [Christ's first advent]" (Heb. 9:9-10).

The Greek word translated in the King James Version as "figure" is *parabole* from which we derive our English term, *parable*. God designed the sanctuary system to function as a great ritual parable to illustrate the basic truths of the plan of salvation. Therefore, in interpreting the sanctuary symbolism, it is important for us to understand the nature of a parable.

A parable is literally what is "placed beside something." We place a parable—perhaps a story—beside an abstract truth in order to illustrate that truth, clarify it, and thereby fasten that truth in the mind more effectively. Usually parables or illustrations are told to clarify one fundamental point. Unlike an allegory, the details of a parable do not have significance. They simply round out the story and serve to contribute to the major point being made. Furthermore, the parable-illustration must itself be understood in terms of the truth it is designed to portray.

The Hebrew sanctuary parable is complex, designed to illustrate several clear-cut truths that make up the plan of salvation. But we must let Scripture point out these truths so that we do not get lost in the myriad details of the ritual parable that have no real significance in spiritual terms but serve only to round out the ritual "story."

Since the sanctuary parable was given to illustrate the gospel or plan of salvation, its symbols must clearly then be studied in the light of the Bible statements that deal with various aspects of that plan. Thus, the sanctuary symbolism will illustrate and illumine the plan; but in turn it will also be illumined and clarified by the truths of that plan presented throughout the Bible.

2. *The Israelite sanctuary is described as a shadow-type.* God's instructions and legislation governing the sanctuary and its system of rituals may be summed up as "the ceremonial law." As a body of instruction it is referred to as "the law having a shadow [Gk. *skia*] of good things to come" (Heb. 10:1). The priests in the sanctuary were said to "serve unto the example [copy] and shadow [Gk. *skia*] of heavenly things [that is, the heavenly sanctuary and the priestly ministry of Christ]" (Heb. 8:5).

The term *skia* means a "shadow" or, as in these passages, it carries the idea of "foreshadowing."

9 Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1941), 133, italics supplied.

10 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1903), 124. Italics supplied.

11 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 488, italics supplied.

12 Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), 194, italics supplied.

We generally designate these ritual “shadows—as *types*. A dictionary definition of *type* is “a person or thing regarded as the symbol of someone or something that is yet to appear.” Types are, therefore, like prophecies. Instead of being embodied in words, the sanctuary shadow-types were prophecies embodied in rituals which *foreshadowed*—“foretold”—the coming death of Jesus and His priestly ministry in heaven.

Here again, shadow-types can be subject to a variety of interpretations, but we may be guarded from misapplications of both sanctuary symbols and types if we study them in the clear light of the plan of salvation as taught throughout the Scriptures. There is a two-way exchange here: The symbols and types help us understand salvation truth, and conversely, salvation truth helps us understand the significance of the symbols and types. If we follow this procedure, we will find that the symbols and types of the Israelite sanctuary system do not teach anything that is not taught in the Scriptures regarding the plan of salvation.

Could a person then find salvation in Christ without a knowledge of the Hebrew sanctuary? Of course. Why then study these ancient symbols? We could answer this by asking another question. Could an individual make a living with only an eighth-grade or a high-school education? Yes. Why then should we encourage him to go to college or vocational school? Simply because further education can greatly enrich and enhance his life and happiness. Likewise, the study of God’s salvation truths cast in the form of parable and type can greatly enrich our insights and understanding of the plan of salvation and the great God who proposed it at infinite cost to Himself.

A careful, reflective study of the Hebrew sanctuary system will lead the Christian to a more intelligent faith and will focus his attention upon the living Christ in heaven. In the heavenly sanctuary he will recognize the command center for the plan of redemption. It is there that his Lord ministers the merits of His sinless life and atoning death and guides the destiny of the church and the world. There as an anchor for his soul is Jesus Christ, his High Priest, who is able to save to the utter-

most all who come to God. He lives “to make intercession” in their behalf (Heb. 7:25).

V. Three-point Focus of the Sanctuary Parable

The plan of salvation was laid by the Godhead “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:3-14). When Adam and Even toppled the human family into the treacherous currents of sin, no calloused or surprised Godhead speculated on the pros and cons of rescue or questioned the cost. “The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam.”¹³ Before time began, the rescue operation had been carefully devised by a loving and concerned Godhead. Grounded in grace (2 Tim. 1:9), the plan was a divine secret (Rom. 16:25; I Cor. 2:7), locked deep in the heart of the Deity until the terrible possibility of transgression and rebellion by free moral agents became a reality.

The central provision of that plan was and is the atoning, substitutionary death of God the Son who by His incarnation adopted our humanity and as the God-man became the representative Head of the human family. As the “second Adam” (Rom. 5:14, last part), He could rightfully bear the liabilities—the sins—of His human children and expiate them by His death. Peter pointed to this provision in these words:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Pet. 1:18-20).

From a survey of the Scriptures we may infer the four basic goals the plan envisions: (1) to clear the character of God from Satan’s charges, (2) to secure the loyalty of the unfallen universe to God’s authority, (3) to accomplish the salvation of sinful

¹³ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1940), 22.

human beings who will respond to its offer, (4) to destroy Satan, his associate evil angels, impenitent sinners, and all the effects of sin, thereby bringing moral harmony once again to the universe.

It is important to note in this brief statement about the plan of salvation that *all* facets of it (and not merely final judgment) are carried out for the sake of—that is, for the understanding of—the created intelligent beings under God's government. Being omniscient, God knows the nature of sin and rebellion against His will and what will be the results. But He has permitted sin to rise and the plan of salvation to operate that He might draw His creation into agreement with His judgment on sin and the principle of self-centeredness on which it rests.

Angels desire to study intently the issues and God's resolution of those issues (see 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Principalities and powers in heavenly places are gaining insights into the mind and wisdom of God as they see the gospel at work in the church (Eph. 3:8-11). They follow the career of Satan as well (Rev. 12:9-10, 12), and they will be present at the judgment (Dan. 7:9-10).

The sanctuary parable has three basic emphases that illustrate the steps the Godhead has taken to resolve the sin problem so as to achieve the four major objectives noted above. These main thrusts of the parable are (1) substitutionary sacrifice, (2) priestly mediation, and (3) final judgment. We now move to a discussion of these three areas of concern as they relate to both the types of the ancient sanctuary and the Antitype or reality realized in Jesus Christ, our Sacrifice and High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Substitutionary Sacrifice

One thing that strikes a modern reader as strange is the Old Testament's heavy emphasis upon sacrificial blood. In addition to the public morning and evening ritual, other sacrifices represented different emphases in the Israelites' approach to God, such as worship, confession of sin, dedication, cleansings from ritual defilement, and expressions of thanksgiving. But all sacrifices had one thing in common: the shedding of blood.

What did shed blood signify? God explained the matter to Israel:

The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. . . . For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof. . . . for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof (Lev. 17:11, 14).

The passage is clear. The blood of the sacrifice symbolized its life. Shed blood simply meant a life given—a life laid down. Since the blood of the sacrifice was shed and mediated by the priest in behalf of the worshiper, it is clear that God intended by these acts to foreshadow the substitutionary atoning death of the coming Redeemer. As the writer to the Hebrews affirms, "Without shedding of blood is no remission [that is, forgiveness]" (Heb. 9:22).

Thus every sacrifice, whether offered in the public daily or yearly rituals or as a private offering, foreshadowed Calvary and the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Every dying victim was a type of Christ, which lesson was impressed on mind and heart in the most solemn, sacred ceremony, and explained definitely by the priests. Sacrifices were explicitly planned by God Himself to teach this great and momentous truth, that through the blood of Christ alone there is forgiveness of sins.¹⁴

The sacrifices of the ancient altar and the cross that they foreshadowed were intended to teach God's people a number of interrelated truths about the death of the Redeemer.

1. Through every dying victim the penitent sinner was reminded that he lived in a moral universe, that justice and judgment are foundational to the divine government as well as mercy and truth. (See Ps. 89:14.) In the government of God, sin and rebellion cannot be winked at or ignored. The universe is secure only if God is just. The penalty for sin must be enforced. Imagine the instability of

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), Book. 1, 107.

any nation whose judicial system ceased to punish transgressors! The apostle Paul declares that the death of Christ, who bore the penalty of the world's sin upon Himself, has shown God's justice in dealing with the sin problem (Rom. 3:25-26).

Through disobedience Adam fell. The law of God had been broken. The divine government had been dishonored, and justice demanded that the penalty of transgression be paid.¹⁵

Had God pardoned Adam's sin without an atonement, sin would have been immortalized, and would have been perpetuated with a boldness that would have been without restraint.¹⁶

Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon.¹⁷

At the cross justice was satisfied.¹⁸

2. In every dying victim was seen God's judgment on sin. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). A holy God cannot take transgression lightly, for sin is a deep-seated rebellion against all that is good, noble, and true. Sin must be eradicated if there is again to be harmony in the universe. The principle of self-seeking or self-centeredness is incompatible with the outgoing principle of self-sacrificing love. Because they cannot exist in harmony, God's judgment on sin is separation and death.

3. Every dying victim foreshadowed Calvary's great Substitute. "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

4. Every dying victim foreshadowed the great truth that it is God, and not man, who provides the atoning sacrifice. *The Godhead take their judgment on sin upon themselves.* "God hath set forth [Christ Jesus] to be a propitiation through faith in

his blood" (Rom. 3:25). "For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:2 1).

Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed."¹⁹

5. Every dying victim illustrated the truth that forgiveness, and the resulting reconciliation with God, could be received by faith alone. (Compare Rom. 4:4-8; Heb. 9:15.) Any spiritually minded Israelite knew that it was "not possible" for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Heb. 10:4). True forgiveness and acceptance could be had only through faith in what the sacrifice symbolized—the coming Redeemer.

A corollary to the principle of substitution taught in every sacrifice is the transference of accountability. The class of sacrifices commonly designated "sin offerings" stressed this concept. (See Lev. 4.) The penitent sinner laid his hand upon the head of the offering and confessed his wrongs. In some instances the blood of the sin offering was placed on the horns of the golden altar and sprinkled on the inner veil (Lev. 4:6-7, 17-18). In other instances, the blood was placed on the horns of the altar in the court, and the priest ate part of the flesh (Lev. 6:25-26, 30).

The following rule was established: If the blood was sprinkled within the sanctuary, the flesh of the sacrifice was not eaten; if the blood was not thus administered, then a portion of the sacrificial flesh was eaten by the priest. The participants understood that either rite represented a transference of accountability from the penitent sinner to the sanctuary and its priesthood.

On one occasion, when there had been a failure to carry out the prescribed ritual of a certain sin offering, Moses asked the priests, "Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place,

¹⁵ Ibid., 308.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary* 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1953): 1082.

¹⁷ White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 340.

¹⁸ Ibid., 349.

¹⁹ White, *The Desire of Ages*, 25.

seeing it is most holy, and God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord?" (Lev. 10:17). This indicates that sins confessed on the head of a sin offering were understood by Moses to be transferred in figure from the penitent to the sacrifice and in turn to the priesthood. The confessed sins of Israel were specified as being removed from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement, which offers further evidence of this principle of transference (Lev. 16:20-22).

In this ritual parable *the sanctuary assumed the penitent's guilt and accountability*—for the time being at least—when the penitent offered a sin offering, confessing his errors. He went away forgiven, assured of God's acceptance. So, in the antitypical experience, when a sinner is drawn in penitence by the Holy Spirit to accept Christ as his Saviour and Lord, *Christ assumes his sins and accountability*.²⁰ He is freely forgiven. Christ is the believer's Surety as well as his Substitute.

The student of the Hebrew sanctuary is soon impressed with the fact that there is a good deal of overlap in the ritual. However, each facet adds another insight to this remarkable portrayal of the plan of salvation. We mentioned near the beginning of this article that the main patriarchal offering—the burnt offering—was retained as a central and foundational sacrifice in the sanctuary service. It was offered morning and evening on the great altar, but it was arranged in such a manner as to be continuously burning 24 hours a day (Ex. 29:38-42; Lev. 6:9, 12-13).

The continuously burning sacrifice of the daily public offering assured the penitent Israelite of the constant availability of God's forgiving grace through the merits of the coming Redeemer. Regardless of time—night or day—he might in faith look to this sacrifice offered for him. If he were sick, lived at a distance from Jerusalem, or in a foreign land, his faith could still reach out to the promise symbolized in the continual burnt offering.

This daily public offering teaches us likewise that forgiveness and acceptance with God through the merits of Christ are always available—only a prayer away. The divine business of salvation is

never closed at five p.m. or on holidays!

As the writer to the Hebrews has pointed out, the sacrifices of the sanctuary system were repetitive (Heb. 10:1). They could not in themselves accomplish anything. Like a story, this ritual parable of redemption was "told and retold" year after year. By contrast, the Antitype—the actual atoning death of our Lord—took place at Calvary *once for all time* (Heb. 9:26-28; 10:10-14).

On the cross the penalty for human sin was fully paid. Divine justice was satisfied. From a legal perspective, the world was restored to favor with God (Rom. 5:18). Therefore, in one sense we can speak of the atonement or reconciliation completed on the cross as foreshadowed by the sacrifices. The penitent believer can trust in this finished work of our Lord.

Priestly Mediation

In patriarchal worship the symbolism centered on the sacrifice. In the Israelite sanctuary the emphasis was extended to the priesthood and its handling of the sacrificial blood. Why this enlarged emphasis? Why the necessity for a priest if sin was completely atoned for in the sacrifice? What insight into the plan of salvation did God thus seek to clarify?

In the religion of both patriarch and Israelite, the shedding of blood symbolized a life given, a *life laid down in behalf of another*. The blood "spoke" of expiation and forgiveness. But another aspect of the process of reconciliation was accentuated in the office of the priest: the need for mediation between God and man.

The ministry of a priesthood stresses the seriousness of sin, the sharp cleavage it has made between heaven and humanity, and the ugliness of the estrangement between holy Creator and sinful creature. Just as every sacrifice foreshadowed Christ's death, so every priest foreshadowed Christ's mediatorial ministry as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

Although the sanctuary was located in the midst of Israel, its arrangement excluded even the

²⁰ Cf. White, *Selected Messages*, Book. 1, 392.

most spiritual Israelite from a direct approach into God's presence. A penitent sinner might bring his sacrifice and slay it, but he could receive no forgiveness until the priest mediated in his behalf and sprinkled the blood in the appropriate place before the Lord. He needed the priest to represent him to God and apply the merits of the sacrifice.

This mediatorial ministry of the priest—this application of sacrificial blood—was also viewed by the Israelites as a form of atonement. "And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and . . . the priest shall burn [the fat] upon the altar, . . . and the priest shall make an atonement for his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him" (Lev. 4:34-35).

The English term *atonement* carries the idea of a reconciliation between two estranged parties. Just as the atoning death of Christ (in a legal sense) reconciled the world to God, just so the mediation, or application, of the merits of His sinless life and substitutionary death make reconciliation with God, or atonement, a personal reality to the penitent believer.

The writer of Hebrews clearly indicates that the Levitical priesthood foreshadowed the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in the presence of God. The focus is on the living Christ "who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:1-2).

Furthermore, the sanctuary in heaven is seen not simply as the dwelling place of Deity, but as the great center of redemptive activity because of Christ's priestly ministry. For "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities. . . . Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15-16).

Our Lord's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary can be seen more clearly by examining

the Israelite sanctuary "parable" that prefigured it (compare Heb. 8:4-5). On earth the priests engaged in two distinctive divisions of ministry—a daily and a yearly—each characterized by certain specific rituals. The daily service and ministry related to the holy place, whereas the yearly related to the Most Holy Place as well.

Holy Place: The priestly ministry carried on in connection with this first apartment of the sanctuary (earthly or heavenly) may be characterized as a ministry of forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. It was a continuous ministry. Access to God was always available through the priest. The odor of continuously burning incense (Ex. 30:8) arose from the golden altar. There was the never-failing light of the golden candlestick (Ex. 27:20), and the bread was always present before the Lord on the golden table (Ex. 25:30). These typical persons and articles foreshadowed various facets of Christ's unceasing priestly ministry in the presence of God for us. We should survey their meaning in brief:

The earthly priest foreshadowed the truth of the penitent's immediate and continual access to God through the priestly ministry of Christ (Eph. 2:18; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25; 9:24; 10:19-22). His work represented that of Christ, who applies the merits of His sinless life and atoning death to those who seek reconciliation with God (Rom. 8:34). As our Advocate, Jesus does not plead our innocence; rather, He pleads the benefits of His atonement (1 John 2:1-2).

While probation lasts, divine forgiveness through Christ (typified by the ever-burning sacrifice) is ever available—both at the beginning of the Christian experience and along the way (Acts 5:31; 1 John 1:7). The golden altar of incense underscored again the continual intercession of Christ in behalf of those who are drawn to God (Heb. 7:25; 9:24). The seven-branched candlestick or lampstand denotes the continual operation of the Holy Spirit who is mediated to us through Christ (Rev. 4:5; Titus 3:4-6). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about conviction, conversion, and transformation of heart. It is His activity that brings about character growth and the restoration of the

“image of God” within (John 16:8; 3:3-8; Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:10). The bread symbolized spiritual food, which is provided through Christ’s mediatorial work for the believer’s growth and maturation (Matt. 6:11).

It will be observed that the first apartment ministry in both the type and Antitype is primarily *individual-centered*. Provision is made through Christ’s priestly ministry for the sinner’s forgiveness and reconciliation to God (Heb. 7:25). For Christ’s sake God forgives the repentant sinner, imputes to him the righteous character and obedience of His Son, pardons his sins, and records his name in the book of life as one of His children (Eph. 4:32; 1 John 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:24; Luke 10:20). And as the believer abides in Christ, spiritual grace is mediated to him by our Lord through the Holy Spirit so that he matures spiritually and develops the virtues and graces that reflect the divine character (2 Pet. 3:18, Gal. 5:22-23).

It can easily be seen from this brief survey that the daily priestly ministry, in connection with the first apartment in both the type and Antitype, really represents the experience of the believer in terms of his justification and sanctification. This is the objective of this facet of Christ’s priestly ministry of forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. Though He will assume another aspect of ministry typified by the rituals related to the Second Apartment, He never ceases the kind of ministry discussed above until probation closes.

Final Judgment

Most Holy Place: The yearly service—the second distinctive division of priestly ministry in the sanctuary parable—occurred only one day each year. Known as the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27), it was a most solemn time, to be observed with fasting, prayer, and confession (Lev. 23:28-32).

The Day of Atonement ritual is the only one in the Israelite sanctuary that directly involved the ministry of the high priest in the Most Holy Place. It should be noted that this Second Apartment ministry was primarily *sanctuary-centered*. “And when he [the high priest] hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, [in this chapter *holy*

place refers to the Second Apartment], and the tabernacle of the congregation [first apartment], and the altar [in the court], he shall bring the live goat” (Lev. 16:20).

The daily ritual involved the cleansing of the individual; the yearly involved the cleansing of the sanctuary (with the individual being indirectly involved). The Day of Atonement ritual looked beyond Calvary, although it was made possible by Calvary. It looked beyond the salvation of the individual to the final resolution of the sin problem; that is, it encompassed in its symbolism the final eradication and banishment of sin and Satan from the universe.

The Day of Atonement was the set time for the removal of the sins that had been figuratively transferred from penitent sinners to the sanctuary through the blood or flesh of the sacrifices offered throughout the previous year (Lev. 16:15-22). This final disposition of sin in the sanctuary parable left the sanctuary and camp ritually clean and clearly foreshadowed the final judgment. This fact is evident because the final judgment, in the plan of salvation, eradicates sin, the devil, and all the effects of transgression from the earth and the universe. It may be said, therefore, that the Day of Atonement ritual foreshadowed the final application of the merits of Christ to banish the presence of sin for all eternity and to accomplish the full reconciliation of the universe into one harmonious government under God.

Final judgment completes God’s eternal purpose: “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Eph. 1:10).

The distinctive feature of the Day of Atonement ritual centered on two goats—the “Lord’s goat” and the “scapegoat” (the word translates the Hebrew term, *azazel*, and was coined to refer to the goat that “escaped” into the wilderness).

A special sprinkling of the blood of the Lord’s goat in the two apartments and court of the sanctuary led to the priestly act of transferring all the sins to the head of the live goat (scapegoat) which was then banished into the wilderness, with both

goat and sin forever removed from the camp (Lev. 16:15-22).

As far back as the second century A.D., some Christians held that both the scapegoat and the Lord's goat in this ritual symbolized Christ (Epistle of Barnabas, 7:6ff.). However, three facts suggest a different identification for the scapegoat:

1. The scapegoat was not slain as a sacrifice. It could not, therefore, have been used as a means of bringing forgiveness. For "without shedding of blood," there is no remission or forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22).

2. The sanctuary was entirely cleansed by the blood of the Lord's goat before the scapegoat was introduced into the ritual (Lev. 16:20).

3. The passage treats the scapegoat as a personal being, the opposite of, and opposed to, God. The passage describing the selection of these goats by lot reads literally, "One lot to/for Yahweh and one lot to/for Azazel" (Lev. 16:8). Since *Yahweh* is the name for a personal Being, in this case God, it is reasonable to infer that *Azazel* also designates a personal being, the enemy of God. Therefore, in the setting of the sanctuary parable, it is more consistent to see the Lord's goat as a symbol of Christ and the scapegoat, that is Azazel, as a symbol of Satan.

Thus, the Day of Atonement ritual of the scapegoat points beyond Calvary, beyond the simple forgiveness of sin through faith in Christ. The significance of this year-end ritual was its foreshadowing of the final resolution of the sin problem and the banishment of sin and Satan. The doctrinal views of many Christians do not provide any resolution of the sin issue. They believe that their salvation is fully accomplished at the cross and that they escape the human predicament by death, entering heaven at that time by virtue of their saved immortal souls. The popular idea is that the devils will stoke the fires of hell and eternally torment the lost. Christ dies but Satan and sin live on!

But in the rituals of the Day of Atonement Seventh-day Adventists see portrayed the deliberate and rational movements of the Deity to resolve the rebellion of sin and, in a just way, punish the originator and those who have joined with him. In

the final judgment foreshadowed in this particular ritual, the *ultimate effects* of Calvary will be seen. (Compare Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8.)

The throne of God, represented by the sanctuary, and those who have placed their trust in Him through the merits of Christ, will be cleared. Full accountability for sin will be rolled back upon Satan, its originator and instigator. Satan, his followers, and all the effects of sin, will be banished from the universe by destruction. Atonement by judgment will, therefore, bring about a fully reconciled and harmonious universe (Eph. 1:10). This is the objective and end result of the second and final phase of Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. We may, therefore, call Christ's second phase of priestly ministry (represented by the Second Apartment, the Most Holy Place) a *ministry of judgment and vindication*.

The total concept of final judgment is enfolded within the typical Day of Atonement ritual just as an oak is enfolded within an acorn. This can be easily seen by examining figure 1. The three parts of the typical sequence—(1) the removal of sin from the sanctuary, (2) the banishment of the scapegoat to the wilderness, and (3) the clean camp—are analogous to the three phases of final judgment as explained elsewhere in the Scriptures.

The removal of sin from the sanctuary relates to the great preadvent judgment in heaven prior to Christ's return (Dan. 7-9, 12). This investigative phase focuses on the names recorded in the book of life just as the Day of Atonement focused on the removal of the confessed sins of the penitent from the sanctuary. False believers will be sifted out; the faith of true believers and their union with Christ will be reaffirmed before the loyal universe, and the records of their sins will be blotted out.

The banishment of the scapegoat to the wilderness is analogous to Satan's millennial imprisonment on this ruined earth as a second phase of final judgment takes place in heaven (Rev. 20:4; 1 Cor. 6:1-3). We may term this aspect a "review" phase of final judgment. Such a "review" will benefit the redeemed, giving them an opportunity to understand more fully the issues in the great moral controversy that has wracked the universe for so

long. It will satisfy all their questions regarding the fairness and mercy of God.

Finally, the clean sanctuary and camp is analogous to the results of the executive phase of final judgment in which impenitent sinners will also be led to understand the issues, the rightness of God, and the true nature of their rebellion. The executive judgment phase results in the just punishment and final destruction of the impenitent and a cleansing of the earth by fire (Rev. 20:11-15; Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Pet. 3:7-13).

The plan of salvation has been laid so carefully, so comprehensively and fairly that the universe of intelligent beings—whether loyal and unfallen, redeemed, or lost—will ultimately confess in the final judgment that God is right and true in all His dealings, and that Satan

and his accusations and those who have joined in with his rebellion—angel or human—are wrong. “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Rom. 14:11).

VI. The Heavenly Sanctuary and Prophecy

Through the illuminating insights of Bible prophecy, particularly the prophecies of Daniel 7-9 and 12, those important saving acts of God registered on the grid of the sanctuary parable come alive with a *time dynamic*.

The “70 weeks” of the prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:24-27 accurately foretold the time for the appearance of the Messiah. Furthermore, this basic prophecy focused on two important facets

of His mission: His atoning death and His entrance into the heavenly sanctuary in priestly ministry. (See figure 2.)

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city,” the angel Gabriel explained to Daniel, “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy” (Dan. 9:24).

Following historicist principles of interpretation in which a day in symbolic prophecy is equated to a year of literal time (cf. Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6), we arrive at a period of 490 years allotted to Israel (70 weeks x 7 days = 490 days or years). This period of Jewish history—both in prepara-

tion for and in experiencing its climactic events—could have been the nation’s finest hour. The time for the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah was being spelled out.

The angel continued: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks” (Dan. 9:25). Counting this sequence of 69 weeks, or 483 years, from the decree of Artaxerxes I in 457 B.C. (the decree that gave the fullest possible restoration to the Jewish state, according to Ezra 7:11-26) brings one down to A.D. 27—the time of the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit at His baptism and the official entrance upon His Messianic mission. (Compare Acts 10:38; John 1:32-34; Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-21.)

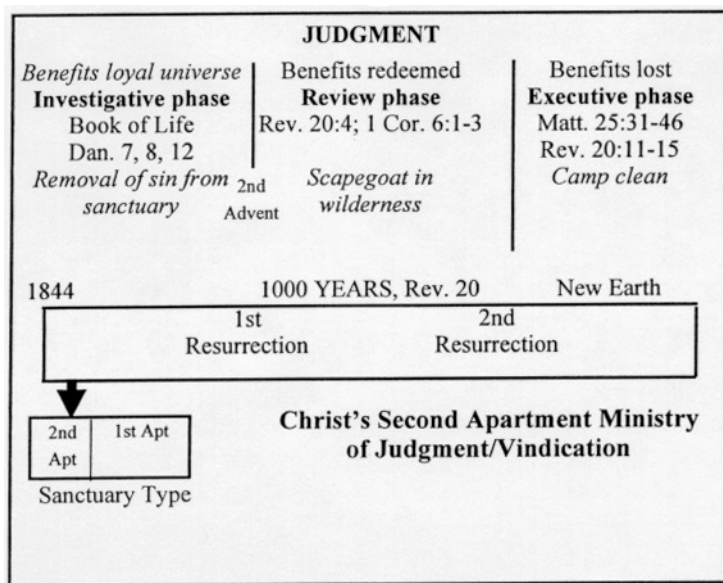


Figure 1.

But the prophecy moved on to speak of the Messiah's death. He would be "cut off, but not for himself" (Dan. 9:26). He would confirm the covenant made with Israel in the last prophetic week, but "in the midst of the week he [would] cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (vs. 27).

After a short ministry of three and one-half years, our Lord was crucified. The great inner veil of the temple was torn in two at the moment of His death, signifying that the sacrifices of the ancient ritual had met their Antitype in the Saviour's atoning death (Matt. 27:50-51). By His supreme sacrifice at Calvary, Christ obtained the right to "make an end of sins." There He made "reconciliation for iniquity" and brought in "everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24).

The 70-week prophecy also pointed to the beginning of Christ's priestly ministry as foretold in the last phrase of verse 24: "to anoint the most Holy." The Hebrew phrase, so translated, is never used in the Old Testament to describe a person; rather, it is consistently used in connection with the sanctuary. Consequently, it would be more in harmony with the Scriptures to translate the phrase to read, "to anoint a most holy place" as the Revised Standard Version renders it.

When the Israelite sanctuary was first erected, it was anointed with holy oil to consecrate it for God's service. Something analogous to this appears to be alluded to here. Since the items listed in verse 24 pertain largely to Christ's redemptive

work on earth, it is reasonable to see in this phrase a prophetic reference to the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary when, at His ascension, Christ was enthroned at the right hand of God as our High Priest and began His intercessory ministry. Indeed, this is the subject of the book of Hebrews (Heb. 8:1-2; cf. Acts 2:33; 5:31; Rom. 8:34). Thus, the year of our Saviour's death and resurrection becomes also the year when He began His high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

But the 70-week prophecy, which focused on the appearance, death, and inauguration of Christ's priestly ministry in heaven, is only the first part of a longer prophecy. A careful study of Daniel 8 and 9 indicates that the angel Gabriel intended his remarks in chapter 9 to be a clarification of the unexplained time period in chapter 8: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan. 8:14). Starting from the same point as the 70 weeks (457 B.C.), this longer span reaches across many centuries to A.D. 1844.

But what does the cleansing of the sanctuary signify? The answer is solemnly spelled out in the parallel prophecy of Daniel 7.

Although we have, for brevity's sake, approached the prophecies of Daniel in reverse, it is generally conceded that the four main lines of prophecy—chapters 2, 7, 8-9, 10-12—are parallel and that each succeeding prophecy elaborates upon the earlier ones. It may be helpful at this point, therefore, to take an overview of these chapters.

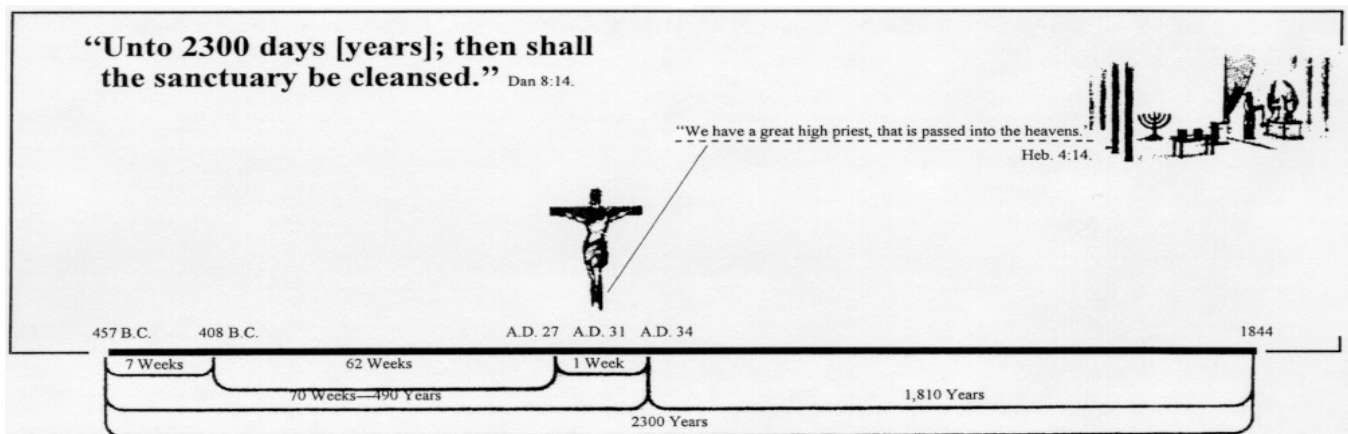


Figure 2. Daniel 8-9 Time Detail.

Such a survey will answer the question we have just raised. The reader is invited to study the brief line chart that sketches the lines of prophecy in Daniel 2, 7-9. (See figure 3.)

Daniel 2 and 7. The four beasts of Daniel 7 represent the same world empires denoted by the four metals of the image in Daniel 2: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia, and Rome. Both the ten toes of the image and the ten horns of the fourth beast represent the nations of western Europe into which Rome was divided. Two new features are added in Daniel 7 that are not found in chapter 2. The first is the rise and career of the little horn with the eyes and mouth of a man (representing the papacy). The second is the scene of the preadvent judgment in heaven.

After Daniel was shown human organizations struggling to gain political and religious dominion on earth, the scene dramatically shifted to heaven. Daniel saw the heavenly court convene. God the Father, described as "the Ancient of days" surrounded by myriads of holy angels, sat upon a fiery throne. "The judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Dan. 7:10). Then the attention of the prophet was drawn to "one like the Son of man" who (at the close of this judgment) was presented before the eternal Judge to be awarded rightful authority over the earth and an eternal kingdom. The one "like the Son of man" spoken of here is none other than Jesus Christ.

Daniel 8 and 9. The new features in Daniel 8, not mentioned in either Daniel 2 or 7, are the divine announcement of the time when the heavenly court of judgment would begin its work, and the attack of the little horn upon the heavenly Prince, His sanctuary, and His people.

As Daniel viewed the desolating work of the little horn depicted in this particular vision, he heard two holy beings talking. One asked, "How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?" (vs. 13). The second holy personage replied that it would be 2300 days (or years), and then the sanctuary would be cleansed or restored (vs. 14). This reply reveals that God has set some definite

limits to the time that iniquity can prevail.

It will be immediately noted that the angel Gabriel in the subsequent verses of the chapter does not explain this time element of the 2300 days/years to Daniel; neither does he provide a starting point. It is not until the vision of Daniel 9 that Gabriel returns and supplies a beginning point for the 70-week prophecy that makes up the first part of the longer 2300-year span. We have already discussed this aspect of the Daniel 8-9 visions. We now briefly survey the work of the little horn as Daniel saw its career in the vision of chapter 8.

The reader will note from figure that the little horn of the chapter 8 vision represents Rome in both its pagan and papal phases. However, the further elaboration in this vision deals more with the latter phase. The career of this Christian apostasy has directly affected Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary by interposing a human priesthood along with Mary and the saints and in casting down to the ground various aspects of God's revealed truth (vss. 11-12).

The fact that the "little horn" of Daniel 8 represents the papal phase of Rome, which functions in the Christian Era (as well as its pagan phase, which is not so largely in view in chapter 8), points us beyond the temple in Jerusalem (destroyed in A.D. 70) to the heavenly sanctuary of the Christian Era (Heb. 8:1-2).

In Daniel 7 the dominion of the papal horn was brought to an end, and the saints were vindicated and given dominion with Christ as a result of the convening of the preadvent judgment in heaven. In Daniel 8 the career of the little horn in its papal phase of trampling upon God's people and downgrading the priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is brought to an end by the cleansing of the sanctuary, restoring the heavenly authority to its rightful state. Since both visions (Dan. 7 and 8) cover essentially the same area, we can logically conclude that the cleansing of the sanctuary in chapter 8 is the same event as the preadvent judgment in chapter 7. (See figure 3.)

These two prophetic visions (Dan. 7, 8) make it clear that they focus on a phase of final judg-

ment that takes place at the end of the age *in heaven* prior to the second coming of Christ. In connection with this judgment, a decision is rendered in favor of God's true people (cf. Dan. 7:22, RSV). The counterfeit believer has been blotted from the book of life (Ex. 32:33), and the genuine believer has been reaffirmed, with the records of his sins blotted out (Rev. 3:5).

It is at this preadvent judgment that the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8 (analogous in part to the scapegoat in the sanctuary parable) is judged and deposed (chaps. 7:25-26; 8:25, last part). But these prophecies have a *cosmic* dimension. Through all forms of apostasy and rebellion Satan has sought to carry on his warfare against God. A verdict of condemnation upon the little horn is ultimately a verdict of condemnation upon Satan, the real power behind the scenes. (Compare Gen. 3:14; Rev. 12:9.) Furthermore, it is in connection with this heavenly sanctuary judgment that Christ receives His universal dominion and His kingdom made up of those accounted worthy to be in it, "every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 7:13-14, 22; 12:1). In the light of Calvary and the whole sweep of the plan of salvation, Satan's charges will be shown to be false. God's character will stand unassailable, His government approved before the loyal universe.

Thus, the prophecies of Daniel 7-9 in conjunction with the sanctuary parable testify to the solemn fact that since 1844 the human family has been living in the antitypical day of atonement prefigured in the earthly sanctuary. Christ is performing the last phase of His priestly ministry in the sanctuary of heaven, interceding for those whose

trust is rooted in him.

The years of human probation are slipping away. No one knows just when the divine voice will say, "It is enough. It is finished." But just now, while mercy lingers, a distinctive message from heaven calls "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" to attention: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev. 14:6-7).

VII. The Sanctuary and Assurance

How does the preadvent judgment—this atonement by judgement—depicted in Daniel 7-9 affect the believer who is resting in the merits of his Lord and who believes the promise of God: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12). Does

he stand in jeopardy because of a final judgment of human-kind by God? Not at all.

The believer who is in genuine union with Christ has nothing to fear from the judgment. He has a High Priest who is his Intercessor (Rom. 8:34); he has a Lawyer to represent him. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

If a genuine believer

in union with Christ has nothing to fear in the judgment, why is he brought into court at all? The wider picture of the universal proportions of the great moral controversy helps us to understand the matter. The reason for the judgment is simply this: *Salvation by faith requires an investigative judgment of all who profess faith in Christ.*

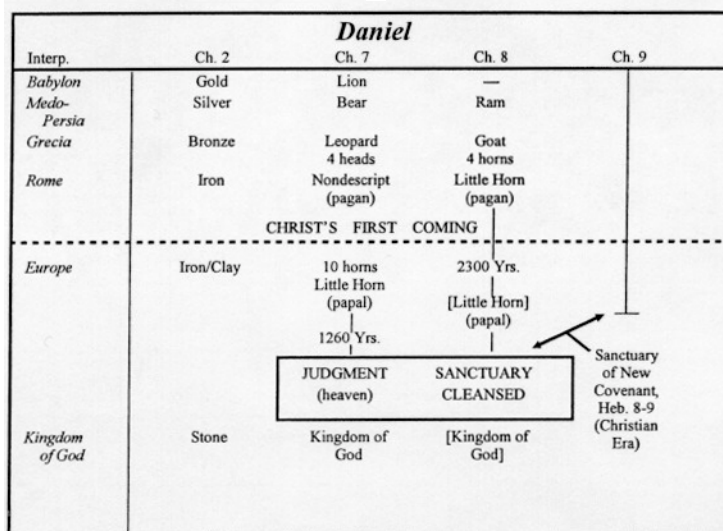


Figure 3.

There are only two ways that salvation can be achieved apart from human works: Either by faith or decree. Some Christians hold that salvation is obtained by decree of God. If God predestines a person to be saved, then he cannot resist the gospel when it comes to him, neither can he fall away from it after accepting it. Ultimately, there is no need for a judgment for such a person, since his destiny is fixed before his birth. Others, who start this process a bit later, argue that once a person accepts Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord, he cannot fall away. Christians with this kind of mind-set naturally find an “investigative” phase of judgment difficult to grasp and accept. For such persons, the concept of final judgment can mean nothing more than an “awards” day.

However, if salvation is truly obtained by faith in the merits of Christ, the evidence for that faith and commitment must be demonstrated to an interested universe. Assurance must be given to unfallen beings that God will accept only genuine believers into His eternal kingdom. The books of record must be opened for impartial inspection.

Obviously, the judgment is not for the benefit of the omniscient Deity. Sin arose as a creature’s challenge to God, a defiance of His authority. God could have destroyed Satan and his angels at once and settled the sin problem instantly. But the plan of salvation was instituted so that all created beings may be drawn willingly into agreement with God’s view of sin because they love Him and trust Him. Ultimately, all created intelligences will openly acknowledge the rightness of God and the wrongness of Satan in this whole controversy (Rom. 14:11).

Three classes of humankind are involved in the sin situation: (1) the wicked, who persistently reject the authority of God; (2) the genuine believers, who accept the authority of God and, as penitents, trust in the merits of Christ for salvation; and (3) the false believers, who appear as genuine followers of God, but are not.

The universe can see clearly where the first class stands in relationship to God. But who is the genuine believer, and who is not? Both classes are listed in the book of life. The church contains wheat and tares; the gospel net brings in both good

and bad (Matt. 13). The gospel invitation is extended to all. As Jesus said, “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests” (Matt. 22:10).

So a judgment is needed—*before* the second coming of Christ—to sift the true from the false and to demonstrate to the interested universe God’s justice in saving the sincere believer. The issue is with God and the universe, not between God and His true child. This calls for the opening of the books of record, the disclosing of those who have professed faith and whose names have been entered into the book of life.

Jesus, our High Priest and Advocate, says, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Rev. 3:5). If a believer’s life is found to be united with Christ, the Saviour will intercede for him—not only to the Father, but before the angels and the heavenly universe of intelligent beings.

Now is the time to apply the parable about the king’s inspection of the guests attending the gospel feast. Who are truly clothed in the wedding garment of Christ’s righteousness? (Matt. 22:11-14). Those who profess to be followers of God, but who are living in open disobedience to Him, whose lives are not covered by Christ’s merits, will be blotted from the book of life. (See Ex. 32:33). The apostle Paul knew that one day his own record would come into review, and he expressed his desire to “be found in him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

Notice how Ellen White describes this *sifting* aspect and the *reaffirmation* of the genuine believer before the heavenly tribunal:

As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin-offering, and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary; so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon

Christ, and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. *But before this can be accomplished there must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ are entitled to the benefits of His atonement.* The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation—a work of judgment.²¹

In this matter of salvation and judgment the options are few: (1) When a person is saved, he is eternally saved and can never fall away and be lost. Such a position—held by many Protestants—we believe is contrary to the plain teachings of Scripture. (2) Although a person is saved and a child of God, at death he must go through an indefinite period of suffering in Purgatory before he can enter heaven. This is a Catholic view that has no basis in Scripture. (3) A child of God who is united with Jesus Christ stands in a saved position by virtue of that union. In the preadvent phase of final judgment, his saving relationship with Christ is reaffirmed before the loyal universe. This is the biblical portrayal of the doctrine held by Seventh-day Adventists.

The idea of “investigation” in this context implies an audit or review. It does not suggest that an angry God is searching the book of life hoping to find some item that will give Him the right to exclude a poor sinner from His kingdom! Such a distortion demeans and degrades the character of God.

In concluding the controversy between good and evil, God must show why it is safe to take into His eternal kingdom those who have truly become His followers. In effect, He says to the universe: Here are the records. Yes, this person is a sinner, and here is the evidence of his waywardness. But see also that laid hold of eternal life. See by the evidence of his life that he is truly in union with Me. I claim him as My own. He has faithfully endured with Me until the end. My blood covers him.

Speaking of all the genuine believers in this judgment, Ellen White thus describes Christ's priestly ministry in their behalf: “Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying, ‘I know them by name. I have graven them on the palms of my hands.’”²²

Of course, in this last phase of priestly ministry Christ cannot make such a claim for one who is a believer in name only. (See Matt. 7:21-23.) Thus, the records serve as more than just a basis for sifting the false from the genuine; they also form the foundation for confirming and vindicating the genuine believer before the angels.

The controversy began with a questioning universe. I cannot close until that same universe is satisfied with God's character and all His actions—that is, actions involving His plan of salvation and those who have professed to accept it. Christ's parables of the wheat and tares the net, and the wedding garment have their primary application in the preadvent heavenly court session set forth in Daniel's prophecy. Daniel 8 and 9 also look into Daniel 7, giving us the *time dynamic* for the beginning of this last phase of Christ's priestly ministry in behalf of His genuine followers.

The three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14 likewise connect with Daniel's judgment scene by portraying the religious movements on earth that seek to arouse its population to the significance of the heavenly event (“the hour of [God's] judgment is come”) and to extend God's final offer of mercy.

Far from robbing the believer of his assurance in Christ, the doctrine of the sanctuary sustains it. It illustrates and clarifies to his mind the plan of salvation. His penitent heart rejoices to grasp the reality of Christ's substitutionary death for his sins as prefigured in its sacrifices. Furthermore, his faith reaches upward to find its meaning in a *living* Christ, his priestly Advocate in the very presence of the holy God.

As he humbly walks in union with his Lord, the believer may be fully assured that Christ not only intercedes in his behalf, but in the awesome

²¹ White, *The Great Controversy*, 421-422, italics supplied.

²² *Ibid.*, 484.

preadvent judgment now in session He will represent him personally and reaffirm his faith in God before the loyal universe. What greater assurance can a believer have than to know by faith that Christ is both his personal Saviour and Priest, and that His last ministry in the heavenly courts is in his behalf? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33-34).

tian lives, his knowledge widens and his understanding matures, he will continue to grow. Thus, during each moment of his life

Note: Materials in this article adapted in part from author's previous writings: *Shadows of Hope* (Academy text published by Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, CA, 1974); "The Israelite Sanctuary," *The Sanctuary and the Atonement* (Biblical Research Institute, 1981); "Sketches in the Sanctuary," *The Adventist Review*, Dec. 4, 11, 18, 25, 1980; Jan. 1, 8, 1981; "The Sanctuary and Assurance," *The Adventist Review*, July 15, 22, 1982; "Sanctuary of Salvation," *The Ministry*, January, 1983.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

An Overview of the Doctrine of Salvation in Christ

In the previous article, entitled, “Light in the Shadows,” we discussed the meaning and significance of the ancient sacrificial system as it came to be embodied in the Israelite sanctuary and its services. The sanctuary was a ritual parable whose function was to foreshadow the atoning death of the coming Redeemer and His priestly ministry in behalf of humankind.

Down through the centuries to Christ’s first advent, God intended for the light of the saving gospel of His Son to “shine out” from these shadow-types (cf. Heb. 4:1, 2; Isa. 56:6, 7). Unfortunately Judaism largely perverted its religious worship into a system of works. Just as Moses was forced to cover his face with a veil because the glory shining from it troubled the people, so the national perversion of the ritual prevented both Jew and Gentile from seeing and embracing the truth of God’s salvation (cf. 2 Cor. 3:7-18).

In this essay we will move from the shadow-type to the actual gospel itself—the doctrine of salvation in Christ. The light of the gospel is no longer confirmed to the “shadows” but has now come to be confirmed and realized by the actual incarnation, atoning death, and priestly ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I. Before Time Began: The Divine Secret

When God confronted the heathen Babylonians enmeshed in their idolatrous worship, He challenged their gods to demonstrate the attribute of foreknowledge as an evidence of their power and authority. “Shew the things that are to come hereafter,” He demanded through the prophet Isaiah, “that we may know that ye are gods” (Isa. 41:23). The failure of these so-called deities to do so underscored for Israel—always prone to adopt Babylonian manners—the utter futility of placing her trust in impotent idols.

By contrast, omniscience is one of the attributes of the true God of the Scriptures. Nowhere is His foreknowledge more lovingly operative than in those passages that drop hints about the “council of peace,” which at some point in eternity past formulated the plan of salvation.

When Adam and Eve through sin brought sorrow and death on the human race, the unsurprised Godhead did not speculate on the pros and cons of rescue or question the cost. Before time began, the rescue operation had been carefully devised by a loving and concerned Godhead. It was a divine secret, locked deep in the heart of the Deity.

In response to human disbelief and disobedience, divine Love disclosed to our first parents “the mystery, which [had been] kept secret since the world began” (Rom. 16:25). It was “the hidden wisdom, which God *ordained before the world* unto our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7).

God had a knowledge of the events of the future, even before the creation of the world. He did not make His purposes to fit circumstances, but He allowed matters to develop and work out. He did not work to bring about a certain condition of things, but He knew that such a condition would exist. The plan that should be carried out upon the defection of any of the high intelligences of heaven—this is the secret, the mystery which has been hid from ages. And an offering was prepared in the eternal purposes to do the very work which God has done for fallen humanity.¹

It was grace—divine compassion toward undeserving sinners—that moved the Godhead to reach out to the fallen race before it even existed. Grace “was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*,” the apostle Paul asserted (2 Tim. 1:9).

¹ Ellen G. White comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary* 6 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957): 1082.

Let those who are oppressed under a sense of sin remember that there is hope for them. The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity.²

We owe everything to grace, free grace, sovereign grace. Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption. Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our adoption to heirship with Christ.³

The centerpiece of the plan was the substitutionary and atoning death of God the Son who (through the incarnation) was to become the representative head of the race—the second Adam. In this role the Saviour would bear the liability of the sins of the human family. “Ye know,” declared the apostle Peter, “that ye [were redeemed] with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was *foreordained before the foundation of the world*, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:18-20).

In the councils of heaven, before the world was created, the Father and the Son covenanted together that if man proved disloyal to God, Christ, one with the Father, would take the place of the transgressor, and suffer the penalty of justice that must fall upon him.⁴

Sin not only brought its just penalty of death, but it also corrupted and weakened the inner nature. Man became enslaved to carnal impulses. The tyranny or power of sin in the life had to be broken as well as its penalty met. This necessary emancipation from sin’s enslavement would be accomplished by the indwelling Christ.

Writing to the Colossian believers, the apostle Paul again referred to “the mystery” which “had been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.” In this passage

the apostle emphasized a particular aspect of the plan: “God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:26-27).

This reference to Christ dwelling in the believer opens another window on the “council of peace.” The phrase intimates the role that the Holy Spirit would occupy in the redemption strategy. For it is by means of the Holy Spirit that Christ dwells in the life (see John 14:16-18). The Spirit transforms the wayward sinner, drawing him into such a close and tender bond of union with the Saviour that as a result, Christ seems to be living in him (John 3:3-8; Gal. 2:20).

The “council of peace” also determined the eternal destiny of the two “roads” the human family could take. Those sinners who agreed with God’s judgment on sin and accepted the gracious provisions for their redemption would be granted eternal life (Titus 1:2). Believers eagerly anticipate that awesome day when the righteous Judge will say: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matt. 25:34).

In the agreement formulated by the Godhead, judgment was passed upon sin. The spirit of selfishness and rebellion is contrary to the loving nature of God. Since self-centeredness is incompatible with the best interests of created beings, the judgment of the Godhead upon all who would pursue and embrace it was separation and death. Only by the eradication of this rebellion and those who committed themselves to it could peace and harmony exist again in the universe. Thus, in the final judgment the sad words of sentence will be spoken to the impenitent: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, *prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41).

It is evident from Christ’s statement that it was never God’s purpose that any human being should be lost. It was the fate of the “devil and his angels” that was the focus. God designed the plan of salvation to give every child of Adam an opportunity to choose to follow Him, to elect redemption. “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return

² Ibid., 7: 934.

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* 6 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948): 268.

⁴ Ellen G. White comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:1070.

from his ways, and live?" (Eze. 18:23). Those impenitent persons, however, who chose to identify with the archrebel of the universe would inevitably share in his final destruction.

The great summary statement on the decisions of the Godhead in the "council of peace" is found in Ephesians 1:3-12. The following is a brief analysis:

1. *The basis upon which God would accept and save penitent sinners:* "He hath chosen us *in him* [Christ] *before the foundation of the world*, . . . having predestinated us unto the adoption of children *by Jesus Christ* to himself, . . . he [God] hath made us *accepted in the beloved* [in Christ]" (vss. 4-6).

2. *The status that God planned to bestow on penitent sinners:* "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (vs. 5).

3. *The transformation in character He proposed:* "He hath chosen us in him. . . that we should be *holy and without blame* before him. . ." (vs. 4).

4. *The reason penitent sinners could be accepted through a union with Jesus Christ:* "In whom [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (vs. 7).

5. *The ultimate objective of the plan of salvation:* "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he [God] *might gather together in one all things in Christ*, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (vs. 10).

Such wonderful decisions and gracious promises! Infinite love drew a circle around each sinner before he existed! Although he would one day live on the Earth estranged from His Father's house, he would not be forgotten in the Father's heart. In eternity past "He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ" (vs. 5, RSV).

In the council of heaven, provision was made that men, though transgressors, should not perish in their disobedience, but, through faith in Christ as their substitute and surety, might become the elect of God, predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ

to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. God wills that all men should be saved; for ample provision has been made, in giving His only-begotten Son to pay man's ransom. Those who perish will perish because they refuse to be adopted as children of God through Christ Jesus.⁵

But the plan envisioned the restoration of the universe as well as sinners to full harmony with the Creator. The apostle grants us an insight into the grand sweep of the divine intention. Although sin would intrude, leaving a trail of heartache and misery across the centuries, the divine objective of a restored universe, an eternally secure universe, would be achieved. The intelligent creation would be led to comprehend the "manifold wisdom of God" and would be satisfied (Eph. 3:8-12).

Through the human experience, prophecy (oral and written) and the shadow-types of the sacrificial system, God progressively revealed to the human family the provisions of the plan of salvation. With the coming of Christ came the fullest disclosure of the intentions of divine love. In the teachings of Jesus the ancient prophecy was fulfilled: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:35).

II. Heaven's Constitution

The Universality of Physical Law

The development and progress of the natural sciences continues to demonstrate that our universe operates under amazing physical laws. There could be no authentic study of science if the universe were not orderly.

Plants yield seed and fruit in harmony with fixed laws determined by the Creator (Gen. 1:11-12). Sun, moon, and stars move in precise orbits according to the design of the divine will (Gen. 1:14-18). The amazing feat of landing men on the moon would not have been possible without a knowledge of and a cooperation with physical laws that govern the universe.

⁵ Ibid., 1114.

The Creator can still challenge man today regarding the laws that govern the stars as He once challenged the patriarch Job: “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?” (Job 38:31-33).

Living as well as nonliving nature are subject to physical laws. Absence of physical law would mean chaos in the universe. Infractions of physical law result in ruin and harm. A person may think he can defy the law of centrifugal force and go around a corner in his car at a high speed, but he will find that the laws of physics still work even if he protests, “I disagree with the law.”

Moral Law—Universal and Eternal

Another kind of law also operates in God’s universe—moral law. It has existed from eternity just as God has always existed. “From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Ps. 90:2).

Moral law expresses the will of the Creator for those created beings capable of choosing between good and evil.

Divine love could design only just and good commands. Since “love worketh no ill to his neighbour,” the apostle Paul concludes that “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10). It follows, therefore, that both angels and men as originally created, motivated by a supreme love for their Creator, would have delighted to obey any requirement of God.

While everything in nature is governed by natural law, man alone, as an intelligent being, capable of understanding its requirements, is amenable to moral law. To man alone, the crowning work of His creation, God has given a conscience to realize the sacred claims of the divine law, and a heart capable of loving it as holy, just, and good; and of man prompt and perfect obedience is required. Yet God does not compel him to obey; he is left a free moral agent.⁶

God’s Method of Expressing His Will

Since the moral law codifies the will of God and is binding upon all intelligent beings, the question naturally arises: How is this moral law expressed? We answer, and rightly so, by the Ten Commandments. But are the *angels*, as well as *other intelligent beings* in the universe, also subject to the Ten Commandments?

The Ten Commandments, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, define the duty of *man* to his God and his fellowmen. In doing so they apply the principle of love in these two relationships.

Jesus summarized the first four precepts this way: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;” and the last six, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22:37-39). This twofold principle of love is eternal and universal because it is rooted in the very character of God (1 John 4:8).

Therefore, it follows that *all* intelligent beings in God’s universe are under obligation to love God supremely and show impartial love to their fellow beings. To violate either aspect of this principle would be to sin against the will of God.

The will of God is expressed in the precepts of His holy law, and the principles of this law are the principles of heaven. The angels of heaven attain unto no higher knowledge than to know the will of God, and to do His will is the highest service that can engage their powers.

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy.⁷

Since angels and mankind are two different orders of intelligence, it was necessary to adapt the twofold principle of love to the circumstances of each order. The Ten Commandments apply

6 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), Book 1, 216.

7 Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1956), 109.

specifically to man. Obviously, the fifth and seventh precepts could not apply “word for word” to angels, since Jesus implies that angels do not marry (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25). Although we know that some angels “sinned” (2 Peter 2:4), and thus violated the will of God, and that Satan was a liar and a murderer (John 8:44), the Scriptures do not specify how the basic twofold principle of love is expressed to meet the circumstances of angels.

The Scriptures are silent on whether the Creator made known to the first human pair at Creation the ten specific precepts of the Ten Commandments. But it is evident that Adam and Eve were controlled by the basic twofold principle of love. In obeying whatever commands God gave to them in the Garden, they would have fulfilled the principle undergirding the first four precepts; supreme love to God.

The law of God existed before the creation of man or else Adam could not have sinned. After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed, but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition.⁸

The evidence from the book of Genesis indicates that God gave the specific precepts of the Ten Commandments to our first parents orally—and through them to their posterity. For example, murder and violence were known to be wrong by Cain and the later antediluvians (Gen. 4:6-15; 6:5, 11, 13). Abraham and the kings with whom he dealt knew that lying was wrong (Gen. 12:11-20; 20:1-18). Jacob and Esau were aware of the covetousness of the former when he stole the birthright blessing by deceiving his father Isaac (Gen. 27). Joseph refused to participate in an adulterous union, exclaiming, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9).

When Jacob’s family surrendered their idols in response to his appeal to consecrate themselves to God, their action tacitly admits their understanding of the first two precepts of the Decalogue (Gen. 35:1-4). The observance of the seventh-day Sabbath was known by Adam and Eve from the beginning. In their presence the Creator had blessed

the day and sanctified it—that is, set it aside for holy use—for their well-being (Gen. 2:1-3). As Jesus later commented, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27).

The apostle Paul acknowledged in one sweeping statement the presence of the Ten Commandments in human society prior to their restatement at Sinai. “For until the law [was given at Sinai] sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom. 5:13). The fact of sin’s presence from Adam to Moses is mute evidence of the functioning of the moral law of the Ten Commandments throughout the era (cf. 1 John 3:4).

The Center of Controversy

The law of God is central to the sin problem and Heaven’s solution to it. It reflects the character and authority of the sovereign Creator, the expression of His personal will in defining our duty to Him and our fellow beings.

The law is to be presented to its transgressors, not as something apart from God, but rather as an exponent of His mind and character. As the sunlight cannot be separated from the sun, so God’s law cannot be rightly presented to man apart from the divine Author. The messenger should be able to say, “In the law is God’s will; come, see for yourselves that the law is what Paul declared it to be—’holy, and just, and good.’”⁹

Those who profess to cling to Christ, centering their hopes on Him, while they pour contempt upon the moral law, and the prophecies, are in no safer position than were the unbelieving Jews. They cannot understandingly call sinners to repentance, for they are unable to properly explain what they are to repent of. The sinner, upon being exhorted to forsake his sins, has a right to ask, What is sin? Those who respect the law of God can answer, Sin is the transgression of the law. In confirmation of this the apostle Paul says, I had not known sin but by the law.¹⁰

It is evident that God’s moral law is an expression of His character of love, because, as we noted

⁸ *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 230.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 371.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 229.

earlier, its precepts may be summarized in a two-fold principle of love (Matt. 22:35-40; Rom. 13:8-10). We realize instinctively that any law places limits upon a person, but we do not always acknowledge that love likewise imposes limits. For whose sake does God (if He is infinite love) express His will in commands and precepts? The answer must be that He does so for *our* sakes—for our best interests.

When a mother forbids her child to touch a hot iron, her love has placed limits upon the child through her expressed will. Is her law arbitrary? No, it is dictated by loving concern for her youngster. Is his personal liberty thus being restricted? Would he truly be happier under the tyranny of his own perverse will, which urges him to touch the hot iron? Likewise, when God expresses His will in the form of laws or commands, He does so in loving concern for our happiness. If a command appears restrictive, it is only because, in love, God would keep us from the consequences of disobedience.

God has placed all the intelligent creation under moral law. It is with this point that Lucifer, one of the created beings of heaven, raised issue in his rebellion. The Scriptures declare: "*Sin is the transgression of the law.*" "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the *devil sinneth* from the beginning" (1 John 3:4, 8).

From this statement we can see that Lucifer rebelled against the expressed will of God. He thus implied that he saw no need for law; he considered the law of God as a restriction to angelic liberty, just as the child might consider his mother's warning to not touch the hot iron as an unnecessary restriction. The text indicates that Lucifer eventually spurned God's control, threw off the yoke of divine authority, and openly defied God's will.

To call God's law into question is to question His character. Behind the law stands the Person of the Lawgiver. If the law, as it was expressed to angels, was unnecessary and restrictive to personal liberty, then God must have had ulterior motives in placing His creatures under law. Thus Lucifer would have reasoned.

Jesus' description of Lucifer's mental agitations at this point are pertinent. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). Whom did Lucifer murder in heaven? No one. But the Scriptures indicate that the root of murder is hate (1 John 3:15).

This suggests the strange feelings that began to stir and be cherished in the mind of this brilliant angel. With hate in his heart against the Deity, he misrepresented the character of God, His authority, and government to the angels. Only by insidious falsifying could he ever have succeeded in persuading a large number of angels against their better judgment and experience to believe that the character of God was essentially unjust and His law and government arbitrary.

Hidden behind the challenges of God's law and character lay the real issue—the desire of a created being to be independent and free from his Maker's laws, rules, and control. Under the prophecy regarding the king of Babylon we discern the self-centered spirit that took possession of Lucifer. "*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit. . . I will ascend. . . I will be like the most High*" (Isa. 14:13-14).

The primary sin of a created being is to desire and assert his complete autonomy—to be his own god. Hence Lucifer's revolt against the law and authority of the Creator and hence his questioning of God's character. These issues gave him a rationale for casting off the yoke of obedience. "I don't need you, God," Lucifer said in effect by his rebellion. "I am fully capable of running my own life."

From this perspective it can be seen that sin (at its root) is much more than a simple disobedience to a rule or ethic. It is essentially a rebellion against the Creator, an assertion of independence from divine authority. Conversely, it is evident that true and genuine repentance is more than a simple confession that one has broken a rule or a commandment. True repentance is a return to a *dependent* relationship upon God. It involves the willingness of the creature to be subject to the loving authority of the Creator.

The issues raised by Lucifer in the great rebellion came to a head about the time the earth was created. Heaven's highest angel directly challenged the Deity, rejecting the law of God and questioning the character and motives of its Author. He asserted the right of creatures to choose freedom from divine control. Justice and mercy were challenged as incompatible—a charge which ultimately denies the validity of the plan of salvation.

Christ, the one who carried out the Father's purpose in creating the world and who was the Father's representative to the created universe, was the particular object of satanic envy and hatred. The great controversy between God and Satan had begun. These challenges, first voiced in heaven, were further developed and debated in the arena of human history.

Dispute about the authority of God and the binding claims of His will as expressed in the moral law of the Ten Commandments continues on earth at the center of the spiritual controversy. One of the basic purposes of the plan of salvation is to bring sinners to repentance and back into harmony with His expressed will. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15).

III. He Had to Die

Christ is to be preached, not controversially, but affirmatively. . . . Gather up the strongest affirmative statements regarding the atonement made by Christ for the sins of the world. Show the necessity for this atonement and tell men and women that they may be saved if they will repent and return to their loyalty to God's law. Gather all the affirmatives and proofs that make the gospel the glad tidings of salvation to all who receive and believe on Christ as a personal Saviour.¹¹

When one studies the life of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Four Gospels, he is struck by the sense of urgency and necessity that governed the Saviour's life, particularly as it related to His death. Here are some of the key statements illustrating

this urgency:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he *must* go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. 16:21). In the parallel Gospels of Mark and Luke the same term is used: "The Son of man *must* suffer. . ." (Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; cf. also 24:6-7).

The Gospel of John also records how the people caught this note of necessity from the Master's teaching, for they questioned Him: "How sayest thou, The Son of man *must* be lifted up?" (John 12:34).

The terrible necessity of His death is underscored not only by His statements, but also by Christ's earnest, heart-rending prayers in Gethsemane. "O my Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Three times He pleaded with the Father. Three times the divine silence implied a "No" answer. It was not possible for the cup to be removed, that is, if man was to be saved from the power of Satan and sin. If the objectives of the Godhead were to be obtained, Christ's atoning death must take place. There was no other way.

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health.¹²

The divine Son of God was the only sacrifice of sufficient value to fully satisfy the claims of God's perfect law. The angels were sinless, but of less value than the law of God. They were amenable to law. They were messengers to do the will of Christ, and before Him to bow. They were created beings, and probationers. Upon Christ no requirements were laid. He had power to lay down His life, and to take it again. No obligation was laid upon Him to undertake the work of atonement. It was a voluntary sacrifice that He made. His life was of sufficient value to rescue man from his fallen condition.¹³

11 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1946), 187.

12 Ellen G. White comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, 7-A:464.

13 Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy 2* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1877): 10.

What God Has Done for Us

As sinners we are helpless to effect our own salvation. The good news of the Christian message is what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. One of the great summary texts in the New Testament centers on this divine activity in our behalf: "For he [God] hath made him [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Note the points being made:

1. *Jesus "knew" no sin.* In these brief words the apostle declares the absolute sinlessness of the Saviour's life. This is a mystery we cannot fathom—that He lived among us "holy, harmless, undefiled" (Heb. 7:26).

2. *God made Jesus to be sin for us.* Now the apostle points to the vicarious nature of the Saviour's death on the cross. The guilt of the sins of humankind were accounted to Him as if they were His own, and He bore Heaven's judgment on sin in our stead. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18).

3. *An exchange: that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.* The significance of this statement is that just as our sins were accounted to Christ as though they were His, so His righteousness is accounted to us as though it were ours. The merits of Christ's sinless life and His atoning death are imputed to the believer who, drawn by the Spirit, reaches out to embrace his Redeemer. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Calvary marked the reconciliation or justification of the whole world in a legal or judicial sense. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). "Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18). The penalty for sin has been paid for all time—for all persons.

This does not mean that all humanity was automatically saved at the cross. It does mean that the Godhead in their compassion have taken Their own judgment on sin upon Themselves and have satisfied justice. This is sometimes referred to as the objective atonement—what God has done in behalf of the human family. This constitutes the good news—that God *has made atonement* for sin and is offering salvation as a free gift to anyone who accepts it (Eph. 2:8-10). The atonement made at Calvary becomes effective for the individual life only if it is accepted.

IV. ABCs of Personal Salvation

Many of us are attracted to Christ, but because of our convictions of unworthiness, hesitate to commit ourselves. Bad habits, we reason, must first be changed. A more virtuous character, we decide, should be developed before we become Christians.

Such a concept prevents many people from receiving and experiencing the converting, transforming power of divine grace. We do not realize that Heaven's salvation is designed for sinners. "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick," declared the world's Redeemer. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). And He assures us, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

The fact is, Heaven can do nothing for those who consider themselves good enough to be a Christian! Salvation is a matter of divine grace *not* of human merit. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

Grace is God's loving, merciful attitude toward undeserving human beings and His power to save us from our sins. It is estrangement from God and enslavement to sin—not righteous deeds—that make the sinner the object of God's loving concern.

In contrasting the prayer of the convicted and distressed publican ("God be merciful to me a sinner") with that of the self-righteous Pharisee ("God,

I thank thee, that I am not as other men”), Jesus said of the publican, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other” (Luke 18:10-14).

The ABCs of salvation begin when *we realize we are not good*. Man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), but that image has been marred and defaced. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Our minds are bent on sin and rebellion against God and righteousness.

Both the Old and New Testaments declare emphatically man’s alienation from God. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

Our education, culture, and social conventions may appear to cover this fact, but in Heaven’s sight these are but a thin veneer bonded by the human will upon an unregenerated heart.

A moral man who trusts in his own uprightness may in his pride fail to find true peace of heart. Such a man was the wealthy Nicodemus, whose complacent, legalistic religious life was shattered by Christ. Fixing His soul reading gaze upon this wealthy, educated rabbi, Christ disclosed Christianity’s greatest secret and miracle: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

The apostle Paul characterized man’s nature this way:

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:22-24).

The apostle answers his own heart cry in the subsequent verse: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (vs. 25).

We cannot feel convicted about our sinful condition and salvation in Jesus Christ, however, unless the Holy Spirit brings this to our hearts (John

16:7-11). The apostle Paul observes that it is “the goodness of God” that “leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). Just as bread dough will not rise of itself, so divine grace, like yeast in the dough, must permeate our lives, so that they will be transformed. We can no more change our wayward moral nature than the leopard can change its spots (Jer. 13:23).

At this point we ask, How does God make sinners into new creations? How are sinners transformed in mind to have the outlook of God?

This change is so fundamental that Christ depicted it as a *new birth* and life. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Marvel not that I said into thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:3, 7-8).

When we surrender to Christ, He produces within us characters and lives that resemble His own. Thus sinners become citizens of His kingdom.

While the process of the new birth is a mystery of divine grace, yet God has outlined the simple steps we are to take to cooperate with His plan.

The apostle Peter advises us, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). Repentance implies sorrow for our sins and a turning away from them. Repentance involves (as the Greek word *metanoia* indicates) a basic change of mind that naturally leads to a new pattern of living. Hence, genuine repentance leads us to genuine conversion, a turning around from the old life in sin to pursue a new course in Christ.

Coming to Christ in heartfelt repentance for our sins, we are led by the Holy Spirit to acknowledge and confess our guilt. There can be no redemption if we stoutly justify our waywardness and deny our failings. Declares the prophet, “Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou has transgressed against the Lord thy God” (Jer. 3:13). And the writer of Proverbs adds, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

As we confess our guilt and acknowledge our sins to Christ, we are confronted with one of the Bible's most reassuring promises: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The honor of the throne of heaven undergirds this heartwarming promise.

When we come to Jesus in repentance and sorrow for our sins and confess our guilt, when we willingly accept Christ as our Saviour and Lord, God forgives and cleanses us from all our sins. Heaven avers, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18).

We need not look for some great emotional flight of feeling as evidence that we have been accepted by God. Here is where many would-be Christians become discouraged. They expect some thrilling emotional experience when they accept Christ as their personal Saviour. But this may or may not happen. God has called us to move by principle and not by impulse. He implores us to live by faith in Him—not by our feelings. Faith is simply trusting God, taking Him at His word.

Faith says, "The promises are true. I have met His conditions, and He has forgiven me. I believe it—not because I feel anything, but because my heavenly Father promised it." Jesus says, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

What does Heaven really do when we come to Christ and, repenting of and confessing our sins, accept Him as our personal Saviour and Lord? The Scriptures declare we are "*justified freely* by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

To "justify" a person in the biblical sense means that God declares that person righteous, without fault before Him. To justify, in legal terminology, carries the sense of "acquittal" (cf. Deut. 25:1). On what basis, therefore, can God acquit or declare us righteous? When under the wooing of the Holy Spirit, we are drawn to trust in Christ as our Saviour and to surrender our wills to His Lordship, God does three wonderful things:

1. *He freely forgives our past sins.* This can now be done on the basis of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross (1 Cor. 15:3; Eph. 4:32).

2. *He imputes to us the righteous character of His Son.* This can now be done on the basis of Christ's sinless life (Rom. 4:3-6; 2 Cor. 5:2 1; 1 Cor. 1:30). Christ's perfect character stands in place of our imperfect ones. His perfect obedience stands in place of our failures.

Righteousness is obedience to the law. The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness.¹⁴

3. *He adopts us as into His family.* As penitent sinners, forgiven in Christ, accounted righteous in Christ, we are fully accepted as sons and daughters of God and may receive all the privileges of this relationship. "As many as received him [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12; see also Rom. 8: 14-17).

Forgiven and covered by the free gift of Christ's righteousness, we stand as penitents before God. Finding no fault in us, He graciously acquits us, declaring us righteous before Him.

He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.¹⁵

The agency used by the Holy Spirit to bring about the new birth and life in Jesus Christ is the

¹⁴ Ellen G. White comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:1073.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1956), 62.

Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. The apostle Paul says that new Christians are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23).

Standing in Christ, justified before God, and belonging to His family do not eliminate the need for growth. The past has been forgiven, but God intends to restore in man the image that sin has defaced. The Word of God, which under the Holy Spirit brought about the new birth, is still the agency for restoring a Christlike character in each Christian.

“Grow in grace,” the apostle urges, “and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). And he points to our spiritual food supply, the Holy Scriptures, “whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20. . . . Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience.

So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.¹⁶

The apostle Paul describes the marvelous transformation of character that occurs as we daily live in Christ. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed into the same image* from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

When we look into a mirror—or “glass” as the apostle terms it—we do not see another’s face. We see merely our own reflection. But the apostle is not talking about a literal mirror. He is speaking about the mirror of the Scriptures. When we search the Holy Scriptures, we see one great face, that of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Constantly beholding the loveliness of His character, we become like Him.

“The Spirit and the bride [the Holy City and the glories of the eternal world, Rev. 21:9-10], say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

Assurances

Becoming a Christian, entering into a life-long bond of union with Christ brings peace to mind and joy to the heart, because human beings were made to enjoy fellowship with their Creator. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Committing ourselves to Christ brings unity of purpose and greatly simplifies the issues of life.

The surrender of all our powers to God greatly simplifies the problem of life. It weakens and cuts short a thousand struggles with the passions of the natural heart.¹⁷

Anchoring to Christ the eternal Rock brings stability to lives that would otherwise be tossed to and fro on the tides and currents of life’s uncertainties. When the winds and storms surge about them, Christians can say with the apostle: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

The experience of the Christian is a new life in every way (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). Being at peace with God (Rom. 5:1) brings the surge of a new and abundant life in Christ. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,” Christ promised (John 10:10).

¹⁶ Ibid., 62-63.

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assn., 1930), 30.

- *Life in Christ brings freedom from guilt and remorse.* “Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Matt. 9:2; cf. Isa. 1:18; 1 John 1:9; Prov. 28:13).
- *Life in Christ also brings freedom from the tyrannical rule of sin.* “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:1-2).
- *Life in Christ brings freedom from the fear of death* (cf. Heb. 2:14-15). Now the Christian grasps the blessed assurance of eternal life as a reality in Christ. “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; . . . These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:11-13). Though a Christian falls asleep in death, he does so with the assurance that His Lord will awaken him at the resurrection (John 6:39-40).
- *Life in Christ brings freedom from corroding care and fear of want.* “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus,” the apostle Paul assured his friends (Phil. 4:19). He who provides for the earth and its teeming life in the field and forest says:

Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewith shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. 6:31-33)

Little wonder that the apostle Paul “determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). In the dying form of the Son of God, the Christian sees Heaven reaching out to embrace lost humanity to draw it back to the Father’s heart. The cross says to every sinner, You are of infinite worth to God. In one sense, God does not see sinful men and women

as they are, but as they may become in Christ. Grace sees worth even in a devil-possessed Mary Magdalene, a dishonest tax collector like Zacchaeus, a nameless dying thief, an accused adulteress. No person is worthless in God’s sight.

The penitent finds genuine security in Christ. His life is “hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). Although perplexities may shadow his path and clouds of sorrow and grief envelop him for a time, nothing can really hurt the committed Christian. He trusts his Father, knowing that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

Whether he lives until Christ’s return or is permitted to fall asleep in death, he has this certain promise from the lips of his Saviour:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand (John 10:27-29).

For the Christian the life of heaven begins here. The Scriptures depict it as a “fellowship” with God—as “a walk” with the Father and the Son. The apostle John wrote: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. . . . If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:3, 7). The apostle Paul graphically describes the believer’s new status: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19).

V. The Life Changer

Earlier in this article we referred to the operation of the Holy Spirit in the sinner’s conversion to Christ. We will now explore this wonderful mystery in greater depth.

The Holy Spirit is the great life changer. His ministry is an absolute necessity if sinners are to come into a saving relationship with Christ. The apostle Paul is unequivocal on this point: “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 12:3).

The apostle’s terse statement naturally sends us back to the terrible scene in Eden—the fall of our first parents. Deceived, yet exercising their choice, Adam and Eve chose to disobey the will of God and thus entered into rebellion against Him. Their choice corrupted their nature. In asserting their will over God’s will, they chose to be independent of Him as Lucifer and his angels had chosen earlier.

When man transgressed the divine law, his nature became evil, and he was in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan. There exists naturally no enmity between sinful man and the originator of sin. Both became evil through apostasy. The apostate is never at rest, except as he obtains sympathy and support by inducing others to follow his example.¹⁸

Had God not intervened, fallen man would have remained eternally corrupt, sharing the fate of fallen angels. However, at this point God interposed. To Satan (symbolized by the serpent) He said: “I will put *enmity* between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed” (Gen. 3:15). Commenting on this divine action, Ellen White writes:

It is *the grace that Christ implants in the soul* which creates in man enmity against Satan. Without this converting grace and renewing power, man would continue the captive of Satan, a servant ever ready to do his bidding. But the new principle in the soul creates conflict where hitherto had been peace.¹⁹

Used in this sense, the term *grace* simply denotes the marvelous working of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the sinner. From the first moments of His wooing and awakening the soul to its great need until its surrender to the authority of Christ—

the Holy Spirit functions creatively. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he [God] saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

The imparting of grace through the Holy Spirit is an unfathomed mystery. Jesus said to Nicodemus: “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:7-8). Conversion is real enough; there is evidence for it in the change of attitudes and action, but “conversions are not all alike.”²⁰

Though we cannot see the Spirit of God, we know that men who have been dead in trespasses and sins, become convicted and converted under its operations. The thoughtless and wayward become serious. The hardened repent of their sins, and the faithless believe. The gambler, the drunkard, the licentious, become steady, sober, and pure. The rebellious and obstinate become meek and Christlike. When we see these changes in the character, we may be assured that the converting power of God has transformed the entire man. We saw not the Holy Spirit, but we saw the evidence of its work on the changed character of those who were hardened and obdurate sinners. As the wind moves in its force upon the lofty trees and brings them down, so the Holy Spirit can work upon human hearts, and no finite man can circumscribe the work of God.²¹

Although conversions are not all alike—some appearing to be mighty, open demonstrations of grace whereas others are more gentle, yet there are certain similar elements in every conversion:

1. *Love toward God and man.* The human heart does not naturally entertain this virtue. “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). Love toward God and man is implanted in the human mind by the Holy Spirit. In the epistle to the Galatians, the apostle speaks of “love” as being a *fruit* of the Spirit’s ministry (Gal. 5:22).

¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), 505.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 506, italics supplied.

²⁰ *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 177.

²¹ *Evangelism*, 288.

2. *Repentance toward God.* This attitude is also a gift. "Him [Christ] hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, *for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*" (Acts 5:31; cf. Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25). Jesus mediates the gift of repentance to sinners through the movings of the Holy Spirit. As the sinner perceives the goodness of God under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the attitude of repentance is implanted (cf. Rom. 2:4). As mentioned earlier, the Greek word *metanoia*, which is translated "repentance," denotes a *change of mind*. Under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, the sinner comes to see God in a different light, to see himself and others from a different perspective (cf. John 16:8). One can repent only as the Spirit is able to impart this gift to the mind.

3. *Saving faith in God.* Like love, this attitude is also a fruit or gift of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The Holy Spirit works through the medium of the inspired Scriptures. "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*" (1 Peter 1:23). As the Scriptures are searched and the mind focuses on Christ, the Saviour of the world, the Spirit engenders faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Looking upon the Saviour, we come to love Him (1 John 4:19). Love leads to faith, that is to belief, trust, and commitment. The gift of faith is born from the gift of love—"faith . . . worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).

4. *Emancipation power.* Jesus said, "Whosoever committeth sin is *the servant* [slave] of sin" (John 8:34). We have a natural bent to sin, and the carnal mind enslaves us in our sinfulness. It is the lifegiving force of the Holy Spirit that alone can emancipate the soul and break the shackles of sinful passion and evil habits. Declares the apostle, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*" (Rom. 8:1-2). The "Spirit of life" simply means the Spirit who gives life. When life-giving power of the Holy Spirit rules as a law

or principle in the life, it brings freedom and release from the domination of the old carnal nature. No amount of culture, education, or self-discipline can produce this resurrection to life in the sinner who is dead in sin (cf. Eph. 2:1-10). It is the gift and outworking of the Holy Spirit.

5. *Sealed by the Spirit.* According to the apostle Paul, the steps that lead to this moment are as follows: "In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: *in whom [Christ] also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*" (Eph. 1:13). Seals were used in ancient times to authenticate documents or authorize their contents. They were also used to attest or identify ownership. To be sealed by the Holy Spirit is to be identified by God as one of His children. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19).

In the epistle to the Romans, the apostle states the matter from a different perspective:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom. 8: 14-15).

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to directly inculcate the conviction that the penitent sinner is now an adopted son, truly sealed and marked as belonging to God whom he can now reverently, yet familiarly, address as "Father."

6. *A temple for the Holy Spirit.* Not only does the Spirit lead the sinner to God, but with his surrender to the authority of Christ, he becomes the dwelling place of the Spirit. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

7. *The Spirit and prayer.* When Jesus was on earth, His disciples requested, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). Guiding the believer to pray aright seems also to be one of the offices of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26-27).

This does not mean that the Spirit prays independently of the believer who now is seeking to reach out to the unseen God in prayer. Rather, in some wonderful manner the Spirit impresses His own mind upon the seeker so that he prays aright. Ellen White expresses this operation of the Spirit using other figurative language:

Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man's behalf, but the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world; the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is the result of the Spirit striking the cords of the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart.²²

8. *The divine element in spiritual growth.* Just as spiritual life—the new birth—begins through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, so growth and maturation in Christ result from the continued leading of the Spirit. The believer cannot live successfully apart from the Spirit's assistance. Regarding this the apostle is quite blunt: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). Only divine grace can subordinate the natural tendency toward sin and cause the character to bear holy fruit (Gal. 5:22-23). "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," the apostle asserts, but he promises, "if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13). The same Spirit that originally broke the shackles of sin and set us free will continue to enable us to assert that freedom, and eventually will complete His task of freeing us from the dominion of sin at the coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:11, 19-23).

VI. The Function of Faith

A chief element in the saving process is the exercise of *faith*. Like the clutch of an automobile—which links the car with the power of the engine—so faith is the mental attitude or disposition that enables the penitent sinner to mesh with God's saving grace. "For by grace are ye saved *through faith*" (Eph. 2:8).

Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin.²³

How important is this believing attitude toward the promises of God? The biblical answer is plain: "Without faith it impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6). This is an obvious conclusion since the sinner is dealing with the Creator whom he has never seen, and only a relatively few persons witnessed the life, death, and resurrection of the Saviour. We must therefore rely upon the testimony of the Scriptures. The biblical writer continues: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

So, one aspect of biblical faith is *belief* in the existence of God, but further, a commitment to the testimony of Scripture that Jesus Christ loves the sinner personally and died for him (cf. Gal. 2:20). When the Philippian jailer cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" the answer came quickly, "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). "With the heart," Paul says, "man *believeth* unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10). This belief in Christ is viewed as saving faith. "Even as Abraham *believed* God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. . . . They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. 3:6-9).

But a true biblical faith is more than a mental assent to the concept that there is a God and that

²² Ellen G. White comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:1077-1078.

²³ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1940), 175.

Jesus died for one's sins, as well as the sins of the world (cf. James 2:19). Saving faith involves a total commitment of the will to God, a total surrender to the Lordship of Christ. "If any man will come after me," said Jesus, "let him deny himself, and *take up his cross, and follow me*" (Matt. 16:24). To bring the will into subjection to the Saviour, self must die; independence must be surrendered. It is not easy to pray, "Not my will, but thine, be done." Only divine grace can bring about this submission.

Jesus used another figure—the symbol of the yoke—to illustrate that faith in Him requires a total commitment to His Lordship. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*" (Matt. 11:28-30). True faith, therefore, not only believes the promises made by God, but leads the believer into a committed and dependent relationship with Christ.

There is a third element in biblical faith, the element of *trust*. The English word *faith* does not appear in the Old Testament except once in Habakkuk 2:4. But a word that is commonly used to reflect its meaning is *trust*.

Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength [margin, "the rock of ages"] (Isa. 26:4).

Our fathers trusted in thee: . . . and thou didst deliver them (Ps. 22:4).

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths (Prov. 3:5-6).

Since faith "works" or is motivated by love (cf. Gal. 5:6), it is only natural that this Spirit-implanted attitude would include a deep, abiding trust in God. One of Ellen White's definitions of faith draws on this concept: "Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good."²⁴

How does faith lead to salvation? It is this quality of the heart that enables the believer to fully embrace Christ as his Saviour and Lord. Believ-

ing the divine promises, trusting their gracious Author, the penitent surrenders his will and commits himself wholly to God through the merits of the Saviour. And Jesus promises: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

Making a decision for Christ—beginning to act out one's faith—is a crucial moment in Christian experience. Some fail to make a wholehearted, intelligent decision for Christ at this point because they either do not understand how to do so, or they expect a marked emotional experience that may not be present.

From the simple Bible account of how Jesus healed the sick, we may learn something about how to believe in Him for the forgiveness of sins. Let us turn to the story of the paralytic at Bethesda. The poor sufferer was helpless; he had not used his limbs for thirty-eight years. Yet Jesus bade him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The sick man might have said, "Lord, if Thou wilt make me whole, I will obey Thy word." But, no, he believed Christ's word, believed that he was made whole, and he made the effort at once; he *willed to walk*, and he did walk. He acted on the word of Christ, and God gave the power. He was made whole.

In like manner you are a sinner. You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe* that promise. You confess your sins and give yourself to God. You *will to serve* Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed—God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It *is* so if you believe it.

Do not wait to *feel* that you are made whole, but say, "I believe it; it *is* so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised."²⁵

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him," declared the apostle Paul to his Christian brethren in Colossae (Col. 2:6). Since the believer begins his Christian expe-

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1952), 253.

²⁵ *Steps to Christ*, 50-51, author's emphasis.

rience by faith in God—by a committed trust in his Redeemer—so he is to continue to live by an abiding trust in God.

“Now the just shall live by faith” (Heb. 10:38). It does not say that the just shall live by feeling. “Emotions are as changeable as the clouds.”²⁶ They can be affected by the weather, the food we eat, or glandular dysfunction. Like love, faith may also be viewed as a principle. The Christian’s steadfast trust in God is rooted in the promises of Scripture, not in his variable feelings. Through daily study, prayer, and communion and through the educative force of life’s experiences and tests, the Christian’s fellowship of faith can grow stronger and more enduring.

VII. Sanctification

For most conservative Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists, the doctrine of justification by faith—how a sinner is saved by faith in Jesus Christ—is relatively easy to understand. But there is considerable confusion over the doctrine of sanctification—the biblical teaching on growing up in Christ. Some Christians view it as a continuous battle against sin. Others believe that complete freedom from the power of sin and even from the desire to sin can be obtained. These Reformed and Wesleyan perspectives mingle in our own communion.

It is easy to move to extremes on this subject. Speaking of certain false views on sanctification, Ellen White wrote many years ago:

There is in the religious world a theory of sanctification which is false in itself and dangerous in its influence. In many cases those who profess sanctification do not possess the genuine article. Their sanctification consists in talk and will worship. Those who are really seeking to perfect Christian character will never indulge the thought that they are sinless. Their lives may be irreproachable, they may be living representatives of the truth which they have accepted; but the more they discipline their minds to dwell upon the character of Christ, and the nearer they approach to His divine image, the more clearly will they discern its

spotless perfection, and the more deeply will they feel their own defects.

When persons claim that they are sanctified, they give sufficient evidence that they are far from being holy. They fail to see their own weakness and destitution. They look upon themselves as reflecting the image of Christ, because they have no true knowledge of Him. The greater the distance between them and their Saviour, the more righteous they appear in their own eyes.²⁷

Definition of Terms

In the Hebrew and Greek languages the terms translated into English as “to sanctify/hallow,” “to consecrate/dedicate,” “sanctification/holiness,” or “saint,” all derive from common roots in the respective languages and carry the same basic meaning—to *separate*—although the context may be either sacred or secular. For example, when God “sanctified” the seventh-day Sabbath, He simply separated it from the other six days—He set it apart (Gen. 2:3). Moses was told to “sanctify” the firstborn, that is, to set them apart for a special service to God (Ex. 13:2). When Eleazar the son of Abinadab was “sanctified,” he was simply separated or set apart to care for the ark in his father’s house at Kirjathjearim (1 Sam. 7:1). This “separation” may be viewed in the Scriptures from two different perspectives:

1. *Sanctification as a status or standing before God.* When a penitent sinner accepts Jesus as his personal Saviour and Lord, he is separated from the kingdom of darkness and brought into God’s kingdom of light. “[God] hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13).

Thus many New Testament passages view sanctification as a past act—something that has already been accomplished. For example, the apostle Paul tells King Agrippa that God sent him to the Gentiles “to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified [*have been sanctified*, literal rendering] by faith that is in me” (Acts

²⁶ *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 328.

²⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1937), 7-8

26:18). The Corinthian Christians are greeted as those who “are sanctified in Christ Jesus”—literally, *who have been sanctified* in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2). Although some of them had come out of gross sins, they were now clean and sanctified. “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 6:11). Literally, this reads, “but ye *were washed*, but ye *were sanctified*, but ye *were justified* in the name of our Lord Jesus. . .”

These passages that regard sanctification as a past act are recalling that moment when these sinful beings became believers in Christ and were separated by His power from the world to join His own kingdom. The open, public moment when this occurred would have been at the time of their baptism when they plainly declared their allegiance to God’s side.

In the New Testament the believer is commonly referred to as a “saint.” Many of Paul’s epistles begin with the expression “to the saints” (Eph. 1:1, cf. 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; etc.). This expression is not used to describe the sinlessness of these people. It simply recognizes their standing or status before God: they are separated ones. A saint is a person who has been separated from the world and now belongs to God.

From this viewpoint sanctification is not a goal toward which one strives. Rather, it is a standing he already possesses, having left the world to become part of God’s family. In his new life as a Christian he is a “saint,” a separated one, set apart for God.

In this biblical view, therefore, justification and sanctification-as-a-standing-before-God are two sides of the same coin of Christian experience. *Justification* emphasizes the fact that the penitent who has entered into union with Christ has been declared righteous before God. Because of the merits of Christ his sins have been forgiven and the righteous character of Christ has been accounted to him. He stands justified—faultless and accepted in God’s sight. Sanctification as a standing before God, on the other hand, emphasizes the fact that the believer has been separated from the world and set apart for God. As a separated

one he belongs wholly to God. In this sense Ellen White says “we may claim sanctification.”²⁸

2. *Sanctification as a process or growth.* The Scriptures consistently picture the beginning of a penitent sinner’s relationship with God as the beginning of a new life. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]” (2 Cor. 5:17). So radically different are the principles of God’s kingdom from those of Satan’s that the believer is said to be “born again” (John 3:7). New Christians are “newborn babes” who are encouraged to grow up to be mature followers of God (1 Peter 2:2).

As in nature, so in the spiritual world, babies must either grow or perish. So the constant appeal of Scripture to the children of God is, “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). “But speaking the truth in love, . . . grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15).

This spiritual growing is just another way of figuratively describing sanctification as a process. If the time of the Christian’s baptism is seen as the initial and public separation of the sinner from Satan’s kingdom to the control and reign of Christ, then sanctification as a process may be seen as the daily separation from sin, the cleaving to that which is good and holy subsequent to baptism. As the Christian continually matures in understanding, as he reaches out to more perfectly know his Father’s will, he becomes more sensitive to what is right and wrong.

Such spiritual development will mean a daily crucifixion of the will of God, a daily surrender. The apostle Paul says in a literal rendering of Romans 6:11, “*Keep on reckoning* ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This indicates a continuous process of reaffirmation. Ellen White alludes to this in her familiar words:

Consecrate [a synonym for *sanctify*] yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. . . . Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.²⁹

28 *Selected Messages*, Book 2, 32.

29 *Steps to Christ*, 70.

Most biblical texts on sanctification view it from this second perspective, as a continual separation from sin. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification,” the apostle Paul declared to the Thessalonians. Then he continued by showing that God was calling them to live morally pure lives and not to copy the licentiousness of their pagan environments (1 Thess. 4:3-8). His closing prayer was that “the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:23-24). Thus it is clear that the Christian is to be mentally, physically, and spiritually set apart to the worship and service of God, and that he is to pursue this separation continuously.

Some Christians believe that sanctification is meant to be an instantaneous experience rather than a process. In this sense they make it a second work of grace that occurs subsequent to the Christian’s justification or initial acceptance with God. This view is sometimes referred to as “the second blessing.” But the Scriptures never view sanctification-as-a-growth as being instantaneous. This, in itself, is a contradiction in terms. Instead, the Christian is challenged to “*Follow* peace with all men, and holiness [sanctification], without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

Note how the apostle Paul describes his Christian experience:

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, *I count not myself to have apprehended*: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, *I press toward the mark* for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:12-14)

The metaphor is striking. The apostle sees himself as a runner in the great race of life—running toward the mark—the goal. There is no stopping along the way. *The track is as long as his life.*

Nothing here suggests that the mark toward which he runs is only half-way or three-quarters of the way down the track—at some point before life ends. The implication is that there is never any point this side of death or the coming of Christ at which a believer may stop and say, “I have achieved the full spiritual development I am capable of attaining.” Ellen White’s comments on this are plain:

This sanctification is a progressive work, and an advance from one stage of perfection to another.³⁰

So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained.³¹

Even the most perfect Christian may increase continually in the knowledge and love of God.³²

The germination of the seed represents the beginning of spiritual life, and the development of the plant is a beautiful figure of Christian growth. As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the development of the Christian life. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God’s purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. As our opportunities multiply, our experience will enlarge, and our knowledge increase. We shall become strong to bear responsibility, and our maturity will be in proportion to our privileges.³³

As a doctrine, sanctification is rather easy to explain in its broad terms; as a lifestyle, however, it is not always easy to practice because the Christian is confronted on all sides by temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In His prayer just before His arrest in Gethsemane Jesus said, “For their sakes [the disciples] I sanctify myself”

30 Ellen G. White, *My Life Today* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1952), 250.

31 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), 560-561.

32 *Testimonies*, 1:340.

33 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1941), 65-66.

(John 17:19). Christ is not admitting sinfulness here, but is stressing the way He lived as a model for the disciples, He sanctified Himself, that is, He dedicated Himself wholly to God. And that is really what *holiness* or sanctification (same word in Greek) is all about. Holiness is serving God with all the heart, mind, and strength. In Gethsemane as Jesus struggled with the great temptation to abandon mankind to its fate, one refrain ran through His prayers: “Not my will, but thine [God’s], be done” (Luke 22:42).

This principle by which our Saviour lived and prayed summarizes the essence of sanctification as a process or growth. Note Ellen G. White’s definition:

On one occasion I spoke in reference to genuine sanctification, which is nothing less than a *daily dying to self and daily conformity to the will of God*. . . . Paul’s sanctification was a constant conflict with self. Said he, “I die daily.” 1 Cor. 15:31. 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.³⁴

The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law.³⁵

Neither justification nor sanctification is an achievement of human effort, although the believer responds in faith and obedience to God. The operation of the Holy Spirit is everywhere present in the saving process and woos us on to holy living.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Rom. 8:13-14).

The Spirit employs the Word of God in His mysterious miracle of transformation. Jesus prayed God to “Sanctify them [the disciples] through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). The Scriptures are a mighty cleansing agency as they are applied by the hand of the Spirit.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word (Ps. 119:9).

Seeing ye *have purified your souls in obeying the truth* through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently (1 Peter 1:22).

The apostle Paul cites the biblical principle that operates in this area of spiritual growth: “Be not overcome of evil, but *overcome evil with good*” (Rom. 12:21). In this process of restoring the image of God from within (cf. Col. 3:10) the Spirit calls the follower of God to focus his thoughts on what is good and wholesome (cf. Phil. 4:8), particularly to meditating upon the Saviour. The cultivating of holy thoughts—of upright and wholesome thought patterns—is to root out and crowd out the unholy. We become like the One whom we choose to think about. “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed into the same image* from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love—this is the subject for the soul’s contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness.³⁶

It was said of Christ, “Thou has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity” (Heb. 1:9). This same attitude toward sin and righteousness is developed by the Spirit in the heart of the Christian. He comes to love the things he once hated, and hate the things he once loved. New tastes, ideals, perspectives, and attitudes develop toward God and his fellow beings.

³⁴ Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1951), 237, emphasis supplied.

³⁵ *The Great Controversy*, 469.

³⁶ *Steps to Christ*, 70-71.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.³⁷

Does this mean, then, that sinless perfection is obtainable in a Christian's life? The Scriptures set a high ideal. The apostle Peter says, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). No higher standard could be placed, and grace is provided for spiritual growth.

Yet—at the same time—a warning is sounded: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). A few verses later the apostle writes, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2).

Perhaps the tension between the ideal ("Be ye holy; for I am holy") and the actual experience ("there is no man that sinneth not," 1 Kings 8:46) is

only apparent and not real—if the Christian truly enters into and maintains a bond with Christ.

We have noted that from the biblical viewpoint sanctification is both a standing with God and a process. When the believer enters into union with Christ, he stands before God both justified and sanctified. By grace he has been put right with God and consecrated wholly to Him. He is a "saint"—a separated or dedicated one. In this sense he fulfills the invitation, "be ye holy; for I am holy." Under this umbrella of his justification and sanctification-as-a-status he continues to grow, to live the sanctified life, daily yielding his will to the will of God. This growth knows no termination point prior to death or the coming of Christ. As long as the Christian lives, his knowledge widens and his understanding matures, he will continue to grow. Thus, during each moment of his life he may have the assurance that God graciously accepts him for Christ's sake.³⁸

Note: Materials adapted in part from author's previous writings: *Shadows of Hope* (Academy text published by Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, California, 1974). "We Don't Have to Be Good" (Emphasis Eternity tract series), Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, TN.

³⁷ *The Desire of Ages*, 668.

³⁸ *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560-562.