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RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH AND THE SANCTUARY DOCTRINE

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Dale Ratzlaff, a prominent ex-Adventist minister and critic of key Adventist doctrines, has written:

Does the SDA doctrine of the cleansing of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment distort, undermine, or contradict the one and only new covenant gospel of grace? This is the acid test. All that has been said thus far—as important as it is—fades, in comparison with this test.¹

Less than two years following the events of Glacier View in the summer of 1980, former Adventist professor Smuts van Rooyen reflected publicly on being dis-employed for his agreement with Desmond Ford's attack on the sanctuary doctrine. Asked in an interview, "What do you see as being wrong with the Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment?" he replied:

*Let me answer that by reading a statement from Ellen White. She wrote this in the book *The Great Controversy*: "Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven. . . there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon the earth." What the investigative judgment boils down to in practice is this: When John Doe confesses the sin of impatience, that sin is not cancelled, but recorded. The blood of Jesus has simply transferred the sin from John to the sanctuary. In the judgment John must face that sin again. If by that time he has not overcome the sin, it remains against him This then makes it imperative that John overcome every sin he has ever confessed. He must, in fact, reach perfection before his name comes up in the judgment or John Doe is a lost man*

Now perfectionism is a terrible thing and it leads to devastating insecurity in one's Christian experience, but perfectionism is an integral part of Mrs. White's investigative judgment doctrine.²

Several years thereafter, another fellow traveler of Ford's in his denial of the 1844 theology made the following observation:

This is the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment as it was originally taught by Ellen White and the early pioneers. It is still taught extensively today by those who take Ellen White literally. It holds up an impossible demand, and breeds an unbearable insecurity. It is not surprising, then, that SDA scholars have sought to reinterpret it to bring relief to the oppressed. One cannot blame them for that. It is time for Adventism to face up to the true doctrine of the Investigative Judgment again and to admit that it is the mainspring of its perfectionism and the gushing fountain of its despair.³

Some years later, Morris Venden wrote in his book *Never Without An Intercessor*:

The dialogue concerning the investigative judgment and related topics within our church today seems primarily an attempt to settle on our beliefs concerning sin and righteousness and salvation. The investigative judgment, as a historical and eschatological event, is not really threatening.

It's not our lack of understanding of how Daniel 8 relates to Leviticus 16 that causes the sleepless nights. It's our lack of understanding of how the apparent bad news of the judgment relates to the good news of the gospel.⁴

In his most recent book *For the Sake of the Gospel*, reflecting on the events and issues of Glacier View more than a quarter-century later, Ford wrote the following:

*I would also strongly recommend Woodrow W. Whidden's book *Ellen White on Salvation*. If this book were well known among us, our key heresies would die.⁵*

Of course, Ford in this book identifies as a "key heresy" the doctrine of 1844 and the investigative judgment,⁵ denial of which he holds to be inevitable if one embraces the gospel theology of such books as Whidden's.⁷ Ford's wife Gillian is more explicit still:

It was Ford's emphasis on righteousness by faith that led him to see the necessity for reinterpretation of the SDA scheme of prophecy.⁸

For Ford and others—be they former, current, or non-Seventh-day Adventists—who hold to this salvation theology, the following are key points:

1. Involuntary sin—the belief that all become sinners simply by being born.
2. The unfallen nature of Christ—the belief that the humanity that Christ took upon Himself was the sinless nature of Adam as it was before the fall.
3. Salvation by justification alone—the belief that the ground of the Christian's salvation includes justifying righteousness only, as distinct from the transforming, empowering righteousness of regeneration and sanctification.
4. Justification as exclusively declarative and not transformative—the belief that justifying righteousness only declares a believer righteous, as distinct from actually making him righteous.
5. Imperfectability of Christian character—the belief that even through imparted divine strength, perfect obedience to the divine law remains impossible for the Christian in this life.

The thesis of this article is very simple. The above premises concerning sin and salvation, held almost universally by critics of the classic Adventist sanctuary doctrine, offer inherent and compelling hostility to the 1844 theology as historically taught by Seventh-day Adventists. Despite recent efforts by some to craft a certain harmony between the aforementioned assumptions concerning sin and salvation—hereafter noted as the evangelical gospel—and the Adventist sanctuary doctrine, the logic of these assumptions remains fundamentally antithetical to what Ellen White described as the "central pillar of the Advent faith."⁹

Efforts to establish harmony between the 1844 theology and the evangelical gospel have received conspicuous exposure of late, as seen in a recent book by one contemporary Adventist scholar. The book consumes many pages upholding the prophetic rationale for Adventism's existence, in particular the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14.¹ One passionate flourish by this author in defense of prophetic Adventism reads as follows:

If Adventism's apocalyptic big picture isn't valid, the most sensible thing is to shut up shop, go home, and do something meaningful with our lives.¹¹

Yet elsewhere in his book, it is clear he has lost none of his fervor for the evangelical gospel, promoted so strongly in other of his books.¹² In his own words:

*The tragedy is that traditional Adventism took a thing of joy and by combining it with less-than-biblical notions of sin and perfection made it a thing of fear, dread, and insecurity. No wonder so many Adventists have hated the "investigative judgment."*¹³

In other words, this scholar and others of like mind are willing to tolerate—even vigorously defend—a pre-Advent judgment beginning in 1844, along with most (though perhaps not all) of Adventism's historic understandings of prophecy. But this allegiance on their part to prophetic Adventism seems conditional on a simultaneous acceptance of the evangelical gospel. Without the latter, it is fair to say they would not be willing to defend the former.

Is such a synthesis possible, both biblically and logically? That is the question we must examine.

The "Finished Atonement" Theology

Let's be clear about one thing from the start. Seventh-day Adventists have always believed that the sacrifice of Jesus was finished on the cross. (I haven't seen an Adventist offer a lamb yet!) What the Adventist pioneers and their contemporary fellow travelers refuse to accept is the unscriptural doctrine of a finished atonement on the cross. Here we see the first of several intolerable tensions between the evangelical gospel and the Adventist sanctuary doctrine.

The question of whether the atoning ministry of Christ was finished on the cross was one of two key doctrinal controversies birthed in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*.¹⁴ From the present writer's perspective, little if any overt departure from classic Adventism can be found in the actual statements of this book on the subject of the atonement, which acknowledge both the atoning aspects of Christ's death and those of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.¹⁵ The most egregious problem with the *Questions on Doctrine* statements concerning this subject, in the present writer's view, were:

(1) the implication that Adventists had changed their basic atonement theology when in fact this was not so, and

(2) the subsequent emphasis of many Adventists—traceable in large measure to *Questions on Doctrine*—on a salvation theology which speaks frequently of the "finished work of Christ" as involving something beyond the biblical scope of Calvary and the sanctuary doctrine as taught throughout Scripture.

The "finished work of Christ" concept here considered goes beyond the simple truth that Jesus died for the whole world and brought an end to the Old Testament sacrificial system. Adventists have always believed this. But the doctrine of a finished atonement in modern Adventism exceeds acknowledgement of a finished sacrifice, the latter being the theme of a number of Ellen White statements included in the appendices of *Questions on Doctrine*.¹⁶ Such statements as the following have frequently characterized "finished atonement" preaching in modern Adventist circles:

My brethren, my sisters, Jesus Christ took away your sins, even yours, two thousand years ago. He was our Champion, He was our Representative, He was our Saviour. Everything He did is put to our account!¹⁷

We were ruined by our first representative (Adam) and we had nothing to do with that. The good news of the gospel is that we have been redeemed by our second Representative (Jesus Christ) and we had nothing to do with that either!¹⁸

God forgave us 2,000 years ago, through the blood of His Son. And there is nothing we can do to earn or add to it. If you and I could make things right, by asking for forgiveness and making restitution, then Christ wouldn't have had to die. But He did! And with His death, "it is finished."¹⁹

Logically, this theory leads to the belief that all our sins—past, present, and future—have already been forgiven, and that once a person accepts Christ, future sins are forgiven just as surely as past ones. Adventist advocates of this teaching have used such terms as "overarching forgiveness,"²⁰ the "umbrella of eternal grace,"²¹ and have at times illustrated the concept by a man wearing a black suit with a white umbrella overhead.²²

It is this "finished atonement," "universal and unconditional forgiveness" doctrine that compels Ford to make statements such as the following:

Hebrews knows nothing of an "extended" atonement which drags on for 1,800 years after the cross. . . . Every translation of these verses is plain that the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement by the Jewish high priest found its fulfillment in the cross of Christ, for on Calvary Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.²³

More recently, this "universal forgiveness" doctrine has been widely promoted in the writings and ministry of such groups as the 1888 Message Study Committee. One prominent backer of this view writes:

All three of these aspects of our salvation—justification, sanctification, and glorification—have already been accomplished in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴

So you in Christ is a finished work but Christ in you is not a finished work; it is an ongoing work, something that God began when you were converted and He is still working in you until the second coming of Christ.²⁵

This author likewise depicts justification as "the just penalty of the law on behalf of our sins, past, present, and future."²⁶ He calls this "finished work" on the cross the "unconditional good news of salvation for all mankind."²⁷ Like Ford,²⁸ he believes salvation to be based on justification alone, declaring at one point that "the righteousness God produces in us . . . has no saving value."²⁹ And as with Ford, the logic of this author's salvation theology leads him to raise fundamental questions about the sanctuary message as historically taught by the church.³⁰

The Bible on the Atonement

Seventh-day Adventists do not teach a finished atonement at the cross for the simple reason that such a concept stands at sharp variance with the doctrine of atonement as found in both Old and New Testaments. The first in-depth biblical description of the atonement process is found in the early chapters of Leviticus, where various sin and trespass offerings are described. In each of these chapters, atonement was not completed until the blood of the sacrifice was mediated before the Lord (Leviticus 4:16-20; 25-26, 30-31, 34-35; 5:9-10; 7:1-7). Elsewhere in Scripture both confession and the forsaking of sin are listed as conditions for receiving divine forgiveness (2 Chronicles 7:14; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; 1 John 1:9).

Romans 5:11, in the King James Version, speaks of those who have "now received the atonement." Most marginal readings and modern translations use the word reconciliation, which is really the best synonym for atonement in Scripture. Man is estranged from God through his choice to sin (Isaiah 59:2), and thus he stands in need of reconciliation with God. The atonement of Christ is the means whereby this reconciliation is to be accomplished.

A number of New Testament passages speak of the cross as the means whereby we are reconciled with God. But a close look at each of them makes it clear that the theme is instrumental, not chronological. Let us examine each of these passages:

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10)

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead: be ye reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 18-20)

And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel. (Colossians 1:20-23)

Notice that while Paul says in one place, "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10), and in another that God "hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:18), he invites his readers elsewhere, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Obviously the first two statements refer to converted believers, while the third is an invitation to readers who are not yet converted.

Paul's earlier statement in 2 Corinthians 5 that "we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf" (verse 12), gives further evidence that "we" refers to himself and his fellow evangelists who had experienced God's converting power, while "you" refers to his audience which doubtless included many who had not experienced conversion.

The verse in Romans which states that "when we were enemies, we were reconciled" (Romans 5:10) must be placed alongside the verse we read from Colossians 1, which states that "you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled" (verse 21). These verses clearly speak of those who have relinquished their evil deeds by availing themselves of Calvary's reconciling power. Without question this cannot refer to the whole world—which would be the case if atonement were finished at the cross—but includes only to those who have willingly chosen by God's grace to give up their sins.

We must also notice that 2 Corinthians 5:19, which speaks of the world as the focus of reconciliation, uses the word reconciling—which is in the present, continuous tense. Never does Paul say the world has been reconciled (past tense). The verse also says, "not imputing their trespasses unto them." But when Paul writes elsewhere of those to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, he quotes an Old Testament passage that adds a condition to this—"in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:2). Again, this can't possibly refer to the whole world, only to those who by God's grace meet the conditions for receiving pardon.

Elsewhere the New Testament is clear that the work of Christ as high priest in heaven is "to make reconciliation (atonement) for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). This is why the apostle John assures us, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). Notice he doesn't say, "We have a Saviour who died on Calvary." The process of atonement and receiving forgiveness is the same in the New Testament as in the Old. Confession and the forsaking of sin remain clearly stated conditions (Matthew 6:13-14; Romans 2:13; 1 John 1:9). The only difference between the portrayal of this process in the two Testaments is that in the Old there were many sacrifices, many priests, and an earthly sanctuary, whereas in the New there is one Sacrifice, one Priest, and a heavenly sanctuary.

The following Ellen White statements confirm what we have seen from Scripture—that human reconciliation to God through Christ's blood is an individual matter, conditional on confession, repentance, and the Spirit's transforming power:

You have seen that all who come to Me, confessing their sins, I freely receive. Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out. All who will, may be reconciled to God, and receive everlasting life.³¹

It is the work of conversion and sanctification to reconcile men to God by bringing them into accord with the principles of His law.³²

It is by the law of God that the sinner is convicted. He sees his own sinfulness in contrast with the perfect righteousness which it enjoins, and this leads him to humility and repentance. He becomes reconciled to God through the blood of Christ.³³

By the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and His work of mediation in our behalf, we may become reconciled to God. The blood of Christ will prove efficacious to wash away the crimson stain of sin.³⁴

The following statement is clear that the reconciliation the cross provides is not an involuntary act accomplished for the whole world, believers and unbelievers alike:

To him who accepts Christ as his righteousness, as his only hope, pardon is pronounced; for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. The justice, truth, and holiness of Christ, which are approved by the law of God, form a channel through which mercy may be communicated to the repenting, believing sinner.

Those who do not believe in Christ are not reconciled to God; but those who have faith in Him are hid with Christ in God.³⁵

But the atonement process does not end even with the removal of sin from believers' lives. Another, final phase of atonement remains necessary. In the typical service, this final act of atonement was made by the scapegoat, who represents Satan:

And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:9-10)

Notice that *both* goats make an atonement—the scapegoat as well as the Lord's goat. This does not, as some have alleged, make Satan our sin-bearer. It does mean that until evil and its originator have been fully removed from God's universe, the process of atonement—full reconciliation between God and His creatures—cannot be finished. Satan, the antitypical scapegoat, will not of course be taken into the wilderness until the millennium, when he and his fallen angels will be confined to the desolated earth. At the end of this period Satan and his followers will at last be destroyed. Then, and only then, will the process of atonement-reconciliation—be truly complete.

In summary, we can see that biblical atonement includes four phases:

1. Confessing and forsaking sin
2. Slaying of the sacrificial victim
3. Mediation of the victim's blood
4. Exile and death of the scapegoat

Quite obviously, in the antitype, only one of these phases was completed at Calvary—the slaying of the Victim. No more sacrifices need to be offered. Seventh-day Adventists have always understood this. But what we have historically rejected, and rightly so, is the abbreviation of the atonement process to include only the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. We refuse to abbreviate the atonement in this way because the Bible clearly does not allow it.

Implications for the Sanctuary Doctrine

We have already seen how Ford's theology disallows what he calls an "extended atonement" beyond the cross, taking place in the heavenly sanctuary.³⁶ But the exact reason why isn't always understood.

If all sin has already been forgiven on the cross, neither confession nor blood mediation—both explicitly essential, according to Scripture, for forgiveness to take place (Leviticus 4:5, 16, 17, 25, 34; 5:9; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9; 2:1)—are needed in order for sinners to have their sins pardoned. This effectively eliminates a major part of the Holy Place ministry of Christ in heaven. In the words of an author quoted earlier:

How do we defend our teaching? This verse . . . deals with the fact that both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries need cleansing. Who defiled it? Sin was taken care of. When the price of sin is paid, is it not taken care of? The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. What is the blood of Christ? The cross. Why should the heavenly sanctuary be cleansed if the blood of Christ has already done it? . . . Look at Romans 5:11 and look at the grammar. This is not talking about 1844 A.D. It is talking about the cross. The context is clear: "We rejoice because we have now received the atonement."³⁷

Elsewhere he asks, "Did the blood of Christ (on Calvary) remove our sin?" He answers: "Yes."³⁸

Following similar logic, Ford insists that the final blotting out of believers' sins takes place when one accepts Christ, without any need for a future blotting out of recorded sins in a heavenly judgment.³⁹ His attempt, of course, to equate the message of Acts 2:38 with Acts 3:19 is belied by the latter text itself, which declares that sins will be blotted out "when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). This is clearly talking about a future time, since the times of Pentecostal refreshing had already come, and this is speaking about times which "shall come." The following verses, which speak of the future return of Christ and the "times of restitution of all things" (verse 21), clearly contain end-time language. A future blotting out of sin is plainly envisioned in these verses, in full harmony with Ellen White's description of a future "refreshing from the presence of the Lord" to take place during a future, final atonement.⁴⁰

If, however, the work Christ finished on His cross included the actual accomplishment of forgiveness, not just a provision for such, the next logical step is to deny the need for any future blotting out of sin in a heavenly sanctuary. Further implications of this conclusion for the classic Adventist sanctuary doctrine will be explored below.

"Cleansed" in Daniel 8:14

A key element in Ford's initial attack on the sanctuary doctrine on October 27, 1979, was his claim that the word "cleansed" in Daniel 8:14 is a mistranslation in the King James Version. In his own words:

Does Daniel 8:14 refer to the ritual cleansing of the sanctuary as described in Leviticus 16? Traditional Adventism says, Yes. We disagree. When early SDA pioneers looked into their KJV Bibles and saw the word "cleansed," in Daniel 8:14, it evoked images from the Day of Atonement ceremonies found in Leviticus 16. So they flipped back to Leviticus and, sure enough, chapter 16 was talking about the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary. Little did they know that the word Daniel used for "cleansed" was different from the word Leviticus used for "cleansing." The more accurate translation of Daniel's "vindicated" or "justified," not "cleansed."⁴¹

Sufficient work, from the present writer's perspective, has already been done to demonstrate that the Hebrew words for "cleanse" and "justify" have parallel and largely identical meanings in the Old Testament Scriptures. Poetic parallelism, the rhyme of meaning, is demonstrated between the words *taher* (cleanse) and *sadaq* (justify) in such passages as Job 4:17 and Psalm 19:7. What is significant for the present discussion is that the above claim by Ford regarding this word in Daniel 8:14 is made by one who has long denied any transformative meaning to the word "justify," whether in the Old or the New Testament. In Ford's own words, "Justification is a declaring righteous, not a making righteous."⁴² It is for this reason that he cannot attribute any meaning of practical or ritual cleansing to the word "justify"

as found in Daniel 8:14.

None will deny that God's forgiveness, or justification, involves a declaration of righteousness, and the covering of our sinful past as though it had never occurred. But the word for forgiveness in the New Testament means much more than the mere cancellation of a sinful record. It also means release from captivity, freedom from bondage.

This is the word Jesus used in His address to the synagogue at Nazareth, when He declared His mission was "to preach deliverance to the captives . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). The word translated "deliverance" and "liberty" is the exact same one used in Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14, which speak of the "forgiveness of sins."

The following passages likewise identify the work of justification with the transforming work of the Holy Spirit:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. . . . And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:1-2, 5)

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5-7)

The words "reckon" and "counted" found in Romans 4 are found in the Old Testament also. When comparing these words, it becomes clear they do not imply a mere legal declaration only. For example, 2 Samuel 4:2 tells us that "Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin." We read in Numbers 18:27, 30 that the tithe was "reckoned" and "counted" unto the Levites. Obviously these words refer to legal transactions, but they also refer to the actual, experiential possession of these things as well.

Romans 4:5-8 becomes especially problematic for a declarative only definition of justification when one checks the Old Testament reference Paul used in this passage. In the apostle's words:

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also described the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. (Romans 4:5-8)

But as we noted earlier, if we go back to Psalm 32:1-2, which Paul quoted in this context, the psalmist clarified exactly what kind of man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. David wrote:

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. (Psalm 32:2, emphasis supplied)

In other words, only the guileless are candidates for God's justification; only they are those to whom the Lord does not impute sin. This is because, according to other Bible passages, God's forgiveness is conditional on, among other things, the forsaking of sin:

If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:7)

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14-15)

For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. (Romans 2:13)

Putting all these inspired statements together, it becomes clear that when Paul speaks of how God "imputeth righteousness without works" (Romans 4:6), he is not talking about the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit's transforming work can make a person without guile, cause him to surrender fully, and make him obedient to all God's requirements. This becomes even clearer, as we noted above, in Titus 3:5, where Paul draws a contrast between "works of righteousness which we have done" and "the washing of regeneration, and renewing in the Holy Ghost":

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. (Titus 3:5)

Surely justification involves a declaration of righteousness. But the Bible is clear that when God declares something to be so, it *becomes* so! When God declared at the creation, "Let there be light," there *was* light (Genesis 1:3). The Bible says, "For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:9). When Jesus declared to the leper, "Be thou clean," the Bible says "immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Matthew 8:3). Commenting on the language of Psalm 33:9 and Romans 4:17, which speaks of how God "calleth those things which be not as though they were," Ellen White stated:

At the creation "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." He "calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Psalm 33:9; Romans 4:17); for when He calls them, they are.⁴³

Elsewhere she wrote:

God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me' Psalm 51:10.⁴⁴

In summary, it is Ford's narrowing of the meaning of justification throughout Scripture that constrains him to deny the accuracy of "cleanse" as a translation of *nisdaq* (justify) in Daniel 8:14.

Perfection and the Final Generation

Biblical support for the belief that perfection of character is required of history's final generation is clear from a number of passages (Zephaniah 3:13; Ephesians 5:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Peter 3:10-14; 1 John 3:2-3; Revelation 14:5). As was noted at the beginning, the belief by deniers of the sanctuary doctrine that such perfection is impossible on earth for even the sanctified Christian, forms a key feature of their objection to the 1844 theology of classic Adventism.

Because objectors to the sanctuary doctrine tend to believe our sins have already been removed by Christ on the cross, and thus need not be removed either from the heavenly sanctuary or the Christian's earthly life, sanctification is thus reduced to an unspecified, never-completed work which functions only as proof that a person has been justified. The investigative judgment is thus reduced to a procedure, not by which perfect obedience is developed and ratified, but by which it is determined that someone has accepted Calvary's "legal salvation."

But why, we ask, should this procedure be delayed till 1844? The only sensible reason for the delay of the last judgment until the close of time is that God is seeking to prepare a people whose unqualified conquest of evil in their lives will forever demolish the charges of Satan against God's government. The judgment has been held off until the end of time because only then will God have a totally perfected people. It is for this reason that the

vast array of practical counsels throughout the Spirit of Prophecy writings have been given to God's end-time church and not in previous ages. God could use a man such as Martin Luther in a bygone era—one who drank beer and hated Jews, the latter sentiment being later celebrated by the Nazis⁴⁵—but He cannot accept such performance from believers at the close of the great controversy. Time has lingered through Inquisition and Holocaust, slavery and segregation, Rwanda and Darfur, because God continues to wait for a generation whose unbroken triumph over sin will forever silence the charges of the adversary.

But if, as sanctuary critics claim, such perfection is impossible and our salvation was finished on the cross, any new event of redemptive significance in 1844 becomes a legalistic, guilt-inspiring appendix to the gospel. What some have called "last generation theology" is, therefore, the logical and essential corollary of the 1844 investigative judgment doctrine. Deny that such perfection is possible, and the tension created with the classic Adventist sanctuary message eventually becomes intolerable.

The Investigative Judgment: Revelatory, Determinative, or Both?

A recent article spoke of how, in the author's view, the judgment of the saints in heaven is "revelatory rather than determinative."⁴⁶ But one must ask what truly is the difference between these terms, when applied to the end-time judgment. God already knows, obviously, who will pass the judgment and who will not, but since He alone knows the heart (1 Kings 8:39), the unfallen inhabitants of the universe who assemble for the judgment (Dan. 7:10) will learn through this judgment the true condition of those bearing the name of the Lord.

The determinative role of personal conduct in our standing in the judgment is extremely clear through the Bible, in verses left without a mention in the above article. Consider the following:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man: for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (Matthew 12:36-37)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

How can one possibly read Christ's parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, and not come to the conclusion that behavior is indeed determinative in our vindication in the final judgment? Jesus declared to the sheep in this parable, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

And why are those addressed to inherit this kingdom? For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me (Matthew 25:35-36).

Notice that these behavioral choices on their part are specifically listed by Jesus as the reasons they are worthy of inheriting the heavenly kingdom. This, of course, stands in harmony with other statements by our Lord regarding obedience being the condition for receiving eternal life (Matthew 19:16-17; Luke 10:25-28).

Based on the above Bible verses, it is impossible to make the distinction the aforementioned article makes between "revelatory" and "determinative" regarding the last judgment. It is the content of believers' lives which will be revealed in the judgment, and this in the end will determine whether or not they enter heaven. Ellen White is therefore in total harmony with Scripture when she writes as follows:

*In the day of judgment the course of the man who has retained the frailty and imperfection of humanity will not be vindicated. For him there will be no place in heaven. He could not enjoy the perfection of the saints in light. He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God.*⁴⁷

The author of the aforementioned article wrote, regarding those who in his view are ready for heaven because of Calvary rather than the successful scrutiny of their lives in God's judgment:

*Then, as faith waits for reality, the transforming influences of His righteousness begin to impact on our daily lives as His laws are written upon our hearts (Hebrews 10:16).*⁴⁸

But according to Scripture, faith does not merely wait for reality; it strives for it (see 2 Corinthians 7:1; Colossians 1:28-29; Hebrews 12:4). And the above statement from Ellen White is clear that Jesus' transforming righteousness is to accomplish more than a mere "beginning" impact on our lives if we are to stand the test of the final judgment. Human frailty and imperfection must be vanquished. The power of God must be blended with human effort to keep us from sinning.

The article in question quotes Ellen White's statement: "We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute."⁴⁹ But again, we must allow the writings of Inspiration to explain themselves. In what way do the writings of Ellen White define the substitutionary role of Jesus? The following statements are clear that the substitutional life of Jesus applies only to the believer's past sins:

*Christ bears the penalty of man's past transgressions, and by imparting to man His righteousness, makes it possible for man to keep God's holy law.*⁵⁰

*Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*⁵¹

*There is no way back to innocence and life except through repentance for having transgressed God's law, and faith in the merits of the divine sacrifice, who has suffered for your transgressions of the past; and you are accepted in the Beloved on condition of obedience to the commandments of your Creator.*⁵²

*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.*⁵³

In the story of Joshua and the angel, representing the acquittal of God's people in the judgment of the living, Ellen White was clear that the filthy garments being taken from Joshua represent past sins, not present or future ones.

*"Are these," he (Satan) asks, "the people who are to take my place in heaven, and the place of the angels who united with me? . . . Look at the sins which have marked their lives. Behold their selfishness, their malice, their hatred toward one another." The people of God have been in many respects very faulty. Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins which he has tempted them to commit.*⁵⁴

Elsewhere we read:

Now he (Satan) points to the *record of their lives*, to the defects of character, the unlikeness to Christ, which *has dishonored* their Redeemer, to all the sins which he *has tempted* them to commit⁵⁵

Joshua's victory and that of his people are described as follows:

Israel was clothed in "change of raiment,"—the righteousness of Christ imputed to them. The mitre placed upon Joshua's head was such as was worn by the priests, and bore the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord," signifying that notwithstanding his former transgressions, he was now qualified to minister before God in His sanctuary.⁵⁶

Notice that each of these statements refer to the sins of believers in the past tense. Ellen White was clear that Satan's accusations, while correct in regard to the past, are correct no longer. She declared,

"But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves to the control of evil. They have put away their sins, and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition, and the Divine Advocate pleads in their behalf."⁵⁷

Never, in either Scripture or the writings of Ellen White, is the substitutional righteousness of Jesus ever depicted as covering present or future sinning (The only exception are sins of ignorance, which are covered by Christ's intercession," but as this intercession ceases when probation closes, such sins will by that time have been revealed and conquered in the lives of believers.)

The following statements make it clear that the notion of a "continuous" covering of forgiveness is impossible:

Every impurity of thought, every lustful passion, separates the soul from God; for Christ can never put His robe of righteousness upon a sinner, to hide his deformity.⁵⁹

Every transgression brings the soul into condemnation, and provokes the divine displeasure.⁶⁰

When man transgresses he is under the condemnation of the law, and it becomes to him a yoke of bondage. Whatever his profession may be he is not justified.⁶¹

Yes indeed, "we are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute."⁶² But according to the same author, Christ is not our Substitute for anything except the past. If the above statements mean anything at all, the believer's present and future must be transformed by the righteousness of sanctification if one is to pass the scrutiny of the final, investigative judgment.

Summary and Conclusion

What Dale Ratzlaff calls the "acid test" of the sanctuary debate is quite correct, despite the unscriptural nature of his conclusions. The definitions we give for sin, justification, sanctification, the basis of salvation, and God's ultimate requirements for His people, exert tremendous logical force on our conclusions concerning such key Adventist doctrines as the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the remnant-church theology, and much more.

If one accepts the evangelical gospel, with its "justification-alone" salvation and belief in the imperfectability of Christian character, the notion of a heavenly tribunal investigating the thoughts and deeds of professed Christians is both needless and noxious. Salvation has been completed at the cross, and all that is necessary for the Christian is to accept this finished reality. No level of sanctified obedience can alter this eternal divine decree, if this premise is accepted.

But if, by contrast, the biblical teaching is accepted that both forgiving and transformative righteousness have saving value (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:5),

that the atonement process involves mediation and confession as well as the slaying of a sacrifice (Leviticus 4, 5),

that a guileless spirit and the forsaking of sin are prerequisites for receiving God's forgiveness (2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 32:1-2; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 6:14-15; Romans 2:13),

and that total victory over sin is indeed possible for those trusting in imparted divine strength (Psalm 119:1-3, 11; Zephaniah 3:13; John 8:11; Romans 6:14; 8:4, 13; 1 Corinthians 15:34; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:27; Phil. 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Peter 2:21-22; 4:1; 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1; 3:2-3; Jude 24; Revelation 3:21; 14:5),

a heavenly investigation of Christian lives to ascertain fitness for eternal life has no biblical problems at all.

Those seeking to blend key features of the evangelical gospel with the classic Adventist sanctuary doctrine must of necessity compromise features of both systems in order to achieve such a synthesis. But neither Scripture, the writings of Ellen White, nor simple logic allow for such harmony.

The consequences of such efforts will continue to be tension, inconsistent assumptions, and a precariously brokered peace. And in the end, the present writer firmly holds, such efforts must fail.

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