



**IS PERFECTION POSSIBLE?**

*versus*

**HOW IS  
PERFECTION POSSIBLE?**

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Dear Reader:

During our lifetime the Seventh Day Adventist Church has enjoyed a phenomenal growth in membership, income, and physical assets. From a human viewpoint the past 50 years have seen great progress in preaching the message although admittedly we are far short of "finishing the work".

With the exception of a few minor dissenters, the last 50 years have witnessed this growth of the Church in an atmosphere of almost complete doctrinal harmony. Nineteen Hundred Fifty marked the first serious challenge to Advent leadership, when two missionaries from Africa wrote a manuscript called "1888 Re-examined". After several years of increasing theological agitation, the book "Questions on Doctrine" made its appearance and clearly gave the impression that new dimensions were being added to our concepts of basic Adventism.

We are now entering a new year with unprecedented differences of opinion within the denomination over doctrinal issues. A small but vocal group within the Church is promoting certain doctrines which they contend are historic Advent doctrines but which are incompatible with current viewpoints of some of the leadership of the Church, while the Defense Literature Committee and other self-appointed writers are busily defending the position of the General Conference.

To date the issues have been difficult to sort out, the personalities often overshadowing the theological controversies. Indeed, many life-long Adventists have read various pronouncements by the opposing sides and see little to get excited about. "Minor differences in technicalities" they say. Yet when one's job in the denominational work, one's sustentation, and yes, even one's membership in the Church depends on just how one may arrange the sequence of closing events, or view the matter of the atonement, it behooves one who is striving for the kingdom to examine carefully his position in regard to the issues at hand.

We are told that neutrality in a religious crisis is offensive to God, and again, if a brother is teaching truth we should stand by his side. The possibility of light coming from sources other than leaders has been adequately substantiated by the Servant of the Lord. We should, therefore, examine one another's ideas prior to discarding them. Originally I began this letter to attempt a summary of some of the differences between "the Awakening" and "main-line" Advent thinking. Some have requested this information in an honest attempt to look at both sides before passing final judgment.

One facet of the controversy is the subject of Christian Perfection. In this first letter I would like the reader to prayerfully consider the two viewpoints on Christian Perfection as presented in two articles. The article by Dr. Edward Heppenstall, Professor of Theology and Christian Philosophy, Andrews University, appeared in the December 1963 Signs of the Times. He is one of the outstanding theologians of the Adventist Church, an able exponent of the position taken by our leading administrators and policy makers. The second article is written by Robert Brinsmead, a layman from Australia, who is regarded as the spokesman of what some are calling an "awakening message" to God's church. Both writers have written with such certainty and vigor that I am led to ask: "Is God using the wise to correct the simple, or is He using the foolish to confound the wise?" One side is learning, age, prestige, and denominational backing. On the other stands a young farmer, challenging the greatest product of our schools. I say these things, not to prejudice you one way or the other, but to whet your appetite to something that is not only a most fascinating contrast, but to that which portends to be the greatest crisis that this denomination has ever faced.

Dr. Heppenstall's basic contention seems to be this: Since man has an evil nature, full of propensities and inclinations to sin, and since as he contends, the gospel does not make provision for the eradication of this evil nature, complete perfection of character is not possible in this life. Mr. Brinsmead's basic contention seems to be this: Since, as he contends, the gospel does make provision for the eradication of all man's sinful propensities and inclinations, complete perfection of character in this life is not just a possibility, but a positive necessity for the remnant church.

For a historical point of reference, I am presenting some quotations from the Spirit of Prophecy, representing very early Advent thinking, one article each from Jones and Waggoner representing the early twentieth century, a few thoughts from C. H. Watson's book The Atoning Work of Christ published in the early 1930's by Review and Herald Publishing Association, and a chapter from M. L. Andreasen's book The Sanctuary Service published also by the Review and Herald Publishing Association in 1947. I apologize for perhaps presenting too much at one time by way of history but we must weigh our present positions in the light of past history.

Trusting the perusal of the following material will be a blessing to each one who reads this letter, I am

Your brother in Christ,

  
Fred Metz

# How Much Does God Expect of Christians?

## How Perfect Is "Perfect"?

### *Is Perfection Possible?*

EDWARD HEPPENSTALL

*Professor of Theology and Christian Philosophy,  
Andrews University*

Many sincere Christians express dissatisfaction over the fact that they continually fall short of perfection. Many admit continual failure in the spiritual life, repeating sins again and again, giving way to habit patterns contrary to the life of Christ. When they read the command of Christ, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), they feel both condemned and discouraged.

In almost all great revivals believers have sought in one way or another to attain to perfection of living. They have longed for it, prayed for it, and worked for it. But the testimony of all great Christians is that they have never attained to it; that the more they strove and the closer they came to Christ, the deeper was their sense of inadequacy and inherent sinfulness. While their lives bore testimony to victory over sin, at the same time they felt a deeper sense of their own need and unworthiness. Ask Peter, James, and John. Ask Martin Luther and John Wesley. Ask the noblest souls that the Christian church has ever seen, the most zealous spirits that mankind has ever produced. With one accord they exclaim with the apostle Paul:

"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." *Philippians 3:12-14.*

All true believers who have come to know the saving power of God testify that the only perfection, the only sinlessness, they have ever seen or known has been that of Jesus Christ, the only perfect and sinless Man; and that Jesus is the whole of their salvation, the whole of their righteousness and perfection. To be a genuine Christian means faith in Christ, fellowship with Christ, faithfulness to Christ, and fruitfulness for Christ. Man has no perfection and no righteousness of and in himself; he must trust wholly and solely in Christ.

One of the hindrances to living the Christian life successfully is failure to understand what the Bible teaches about the nature of sin and perfection. A grave misapprehension lies at the root of much of the false teaching on this subject. In applying the term "perfect" to believers, the Bible never means "sinless." There are at least nine different Hebrew words and six Greek words translated "perfect." Noah is said to have been "*perfect* in his generations." Genesis 6:9. Of Asa, the king of Judah, we read: "But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's

### *How Is Perfection Possible?*

ROBERT D. BRINSMEAD

*Layman, Australia*

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection. . . ." *Hebrews 6:1.* No one can read the New Testament without seeing the plain testimony that moral perfection, perfection of character, is the goal of the Christian. The completeness of Christian character is exemplified in the life of Jesus, the Pattern Man. He did not live and die only that His righteousness might be imputed to the believer, but that it might be imparted to him. Christlikeness is the goal of the Christian. Christ's perfection of character is the mark set before the believer. Listen to the great apostle: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after . . . I press toward the mark. . . ." *Philippians 3:12-14.*

What does this perfection involve? In order to answer this question, we must realize the condition of the natural man. The Bible shows that we are all sinners, not just sinners by deed, but sinners by nature. This involves far more than a possession of "sinful flesh"—the weakened and degenerate faculties of man's being—for the real sinful nature of man lies in his heart and mind. It is controlled by the corrupt principle of selfishness, deeply dyed in the stain of original sin. Man is born with hereditary propensities to disobedience, with the whole bent of his mind biased toward evil. He is "estranged from the womb," and goes astray as soon as he is born. *Psalm 58:3.* To the hereditary tendencies to evil he adds cultivated tendencies to evil. By nature he is an enemy of God. "Alienated and enemies in . . . mind," "by nature the children of wrath" is how the apostle Paul describes us. Jesus shows that this sinful nature is the fountain of all evil, or as he changes the figure, the corrupt tree that inevitably bears evil fruit of every stripe and hue. *Mark 7:21; Matthew 7:17.* Paul identifies this sinful nature of the heart and mind as the "old man," or the first husband to which the would-be Christian finds himself united. *Romans 6:6; 7:1-5.*

Now we are ready to answer the question: What does this perfection involve? It is now very evident that it requires that this sinful nature of man's heart and mind be eradicated and changed. His nature must be made pure and holy. The old sinful disposition, the bias and tendency to evil must be cut away from the character. This corrupt and carnal nature must be destroyed out of him, not just counteracted. Then he must be given new motives, new tastes, new tendencies, a new bias and bent of mind. He must be made a partaker of the divine nature.

Does the gospel make provision for such a change in this life? Does it make provision for the purification and eradication of this great fountain of evil which lies buried in a man's heart?

## Heppenstall, *continued*

heart was *perfect* with the Lord all his days." 1 Kings 15:14. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect* man, and able also to bridle the whole body." James 3:2. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." 1 Corinthians 2:6.

The Bible writers do not say that these men were sinless. The meaning of "perfect" in these instances is that of spiritual maturity, ripeness in spiritual understanding, completeness in response to God. A "perfect" Christian is one whose heart and mind are permanently committed to Christ. Noah, Abraham, and Job were all declared to be "perfect" men. Yet the history of their lives shows that they were far from being sinless.

If one's view of sin is shallow enough, sinless perfection would not be an impossible achievement. It is a defective view of sin that leads to a wrong understanding of perfection. If sin simply means a deliberate, willful doing of what is known to be wrong, then no Christian should commit this kind of sin. But if sin includes also a man's state of mind and heart, man's bias toward sin, sin as an indwelling tendency, then perfection presents a totally different picture.

Some Christians believe that it is possible in this life to reach a point in spiritual development where the sinful nature is completely eradicated and, therefore, no longer operative. The Bible does teach that the genuine Christian life is one of uniform and sustained victory over all known sin. The normal Christian experience should be one of victory and not constant defeat. Says the apostle Paul:

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, . . . and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Romans 6:11-15.

There is one truth that every believer needs to learn who would fully enjoy complete salvation in Christ. It is the need to abide in Christ, to look continually to Christ, to depend wholly on Christ and His righteousness. God's method of salvation is not *eradication* of a sinful nature, but the *counteraction* of it by divine power through the Holy Spirit. Only by the continual counteracting presence of the Holy Spirit is it possible to be victorious over sin and the sinful nature within us.

It is fatal to believe that if only we could become totally surrendered to Christ, the sinful nature would be eradicated. The law of sin and death continues to operate within us. It is something that remains in us as long as we live. Victory over all known sin does not mean sinlessness. It does mean the glorious opportunity in Christ to strive successfully against all sin and overcome it. But this is an experience that must be maintained day by day through fellowship with and surrender to Christ. The Christian life is a

## Brinsmead, *continued*

Purification of the fountain of evil, eradication of the sinful desires and inclinations, death and destruction of the "old man" is the verity of the gospel. The Bible employs the most explicit language and the most forceful illustrations to demonstrate that this is indeed God's purpose for the human soul. The incurable leprosy had to be rent away from the infected garment in order that the garment could be clean. Leviticus 13:56, 57. Moses commanded Israel to circumcise (meaning to cut away, separate, eradicate) the foreskin of their hearts. Deuteronomy 10:16. God promised Israel that He would circumcise their hearts. Deuteronomy 30:6. When the Lord, through Ezekiel promised believers a new heart, He made it clear what was to happen to the sinful nature of the old heart: ". . . I will *take away* the stony heart *out of your flesh*." Ezekiel 36:26. John the Baptist declared that the axe was to be laid at the root of the tree — the motives, inclinations, and propensities of the natural heart. Then in the writings of Paul the reality of this great truth is forcefully stated. To him, the gospel of Christ spelled out the *crucifixion* and death of the "old man." He preached that the old man was to be slain, not maimed. "Knowing this, that our old man is *crucified* with Him, that the body of sin might be *destroyed*, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:6. Paul showed that this "first husband" was not merely to be retired to the back room of the house, but that he was to be sentenced to death and destroyed. Romans 7:1-5. He did not tell believers that Christ would share the house of the heart with the corrupt "old man," just to *counteract* his evil temper and lustful practices. To the Colossians he declared: ". . . you threw off your sinful nature in the circumcision of Christ. . . ." Colossians 2:11, Weymouth. Does this sound like a mere counteraction, or a positive eradication? Christ's way of perfection is not just to throw some purifying substance into the turbid and filthy stream to counteract its poison, but it is to cleanse the fountain so that the streams might be pure.

This work of moral perfection has already been wrought out in Christ, as it is written, ". . . He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Hebrews 10:14. We have no business to ask, "Is perfection possible?" The only question is: Are we willing to have Christ's perfection wrought out in us? Since this depends upon our faith and cooperation with Christ and the great agencies He employs in salvation, this work of moral perfection being wrought out in us is a *process*. Let us now examine this process.

Broadly speaking, there are three great steps, and these three steps are most graphically illustrated by the outer court, the holy place, and the most holy place of the sanctuary service.

The first step is justification by faith. This takes place when the sinner is drawn to behold the love of Christ shining from the cross of Calvary. In its light he sees his heart as sinful and wicked, his whole life evil and depraved. Yet he believes that Christ died for the ungodly, and falling at the foot of the cross, he renounces the sinful life and enmity of his heart toward God. God receives, pardons, and cleanses the believer in Jesus. The perfect righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to him, and through

## Heppenstall, *continued*

lifelong battle. So long as the believer abides in Christ, real holiness and victory are possible. What we have in the everyday life is the counteracting power of God against our sinful tendencies and our sinful natures.

"O wretched man that I am!" cries Paul. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law 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." Romans 7:24, 25; 8:1, 2.

Salvation in Christ alone means that the bias to sin in human nature is too strong and overwhelming to be dealt with apart from moment by moment trusting in Christ and in His power to save. As noted above, the law of sin and death is operating all the time. Deliverance comes by means of a higher law, a higher power—the law of the Spirit, the mighty power of God which counteracts the law of sin in our members. Peter sank in the waves the moment he took his eyes off Christ. He sank because he had the tendency to sink in water. The only thing that kept him walking on top of it was the power of Christ, momentarily exercised, to counteract the gravitational downward pull. So it is in the Christian life.

In this earthly life there is always a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Says Paul again, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Galatians 5:16-18.

The Christian must walk continually in the Spirit. Never in this life will he arrive at the place where he can dispense with the counteracting power of Christ against the sinful tendency in his life. Only through the continual, day-by-day operation of the Holy Spirit is our sinful nature counteracted. The sinful nature is not eradicated until the day of the resurrection, until "this mortal shall have put on immortality." The Christian learns to live in the sphere of the Spirit, not in the sphere of the flesh. The believer is never beyond the reach of temptation or the possibility of sinning. But in Christ he is brought into a position of victory over all known sin. Sin no longer has dominion over him.

The greatest men in the Bible never claimed sinless perfection. They were all painfully aware of the fact that they were sinners throughout their lives. So long as a man is in a state of sin with a sinful nature still present in him, he will confess himself to be a sinner. The Christian always recognizes himself to be a sinner in need of divine grace. Says the apostle John, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us." 1 John 1:8-10.

## Brinsmead, *continued*

this imputed righteousness of Christ he stands before God just as if he had not sinned. Romans 3 and 4. More than this, Christ changes his heart. Through the power of divine love, the old nature is broken up, there is a death to self and sin, a cutting away of sinful propensities, a putting off of the "old man" and his deeds (Romans 6:1-4); and to the soul is imparted new motives, new desires, new tendencies, new tastes. He becomes a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust. 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Peter 1:4. All this was illustrated in the outer court ritual of the daily service—the gate (repentance), the altar (confession and death to the nature of sin), the laver (the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost), and the surrounding white linen of the outer court (the imputed righteousness of Christ which completely surrounds the believer).

The second step is the daily process of sanctification. Conversion begins the process of making the believer holy; sanctification carries it forward in the daily life. The reason that such a process is necessary is that when the believer first accepts Christ, the Saviour does not reveal to him all that He might. Although the prerequisite of justification is that the sinner die to all *known* selfishness and sin, his awareness of the deep depravity of the sinful nature of his heart and mind has only just begun. As he follows on to know the Lord, new glimpses of God's law in the face of Jesus Christ will reveal all too painfully the hidden selfishness and corruption of the human heart. The true Christian experience will therefore be a daily, heartbroken confession of sinfulness and a humbling of soul before God. Deeper and deeper must go the work of *conversion*, deeper and deeper the experience of dying to the sinful nature, deeper and deeper the *uprooting* of the sinful propensities of the life. 1 Corinthians 15:31. There will be no boastful claim of freedom from sin. The Christian will ever be on guard against the wiles of the corrupt heart. He will cultivate humility and self-distrust. Because of his past familiarity with evil, he will be all too painfully aware that the old thought pathways and scars of sin have left their dwarfing effect upon his mind. Jeremiah 17:1; Ezekiel 36:31. This daily process of sanctification is illustrated by the service in the holy place of the sanctuary. The altar of incense points out the need of the constant covering of Christ's imputed righteousness and continual prayer from a broken and contrite heart. The table of shewbread points the believer to the necessity of "eating" the Word of God which will *destroy* the natural, earthly nature, and impart new life to the soul. The seven lamps point the believer to the continual need of the cleansing and keeping power of the Holy Spirit.

The final step is the experience with Christ in the cleansing of the sanctuary, an experience which will bring Christ's perfection fully to the heart and mind of the believer. Some claim that since in the history of the church in past ages there never has been a people on earth without sin, there never will be. But Christ's entrance into the most holy place in 1844 (Daniel 8:14) has opened to the understanding of God's people the crowning work of re-

## Heppenstall, *continued*

We find here the most solemn warning against the doctrine of sinless perfection in this life. The incontrovertible meaning of this passage is that the man is a self-deceiver who claims for himself what the apostle John dared not claim. The truth is not in him. The doctrine of sinless perfection leads to the conclusion that both Christ and the Holy Spirit are unnecessary once this state of eradication of the sinful nature is reached. Wherever the professed Christian claims to have the sinful nature eradicated in his life, there is a corresponding loss of true dependence upon Christ. There is a break in the only saving relationship that man needs for victory. This allows people to sin and call evil good. It discourages those who strive to be like Christ, but fall short of this false idea of perfection.

It is God's will that, having surrendered to Christ at conversion as best he knows, the believer will maintain that attitude; that as fast as he perceives anything further that is contrary to the will of God he will promptly give that up also. God will see to it that throughout our Christian life here on earth there will be deeper insights into the sinfulness and selfishness of our natures. There will be increased dependence, increased repentance, and increased prayer for forgiveness. The believer will never come to the place where he will not pray the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." As a result of this increased insight, we shall continually need an increased "looking unto Jesus the Author and the Finisher of our faith." In proportion to the maturity and completeness of our knowledge will be the completeness of our surrender and victory.

The basic doctrine of the Christian faith is salvation by grace alone. This doctrine represents the final renunciation of either human effort or the human claim to perfection. Christ is our sole perfection, our sole righteousness. In ourselves we are never sinless. But so long as we look to Christ, sin and self cannot prevail.

The pretension to sinless perfection at any time in this earthly life is the root of spiritual pride and self-righteousness. The Christian does not deny that the new life in Christ is capable of a new righteousness, of victory over sin. But he insists that it is not his righteousness, not his victory, but Christ's.

There will be no point in spiritual achievement in this life where one may rest with the certainty that he will sin no more, or that he does not stand before God as a sinner in need of divine grace and power. The Christian knows that there still remains in him a fountain of evil, a depraved nature.

Salvation by grace alone means that absolute perfection and sinlessness cannot be realized here and now. Righteousness by faith means that we look continually and exclusively to Christ, that we look away from ourselves and any hope in ourselves altogether in order to live by Him alone. Genuine salvation directs us at once to Christ, to the only perfect life lived here on earth, and to His redemption through the Cross. Jesus Christ is absolutely central. Man's victory over sin is exclusively the work of God in Christ,

## Brinsmead, *continued*

deeming grace — the perfecting of the saints, the development of the sealed 144,000 who will be the firstfruits of the harvest of the saved of all ages. This does not mean that Christ has kept something back from His people in past ages. No! No! It simply demonstrates that His people in past ages were not prepared or able to comprehend some of the vital issues of the plan of salvation and the great controversy. It is not that Christ wanted to wait 6000 years before He would enter the most holy place, but that His people were not ready to enter the experience of the most holy place until so many of the issues of the great controversy had been demonstrated to them.

The open door of the most holy place (Revelation 3:8) has brought into sharp focus the need of absolute perfection of character for the last generation. The light from the most holy place gives us a concept of God's purpose and requirements for the last generation that never entered into the understanding of His servants in past ages. This message of the third angel makes it evident that we face the close of human probation and a time of trouble wherein the saints must live absolutely without sin, without a Mediator in the sanctuary, in the sight of a holy God. This message calls for translation from this earth without seeing death. It calls for a sealed people who will vindicate God's character before the whole universe in demonstrating that God is not unjust in requiring *perfect* obedience to His law.

Now in order to make the final demonstration of His love, mercy, and grace possible, our Lord has entered the most holy place for the work of cleansing the sanctuary. This work of cleansing includes the people of God as well as the temple in heaven. Leviticus 16:30-33; Malachi 3:1-3. The Israel of God is called to gather at the heavenly sanctuary by faith to join in the solemn work of great affliction of soul and special putting away of all sin. Leviticus 16; Joel 2:15-17; Hebrews 10:14-23. Then the High Priest will "... purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Malachi 3:2, 3. "For on that day shall the priest make *an atonement* for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from *all* your sins before the Lord." Leviticus 16:30.

Through this special work of atonement, the Lord will purge the worshippers so that they will have "no more conscience of sin." See Hebrews 10:1-3, 14-18. In this final atonement He will *blot out* the sins of His people so that they will never more be remembered or come into mind. In this great day of judgment He will "take away his [Satan's] dominion" forever. Acts 3:19; Daniel 7:26. In these "last days" God will pour out His *perfecting* latter rain. Joel 2:23-28. This special outpouring of God's Spirit will *complete* the work of God's grace in the soul, *wholly* transform His saints into the likeness of Christ, and prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. As Satan came to Christ and found nothing in Him, nothing that would respond to temptation, so in the last days, Satan will come to the 144,000 and find nothing in them. Every sinful propensity, every last trace of sin will have been

### Heppenstall, *continued*

the continual control of the life by the Holy Spirit, that through daily union with Christ we participate in Christ's holy life.

The righteousness of Christ that saves us is not the beginning of a new self-righteousness but the perpetual end of it. It is a perpetual living in Christ from a center and source beyond us and our wisdom and power. We live continually out of a risen Christ and never out of ourselves. Victory is through the continual operation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. [END]

### Brinsmead, *continued*

removed from their souls. They will be spiritually perfected — sealed and secure from Satan's devices. Here is this last community of saints designated in prophecy:

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. Revelation 14:4, 5.

Notice that this faultless people are called firstfruits. They are the first community of saints upon this earth to attain, by God's grace, to the full stature of perfect men and women in Christ. They are fully mature, without sin. Their natures are pure and holy. God looks upon them with pleasure. His moral image is fully reflected in them. In them He answers Satan's challenge and quietly says: "... Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. The great controversy is won. The great experiment of salvation from sin is complete. "And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy. ..." Isaiah 4:3. They are called holy. They do not call themselves holy. They are the last ones to parade their own righteousness, as Job of old said, "Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul. ..." Job 9:21. But Jesus pronounces them holy in declaring of His saints, "... he that is holy, let him be holy still." Revelation 22:11.

God has committed to His Seventh-day Adventist people the third angel's message, a knowledge of the book of Revelation which brings to view the special work of the last generation of saints. He has given to them a knowledge of the closing ministry of Christ in the most holy place. This message focuses on a special work of blotting out of sins, the sealing, the latter rain, the development of the firstfruits, the close of probation, the necessity of being ready to live without a Mediator\* through the time of the seven last plagues, the people prepared for translation without seeing death. All this spells out PERFECTION. These great and solemn truths are to cut a mighty cleavage between the remnant and its understanding of Christian perfection and Babylonian Protestantism and its understanding of perfection. God forbid that His people lose sight of these mighty concepts which are intrinsic in the third angel's message! God forbid that we deny the possibility of sinless perfection, like the Protestants who have rejected the third angel's message which shows the way into the most holy place! God forbid that professed Seventh-day Adventists deal with the subject of perfection forgetting that there is such a thing as the blotting out of sins, the latter rain, the sealing of the 144,000, and the book of Revelation! May God save His people from being swept into the typical Protestant camp of righteousness by faith — which is simply "sin and repent until Jesus comes."

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\*Without a Mediator but not without grace. The sinless Christ received grace on earth.

# Key to Abbreviations of E. G. White Book Titles

<i>Key</i>	<i>Book Title</i>
AA	The Acts of the Apostles
1BC	The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1 (2BC, etc.)
CG	Child Guidance
COL	Christ's Object Lessons
DA	The Desire of Ages
Ev	Evangelism
EW	Early Writings
FE	Fundamentals of Christian Education
GC	The Great Controversy
OHC	Our High Calling
PP	Patriarchs and Prophets
3SG	Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3
1SM	Selected Messages, book 1
1T	Testimonies, vol. 1 (2T, etc.)
TM	Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers

## Some Definite Statements From the Spirit of Prophecy

### **IS PERFECTION POSSIBLE IN THIS LIFE?**

"God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us the example of Christ's character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through co-operation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character." AA 531.

### **ARE WE EXHORTED TO STRIVE FOR PERFECTION?**

"Are we striving with all our power to attain to the stature of men and women in Christ? Are we seeking for His fullness, ever pressing toward the mark set before us — the perfection of His character? When the Lord's people reach this mark, they will be sealed in their foreheads. Filled with the Spirit, they will be complete in Christ, and the recording angel will declare, 'It is finished.'" 6BC 1118.

### **ARE WE BORN WITH SINFUL PROPENSITIES?**

"Because of sin his [Adam's] posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience . . ." 5BC 1128.

### **DID CHRIST HAVE ANY SINFUL PROPENSITY?**

". . . not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity." 5BC 1128.

### **DOES THE GOSPEL MAKE PROVISION FOR REMOVAL OF OUR SINFUL PROPENSITIES?**

"We need not retain one sinful propensity. . . . As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good." 7BC 943.

"Without the transforming process which can come alone through divine power, the original propensities to sin are left in the heart in all their strength, to forge new chains, to impose a slavery that can never be broken by human power." Ev. 192.

"But Christ declared of Himself: 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.' John 14:30. . . . This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble." GC 623.

### **WHAT MAKES THIS HIGH STANDARD AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY?**

"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." GC 425.

"I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully." EW 71.

"Enoch's life and character, which were so holy that he was translated to heaven without seeing death, represent what the lives and characters of all must be, if, like Enoch, they are to be translated when Christ shall come. . . . The transformation of character must take place before His coming. Our natures must be pure and holy, . . ." OHC 278.

### **DOES CONVERSION CRUCIFY AND ERADICATE THE EVIL NATURE?**

"The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. . . . The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether." DA 172.

"The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus." DA 391.

"Self — the old disobedient nature — must be crucified, and Christ take up His abode in the heart." Signs of the Times, July 26, 1905.

"The carnal heart must be crucified; for its tendency is to moral corruption, and . . . death." 5T 267.

"Cleanse the fountain, and the streams will be pure. . . . If the heart is right, your words, your dress, your acts, will all be right." 1T 158.

"The grace of God must sweep through the chambers of the mind, the imagination must have heavenly themes for contemplation, and every element of the nature must be purified and vitalized by the Spirit of God." 7BC 940.

"The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies." 6BC 1101.

**DOES THE INITIAL CONVERSION COMPLETE THE WORK OF REMOVING ALL SINFUL PROPENSITIES AND EVERY TRACE OF THE EVIL NATURE?**

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

"A constant battle must be kept up with the selfishness and corruption of the human heart."

"Paul was ever on the watch lest evil propensities should get the better of him. He guarded well his appetites and passions and evil propensities." 6BC 1089.

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

"We must strive daily against outward evil and inward sin, if we would reach perfection of Christian character." Review and Herald, May 30, 1882.

"Hidden in his heart were elements of evil that circumstances would fan into life." DA 673.

"In His providence He brings these souls into different positions and varied circumstances, that they may discover the defects that are concealed from their own knowledge." AA 524.

"The Lord may and does forgive the repenting sinner; but though forgiven, the soul is marred." DA 302.

For other clear statements which show how sin leaves a real record in the mind, see TM 447, OHC 227, FE 195; COL 55, 281; CG 199, 201, 202.

**WILL GOD'S PEOPLE REMAIN PERFECT AND WITHOUT SIN?**

"When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity." 5T 216.

"Reference to our published works will show our belief that the living righteous will receive the seal of God prior to the close of probation. . . ." 1 SM 66.

**WILL THIS MEAN THAT THE SAINTS BECOME SINLESS?**

"Those only who through faith in Christ obey all of God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. They testify to their love of Christ by obeying all His precepts." 6BC 1118.

**WILL THEY CLAIM SINLESSNESS?**

"We cannot say, 'I am sinless,' till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body." Signs of the Times, March 23, 1888.

**DOES THIS CHANGING OF THE VILE BODY EFFECT ANY MORAL CHANGE?**

"When Christ comes, our characters will not be changed. These vile bodies will be changed, and fashioned after the likeness of His glorious body; but there will not be a moral change wrought in us then." Review and Herald, August 7, 1888.

**WHAT ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE DELAYS THE COMING OF CHRIST?**

"When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." COL 69.

"If a brother is teaching error, those who are in responsible positions ought to know it; and if he is teaching truth, they ought to take their stand at his side. We should all know what is being taught among us; for if it is truth, we need to know it. . . . We are all under obligation to God to understand what He sends us." TM 110.

"There is no such thing now as a neutral position. We are all decidedly for the right or decidedly with the wrong." 3T 328.

"Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God." 3T 281.

**WHAT HAS THE CLEANSING OF THE SANCTUARY TO DO WITH FINISHING THE WORK OF GRACE IN THE HUMAN HEART?**

"While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth." GC 425. (See also 5T 575).

"Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing up of the great day of atonement. . . . As the people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart, the command is given, 'Take away the filthy garments' from them, . . . The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. . . . Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices. . . . holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them the seal of the living God." 5T 472-5. (Study the whole context carefully.)

"But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out, and they cannot bring them to remembrance." GC 620. (See also PP 202, 3SG 135.)

**IS IT THE POWER OF THE LATTER RAIN WHICH FINISHES THIS WORK OF GRACE IN THE HEART?**

"The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain, and prepares it for the sickle. . . . The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ. . . . Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection." TM 506.

*"The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders [E. J.] Waggoner and [A. T.] Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." TM p. 91.*

## *The Blotting Out of Sin*

By E. J. WAGGONER

It is part of fallen human nature to make religion consist of forms and ceremonies, formulas and doctrines. Sacerdotalism is not peculiar to certain denominations; it is inherent in fallen human nature, and just to that extent that one loses sight of God, that formalism will manifest itself even in those who are most sincere. There are just as sincere souls among those whose religion consists of forms as among any people on earth. I have seen among Roman Catholics as much devout sincerity as among any people. Our danger lies in thinking that the truth consists of certain statements — of losing sight of the distinction between TRUTH and the STATEMENT of truth. There is just as much difference between these two as there is between the law and the writing out of the law. The real law is living; the writing of it in the book is only a shadow. We are in danger of making a creed, and thinking that that is the truth.

No human words can express the truth of God. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." The fullness of the truth of God cannot be stated in human language; otherwise it could be heard by the ear. It cannot be framed in human thought; otherwise it could enter into the heart of man. Truth can be revealed to man only by the gift of the Spirit of truth.

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but 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." I John 1:5-7.

Just forget the division of this epistle into chapters, with which John had nothing to do. This was a letter, containing but a few sentences, not so long as we ourselves have sometimes written. At the be-

ginning of the letter he makes this statement of what his message is, and a little later he writes about the end of the world: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." This, then, is just the message for the last days, that which will make people stand when the world passes away.

Then the apostle speaks of "the anointing which ye have received of him," so that "ye need not that any man teach you." No man can teach you the truth; the things which God has prepared are revealed only by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. "And even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." So this is the message that will give people boldness at the coming of the Lord, so that they will look up and say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us."

This, then, is the message, that God is light; and if we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, — blots out all iniquity. The proof of whether or not we have the truth is in the effect that that which we have has upon our lives. Does it cleanse us from unrighteousness? If we walk in the light, then the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us. Light is the flowing forth of God's life, which cleanses and blots out sin.

We need to be on our guard against the idea that the blotting out of sin is merely as the passing of a sponge over a slate, or an entry in a ledger, to balance the account. This is not the blotting out of sin. An ignorant man who saw a thermometer for the first time thought to lessen the heat by breaking it. But how much effect did this have upon the weather? — Just as much as the wiping out of the record of his sin has upon the sinner. The tearing of a leaf out of a book, or even the burning of the

book containing the record, does not blot out the sin. The sin is not blotted out by blotting out the account of it, any more than throwing my Bible into the fire abolishes the Word of God. There was a time when all the Bibles that could be found were destroyed; but the Word of God — the truth — remained just the same, because truth is God himself; it is His life.

Truth is implanted in the heavens and earth; it fills the stars, and keeps them in their places; it is that by which the plants grow, and the birds build their nests; it is that by which they know how to find their way across the sea. When Moses broke the tables of stone, the law was just as steadfast as it was before. Just so, though all the record of all our sin, even though written with the finger of God, were erased, the sin would remain, because the sin is in us. Though the record of our sin were graven in the rock, and the rock should be ground to powder, — even this would not blot out our sin.

The blotting out of sin is the erasing of it from the nature, the being of man. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. Our bodies are but the channel, the border, the sand upon the shore, of the river of life. Impressions have been made upon us by

sin. At the seashore, when you see a smooth piece of sand, your first impulse is to make some mark on it, to write some characters upon it. Then the sea comes up, and each wave that passes over it helps to obliterate the impression until it is entirely blotted out. Even so the stream of life from the throne of God will wash away and blot out the impressions of sin upon us.

The erasing of sin is the blotting of it from our natures, so that we shall know it no more. "The worshipers once purged" — actually purged by the blood of Christ — have "no more conscience of sin," because the way of sin is gone from them. Their iniquity may be sought for, but it will not be found. It is forever gone from them, — it is foreign to their new natures, and even though they may be able to recall the fact that they have committed certain sins, they have forgotten the sin itself — they do not think of doing it any more. This is the work of Christ in the true sanctuary, which the Lord pitched, and not man, — the sanctuary not made with hands, but brought into existence by the thought of God.

—Complete article by E. J. Waggoner in *Review and Herald*, September 30, 1902.

# The Atoning Work of Christ

## His Sacrifice and Priestly Ministry

By C. H. WATSON

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Page 174 . . . The purpose of that one sacrifice is to put away sin, not merely to forgive acts of sin, or merely to break the power of sin, or even to replace sin with righteousness, but to put away sin. This means to bring it to a complete end. This is the real purpose of God in His dealings with sin, and this He has purposed in Jesus by the sacrifice of the cross. . . .

Page 175 . . . We should observe that in the closing verses of Hebrews 9 the writer reasons that "as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; but unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Observe also that at His first advent He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and at His second coming He has put sin away from His people forever, and comes without sin unto their eternal salvation. How has He done this? — Most certainly by the great work of atonement which, by the sacrifice of Himself, began at the cross, and was continued by His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary until, in the judgment, sin's reign is ended, its power is broken, and it is put away forever. That work of judgment will be conducted in two phases, the investigative phase, which begins at the house of God; and the executive phase, which gives effect to the judgments passed by the Judge in the investigative phase of His work. . . .

Page 176 . . . The service of the Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary typified the judgment. The investigative judgment as an act of atonement puts away sin forever from those whose sins are blotted from the record in heaven and whose names are retained in the Lamb's book of life. It just as definitely puts away sin as any other act of the atonement, and it does it by the same atoning element effectual in all other acts, namely, the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from all sin.

Of one thing we may be sure, that as certainly as Christ once appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, so surely is the judgment a definite feature of the great atoning work by which sin is put away. It is the natural consequence of the sacrifice of Christ to put away sin. As a work of atonement it is not merely a logical thing, but is, in the nature of things, demanded by the offering of Christ for sin, and is bound to follow that great saving act. In the nature of things also, its results must be irrevocable and final.

Now continuing to follow this reasoning in regard to the service on the Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary, we observe that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews opens the tenth chapter by stating that the whole typical service, being but a shadow of the reality, could not

make man perfect. Had it been otherwise, there would have been no need of a change. Notwithstanding this, however, that part of the service which typified the judgment was never omitted; remembrance of sin was made every year. Verse 3. But the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins. Verse 4. However, that which the typical sacrifices and services could not do, Christ, the reality to which all these pointed, does through the offering of Himself and His priestly ministry. Verses 12-14. Thus it is possible for us to approach God. Verses 19-22. If the sacrifice provided by the offering of Christ is not accepted, there is no other sacrifice that can be made acceptable. Verse 26. There is in that case no way whereby we can stand in the judgment. Verse 27.

Page 177 . . . We should next observe how this is illustrated in verse 28: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses."

Reading this verse, we recall that in preparing for the Day of Atonement in those ancient times, each one was required to afflict his soul. Those who neglected or refused to do this were cut off from among God's people. It is clearly to this that the writer refers, for he continues: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. 10:29-31.

The teaching here clearly is that by the blood of the covenant we are sanctified. If we hold not our sanctification clear through, the judgment will commit us to fiery indignation (verse 27); and we then shall find it "a fearful thing to fall," unsanctified, "into the hands of the living God."

From this we learn that our sanctification by the blood of the covenant is in view of the judgment, and looks to the judgment for its eternal seal.

Now, the cleansing of things in the earthly sanctuary, and of things in heaven, being possible only by blood atonement, and the Scriptures plainly teaching that both must be cleansed, there must still be a cleansing of the things in heaven, as there have been cleansings of the sanctuary on earth. Since those cleansings of the earthly sanctuary were typical of the cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven, and those cleansings were performed in figure by the blood of the atonement, and in figure sin was thereby put away with results that were irrevocable, there must necessarily also be a cleansing of the antitypical sanctuary by a work of atonement, the results of which will be unchangeable, and therefore final.

# The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection

By ALONZO T. JONES

## CHAPTER XV.

THE CLEANSING OF THE SANCTUARY.

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The cleansing of the sanctuary and the finishing of the mystery of God are identical as to time; and are also so closely related as to be practically identical in character and event.

In the "figure of the true" in the sanctuary service made visible, the round of service was completed annually; and the *cleansing of the sanctuary* was the *finishing* of that figurative and annual service. And this cleansing of the sanctuary was the taking out of and away from the sanctuary all "the uncleanness of the children of Israel" "because of their transgressions in all their sins," which, by the ministry of the priesthood in the sanctuary had been brought into the sanctuary during the service of the year.

The finishing of this work of the sanctuary and for the sanctuary was, likewise, the finishing of the work *for the people*. For in that day of the cleansing of the sanctuary, which was the day of atonement, whosoever of the people did not by searching of heart, confession, and putting away of sin, take part in the service of the cleansing of the sanctuary was cut off forever. Thus the cleansing of the sanctuary extended to *the people*, and included *the people*, as truly as it did the sanctuary itself. And whosoever of the people was not included in the cleansing of the sanctuary, and was not *himself cleansed*, equally with the sanctuary, from all iniquity and transgression and sin, was cut off forever. Lev. 16: 15-19, 29-34; 23: 27-32.

And this was all "a figure for the time then present." That sanctuary, sacrifice, priesthood, and ministry was a figure of *the true*, which is the sanctuary, sacrifice, priesthood, and ministry of Christ. And that *cleansing* of the sanctuary was a figure of the true, which is the cleansing of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, from all the uncleanness of the believers in Jesus because of all their transgressions in all their sins. And the *time* of this cleansing of the true is declared in the words of the Wonderful Numberer to be "unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed:" which is the sanctuary of Christ in A. D. 1844.

And, indeed, the sanctuary of which Christ is the High Priest is the only one that could possibly be cleansed in 1844; because it is the only one that there is. The sanctuary that was a figure for the time then present was destroyed by the army of the Romans who came and destroyed that city (Dan. 9:26) and that sanctuary; and even its place was to be desolate "even until the consummation." Therefore the only sanctuary that could possibly be cleansed at the time referred to by the Wonderful Numberer, at the end of the two thousand and three hundred days, was alone the sanctuary of Christ—the sanctuary of which Christ is High Priest and Minister; the sanctuary and the true tabernacle of which Christ, at the right hand of God, is true Priest and Minister; the sanctuary and true tabernacle "which the Lord pitched, and not man."

What this cleansing means is plainly declared in the very scripture which we are now studying, —Dan. 9:24-28. For the angel of God, in telling to Daniel the truth concerning the two thousand and three hundred days, tells also the great object of the Lord in this time as it relates to both the Jews and the Gentiles. The seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, of the limitation upon the Jews and Jerusalem is definitely declared to be "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*." Daniel 9:24.

That is the true purpose of God in the sanctuary and its service in all time: whether in the figure or in the true; whether for Jews or for Gentiles; whether on earth or in heaven. Seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, was the limitation set for the Jews to have this accomplished for and in themselves. To accomplish this, to that people, of all people, Christ Himself came in person to show to them the Way, and to lead them in this Way. But they would not have it. Instead of seeing in Him the gracious One who would finish transgression, and make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness, to every soul, they saw in Him only "Beelzebub the prince of

the devils;" only one instead of whom they would readily choose a murderer; only one who as King they would openly repudiate, and choose a Roman Caesar as their only king; only one whom they counted as fit only to be crucified out of the world. For such a people as that, and in such a people as that, could He finish transgression, and make an end of sins; and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness? —Impossible: impossible by their own persistent rebellion. Instead of His being allowed by them to do such a gracious and wonderful work for them, from the depths of divine pity and sorrow He was compelled to say to them: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matt. 23:37, 38; 21:43.

The nation to whom the kingdom of God was given, upon its rejection by the Jews, was the Gentiles. And that which was to be done for the Jews in the four hundred and ninety years which were limited to them, but which they would not at all allow to be done for them—that is the identical thing to be done for the Gentiles, to whom the kingdom of God is given, in the eighteen hundred and ten years allotted to them. And that work is "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." This can be done alone in the finishing of the mystery of God in the cleansing of the true Christian sanctuary. And this is done in the cleansing of the true sanctuary, only in the finishing of transgression and making an end of sins in the *perfecting* of the believers in Jesus, on the one hand; and on the other hand in the finishing of transgression and making an end of sins in the *destruction of the wicked* and the cleansing of the universe from all taint of sin that has ever been upon it.

The finishing of the mystery of God is the ending of the work of the gospel. And the ending of the work of the gospel is, *first, the taking away of all vestige of sin* and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness—Christ fully formed—with in each believer, God alone manifest in the flesh of each believer in Jesus; and, *secondly*, on the other hand, the work of the gospel being finished means only the destruction of all who then shall not have received the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-10): for it is not the way of the Lord to continue men in life when the only possible use they will make of life is to heap up more misery for themselves.

Again, in the service of the earthly sanctuary, we have seen that when the work of the gospel in the annual course was finished in behalf of those who had taken part in it, then all those who had taken no part in it were cut off. "Which was a figure for the time then present," and which plainly teaches that in the service of the true sanctuary when the work of the gospel shall have been finished for all those who have a part in it, then all those who do not have a part in it will be cut off. Thus, in both respects, the finishing of the mystery of God is the final ending of sin.

The service in the earthly sanctuary shows also that in order for the sanctuary to be cleansed and the course of the gospel service there to be finished, it must first be finished *in the people* who have a part in the service. That is to say: In the sanctuary itself, transgression could not be finished, an end of sins and reconciliation for iniquity could not be made, and everlasting righteousness could not be brought in, until all this had been accomplished *in each person* who had a part in the service of the sanctuary. The sanctuary itself could not be cleansed until each of the worshipers had been cleansed. The sanctuary itself could not be cleansed so long as, *by the confessions of the people and the intercessions of the priests*, there was pouring into the sanctuary a stream of iniquities, transgressions, and sins. The cleansing of the sanctuary, *as to the sanctuary itself*, was the taking out of and away from the sanctuary all the transgressions of the people which, by the service of the priests, had been taken into the sanctuary during the service of the year. And this stream must be stopped at its fountain in the hearts and lives of the worshipers, before the sanctuary itself could possibly be cleansed.

Therefore the very first work in the cleansing of the sanctuary was the cleansing of the people. That which was preliminary and essential to the cleansing of the sanctuary itself, to the finishing of transgression and bringing in everlasting righteousness, there, was the finishing of transgression, and the making an end of sins, and making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness *in the heart and life of each one of the people* themselves. When the stream that flowed into the sanctuary was thus stopped at its source, then, and then alone, could the sanctuary itself be cleansed from the sins and transgressions which, *from the people, by the intercession of the priests*, had flowed into the sanctuary.

And all that "was a figure for the time then present"—a "figure of the true." Therefore by this we are plainly taught that the service of our great High Priest in the cleansing of the true sanctuary must be preceded by the cleansing of each one of the believers the cleansing of each one who has a part in that service of the true

High Priest in the true sanctuary. It is plain that transgression must be finished, an end of sins and reconciliation for all iniquity must be made, and everlasting righteousness must be brought in, in the heart's experience of every believer in Jesus, before the cleansing of the true sanctuary can be accomplished.

And this is the very object of the true priesthood in the true sanctuary. The sacrifices, the priesthood, and the ministry in the sanctuary which was but a figure for the time then present, could not really take away sin, could not make the comers thereunto perfect. Whereas the sacrifice, the priesthood, and the ministry of Christ in the true sanctuary does take away sins forever, does make the comers thereunto *perfect*, does *perfect* "forever them that are sanctified."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE TIMES OF REFRESHING.

And *now*, in this time of the consummation of the hope of all the ages, in this time when the true sanctuary is truly to be cleansed, in this time when the work of the gospel is to be completed and the mystery of God indeed finished—*now* is the time of all the times that ever were in the world, when the believers in Jesus—the blessed objects of His glorious priesthood and wondrous intercessions in the true sanctuary—shall be partakers of the full measure of His heavenly grace; and shall have in their lives transgression finished, and end of sins and reconciliation for iniquity made forevermore, and, in the perfection of truth, everlasting righteousness brought in.

This is precisely and alone the purpose of the priesthood and ministry of Christ in the true sanctuary. Is not that priesthood sufficient? Is not His ministry effectual to accomplish its purpose?—Most assuredly. Only by that means can it be possible for this thing ever to be accomplished. No soul can ever himself finish transgression, or make an end of sins, or make reconciliation for iniquity, or bring in everlasting righteousness, in his own life. For that ever to be done, it must be done *alone* by the priesthood and ministry of Him who gave Himself, and who was given, that He might accomplish this very thing for every soul, and present every soul "holy and unblamable and unreprouvable" in the sight of God.

Every one whose heart is inclined to truth and right desires that this thing shall be done. Only the priesthood and ministry of Christ can do it. Now is the time of the complete and effectual doing of it for evermore. Then let us believe in Him who is doing this, and trust Him in the doing of it, that He does it completely and forevermore.

This is the time, and this is the work, of which it is written, that "there should be delay no

longer." And why *should* there be delay any longer? When the priesthood of our great High Priest is efficient, and when His sacrifice and ministry are all sufficient, in that which is promised and in that for which every believer hopes, then why should there be delay any longer in the finishing of transgression, the making an end of sin, the making of reconciliation for iniquity, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, to each believing soul? Then let us trust Him to do that which He has given Himself to do, and which *He alone* can possibly do. Let us trust Him in this, and receive in its fullness all that belongs to every soul who believes in and implicitly trusts the Apostle and High Priest of our profession—Christ Jesus.

We have seen that the little horn—the man of sin, the mystery of iniquity—has put his own earthly, human, and sinful priesthood, ministry, and sanctuary in the place of the heavenly and holy priesthood, ministry, and sanctuary. In this priesthood and service of the mystery of iniquity, the sinner confesses his sins to the priest, and *goes on sinning*. Indeed, in that priesthood and ministry there is no power to do anything else than to go on sinning; even after they have confessed their sins. But, sad as the question may be, is it not too true that those who are not of the mystery of iniquity, but who really believe in Jesus and in His priesthood and ministry—is it not too true that even these also confess their sins, and *then go on sinning*?

But is this fair to our great High Priest, to His sacrifice, and to His blessed ministry? Is it fair that we should thus put Him, His sacrifice, and His ministry, practically upon a level with that of the "abomination of desolation," and to say that in Him and in His ministry there is no more power or virtue than there is in that of the "mystery of iniquity"? May the Lord forever save His church and people this day, with no more delay, from thus bringing down so low our great High Priest, His awful sacrifice, and His glorious ministry.

Let our trust in our great High Priest be true, and let it be truly implicit. By Protestants there is often remark made of the blind unwisdom of Catholics in their so fully trusting to the priest. And, with respect to any earthly priesthood, the thought is correct. And yet implicit trust of the priest is eternally right: but it must be trust of the *right Priest*. Such trust in a false priesthood is most ruinous; but *the principle* of implicit trust in the Priest is eternally right. And Jesus Christ is the right Priest. Therefore every one who believes in Jesus Christ, in the sacrifice which He has made, in the priesthood and ministry which He exercises in the true sanctuary, must not only confess his sins, but he must then forever implicitly trust that true High Priest in His ministry

in the true sanctuary to *finish* transgression, to *make an end* of sins, to make *reconciliation* for iniquity, and to bring in *everlasting righteousness*, in his heart and life.

Everlasting righteousness, remember. Not a righteousness for to-day and sin to-morrow, and righteousness again and sin again. *That* is not everlasting righteousness. Everlasting righteousness is righteousness that is brought in and stays everlastingly in the life of him who has believed and confessed, and who *still further believes* and *receives* this everlasting righteousness in the place of all sin and all sinning. This alone is everlasting righteousness; this alone is eternal redemption from sin. And this unspeakable blessing is the gracious gift of God by the heavenly ministry which He has established in our behalf in the priesthood and ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

Accordingly, to-day, just now, "while it is called to-day," as never before, the word of God to all people is, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come ["that so there may come seasons of refreshing," R. V.] from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the time of restitution of all things." Acts 3:19-21.

The time of the coming of the Lord and the restitution of all things is indeed at the very doors. And when Jesus comes, it is to take His people unto Himself. It is to present to Himself His glorious church, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," but that is "holy and without blemish." It is to see Himself perfectly reflected in all His saints.

And *before* He comes thus, His people must be in that condition. Before He comes we must have been brought to that state of perfection in the complete image of Jesus. Eph. 4:7, 8, 11-13. And this state of perfection, this developing in each

believer the complete image of Jesus—this is the finishing of the mystery of God, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. This consummation is accomplished in the cleansing of the sanctuary, which is the finishing of the mystery of God, which is the final finishing of transgression, the making of a complete end of sins, the making of reconciliation for iniquity, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the sealing up of the vision and prophecy, and the anointing of the most Holy.

The present time being the time when the coming of Jesus and the restitution of all things is at the very doors; and this final perfecting of the saints having necessarily to precede the coming of the Lord and the restitution of all things; we know by every evidence, that *now* we are in the times of refreshing—the time of the latter rain. And as certainly as that is so, we are also in the time of the utter blotting out of all sins that have ever been against us. And the blotting out of sins is exactly this thing of the cleansing of the sanctuary; it is the finishing of all transgression in our lives; it is the making an end of all sins in our character; it is the bringing in of the very righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, to abide alone everlastingly.

This blotting out of sins must precede the receiving of the refreshing of the latter rain. For it is only upon those who have the blessing of Abraham that the promise of the Spirit comes; and it is only those who are redeemed from sin, upon whom the blessing of Abraham comes. Gal. 3:13, 14. Therefore now as never before, we are to repent and be converted, that our sins may be blotted out, that an utter end shall be made of them forever in our lives, and everlasting righteousness brought in: and this, in order that the fulness of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit shall be ours in this time of the refreshing of the latter rain. And all this must be done in order that the harvest-ripening message of the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world with that power from on high by which the earth shall be lightened with its glory.

# The Sanctuary Service

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### THE LAST GENERATION

The final demonstration of what the gospel can do in and for humanity is still in the future. Christ showed the way. He took a human body, and in that body demonstrated the power of God. Men are to follow His example and prove that what God did in Christ, He can do in every human being who submits to Him. The world is awaiting this demonstration. (Rom. 8:19.) When it has been accomplished, the end will come. God will have fulfilled His plan. He will have shown Himself true and Satan a liar. His government will stand vindicated.

There is much spurious doctrine concerning holiness taught in the world today. On the one hand are those who deny the power of God to save from sin. On the other hand are those who flaunt their sanctity before men and would have us believe that they are without sin. Among the first class are not only unbelievers and skeptics but church members whose vision does not include victory over sin, but who accept a kind of compromise with sin. In the other class are such as have no just conception either of sin or of God's holiness, whose spiritual vision is so impaired that they cannot see their own shortcomings, and hence believe themselves perfect, and whose conception of religion is such that their own understanding of truth and righteousness is superior to that revealed in the Word. It is not easy to decide which is the greater error.

That the Bible inculcates holiness is indisputable. "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." I Thess. 5:23. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12:14. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." I Thess. 4:3. The Greek word *hagios* in its various forms is translated "sanctify," "holy," "holiness," "sanctified," "sanctification." It is the same word which is used for the two apartments of the sanctuary, and means that which is set apart for God. A sanctified person is one who is set apart for God, whose whole life is dedicated to Him.

#### FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING

The plan of salvation must of necessity include not only forgiveness of sin but complete restoration. Salvation *from* sin is more than forgiveness of sin.

Forgiveness presupposes sin and is conditioned upon breaking with it; sanctification is separation from sin and indicates deliverance from its power and victory over it. The first is a means to neutralize the effect of sin; the second is a restoration of power for complete victory.

Sin, like some diseases, leaves man in a deplorable condition—weak, despondent, disheartened. He has little control of his mind, his will fails him, and with the best of intentions he is unable to do what he knows to be right. He feels that there is no hope. He knows that he has himself to blame, and remorse fills his soul. To his bodily ailments is added the torture of conscience. He knows that he has sinned and is to blame. Will no one take pity on him?

Then comes the gospel. The good news is preached to him. Though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. All is forgiven. He is "saved." What a wonderful deliverance it is! His mind is at rest. No longer does his conscience torment him. He has been forgiven. His sins are cast into the depths of the sea. His heart wells with praise to God for His mercy and goodness to him.

As a disabled ship towed to port is safe but not sound, so the man is "saved" but not sound. Repairs need to be made on the ship before it is pronounced seaworthy, and the man needs reconstruction before he is fully restored. This process of restoration is called sanctification, and includes in its finished product body, soul, and spirit. When the work is finished, the man is "holy," completely sanctified, and restored to the image of God. It is for this demonstration of what the gospel can do for a man that the world is looking.

In the Bible both the process and the finished work are spoken of as sanctification. For this reason the "brethren" are spoken of as holy and sanctified, though they have not attained to perfection. (1 Cor. 1:2, 2 Cor. 1:1; Heb. 3:1.) A glance through the Epistles to the Corinthians will soon convince one that the saints there mentioned had their faults. Despite this, they are said to be "sanctified" and "called to be saints." The reason is that complete sanctification is not the work of a day or of a year but of a lifetime. It begins the moment a person is converted, and continues through life. Every victory hastens the process.

There are few Christians who have not gained the mastery over some sin that formerly greatly annoyed them and overcame them. Many a man who has been a slave to the tobacco habit has gained the victory over the habit and rejoices in his victory. Tobacco has ceased to be a temptation. It attracts him no more. He has the victory. On that point he is sanctified. As he has been victorious over one besetment, so he is to become victorious over every sin. When the work is completed, when he has gained the victory over pride, ambition, love of the world — over all evil — he is ready for translation. He has been tried in all points. The evil one has come to him and found nothing. Satan has no more temptations for him. He has overcome them all. He stands without fault before the throne of God. Christ places His seal upon him. He is safe, and he is sound. God has finished His work in him. The demonstration of what God can do with humanity is complete.

Thus it shall be with the last generation of men living on the earth. Through them God's final demonstration of what He can do with humanity will be given. He will take the weakest of the weak, those bearing the sins of their forefathers, and in them show the power of God. They will be subjected to every temptation, but they will not yield. They will demonstrate that it is possible to live without sin—the very demonstration for which the world has been looking and for which God has been preparing. It will become evident to all that the gospel really can save to the uttermost. God is found true in His sayings.

The last year of the conflict brings the final test; but this only proves to angels and to the world that nothing that the evil one can do will shake God's chosen ones. The plagues fall, destruction is on every hand, death stares them in the face, but like Job they hold fast their integrity. Nothing can make them sin. They "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Rev. 14:12.

Throughout the history of the world God has had His faithful ones. They have endured affliction and great tribulation. But even in the midst of Satan's buffetings they have, as the apostle Paul says, through faith "wrought righteousness." "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Heb. 11:27, 38.

And in addition to this galaxy of faithful witnesses, many of whom were martyrs for their faith, God will have in the last days a remnant, a "little flock," in and through whom He will give to the universe a demonstration of His love, His power, His justice, which, if we exempt Christ's godly life on earth and His supreme sacrifice on Calvary, will be the most sweeping and conclusive demonstration of all the ages of what God can do in men.

It is in the last generation of men living on the earth that God's power unto sanctification will stand

fully revealed. The demonstration of that power is God's vindication. It clears Him of any and all charges which Satan has placed against Him. In the last generation God is vindicated and Satan defeated. This may need some further amplification.

#### REBELLION IN HEAVEN

The rebellion which took place in heaven and introduced sin into the universe of God must have been a fearful experience both for God and for the angels. Until this time all had been peace and harmony. Discord was unknown; only love prevailed. Then unholy ambitions stirred the heart of Lucifer. He decided that he wanted to be like the Most High. He would exalt his throne above the stars of God; he would sit "upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north." (Isa. 14:12-14.) This declaration of intent was tantamount to an attempt to depose God and usurp His place. It was a declaration of war. Where God sat, Satan would sit. God accepted the challenge.

We have no direct Biblical statement as to the means used by Satan in winning over to his side a multitude of angels. That he lied is clear. That he was a murderer from the beginning is likewise indisputable. (John 8:44.) As murder has its beginning in hatred, and as this hatred found its fruition in the killing of the Son of God on Calvary, we may believe that Satan's hatred was directed not only against God the Father, but also—and perhaps especially—against God the Son. In his rebellion Satan went further than a mere threat. He actually did set up his throne, saying boastfully, "I am a God, I sit in the seat of God." Eze. 28:2.

When Satan thus established his government in heaven, the issue was clear cut. The angels understood clearly the issue. All must take their stand for or against Satan.

In the case of rebellion there is always some grievance, real or fancied, given as the cause. Some become dissatisfied, and, failing to have matters remedied, they resort to rebellion. Those who sympathize with the rebel cause join it. The others remain loyal to the government, and must, of course, take their chance on its survival.

It apparently came to just such a pass in heaven. The result was war. "There was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels." Rev. 12:7. The outcome could have been foreseen. Satan and his angels "prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Verses 8, 9.

Though Satan was defeated, he was not destroyed. By his act of rebellion he had declared God's government at fault, and by the setting up of his own throne he had made claim to greater wisdom or justice than

God. These claims are inherent in rebellion and in the establishment of another government. God could ill afford not to give Satan an opportunity to demonstrate his theories. To remove every doubt in the minds of the angels—and later of man—God must let Satan go on with his work. And so Satan was permitted to live and set up his government. For the last six thousand years he has been giving the universe a demonstration of what he will do when he has the opportunity.

#### SATAN'S DEMONSTRATION

This demonstration has been permitted to continue until now. And what a demonstration it has been! From the time Cain killed Abel there have been hatred, bloodshed, cruelty, and oppression in the earth. Virtue, goodness, and justice have suffered; vice, vileness, and corruption have triumphed. The just man has been made a prey; God's messengers have been tortured and killed; God's law has been trampled in the dust. When God sent His Son, instead of honoring Him, evil men, under the instigation of Satan, hanged Him on a tree.

Even then God did not destroy Satan. The demonstration must be completed. Only when the last events are taking place, and men are on the point of exterminating one another, will God interfere to save His own. There will then remain no doubt in the mind of anyone that, had he the power, Satan would destroy every vestige of goodness, hurl God from the throne, murder the Son of God, and establish a kingdom of violence founded in self-seeking and cruel ambition.

What Satan has been demonstrating is really his character and the lengths to which selfish ambition will lead. In the beginning he wanted to be like God. He was dissatisfied with his position as the highest of created beings. He wanted to be God. And the demonstration has shown that when he set his mind upon this goal he would stop short of nothing to attain it. Whoever stands in the way must be put out of the way. If it be God Himself, He must be removed.

The demonstration shows that *high* position is not satisfactory to the ambitious individual. He must have the *highest*, and even then he is not satisfied. Often a person in a lowly position is tempted to believe that he would be satisfied if his position were improved. He is at least sure that he would be satisfied if he had the highest position possible. But would he? Lucifer was not. He had the highest position possible. But he was not satisfied. He wanted one still higher. He wanted to be God Himself.

In this respect the contrast between Christ and Satan is pronounced. Satan wanted to be God. He wanted it so much that he was willing to do anything to attain his goal. Christ, on the other hand, did not consider it a thing to be grasped to be like God. He voluntarily humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He was God, and He became man. And that this was not a temporary arrangement only for the purpose of showing His willingness, is evidenced by the fact that He will ever remain man. Satan exalted himself; Christ hum-

bled Himself. Satan wanted to become God; Christ became man. Satan wanted to sit as God on a throne; Christ, as a servant, knelt to wash the disciples' feet. The contrast is complete.

#### LUCIFER

In heaven Lucifer had been one of the covering cherubs. (Eze. 28:14.) This refers to the two angels who in the most holy apartment of the sanctuary stood on the ark, covering the mercy seat. This was doubtless the highest office an angel could occupy, for the ark and the mercy seat were in the immediate presence of God. These angels were the special guardians of the law. They watched over it, as it were. Lucifer was one of them.

Ezekiel 28:12 contains an interesting statement concerning Lucifer: "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." The meaning of the expression, "Thou sealest up the sum," is not entirely clear. The reading is capable of varied interpretations. It seems evident, however, that the intent is to show the high position and exalted privilege that were Satan's before he fell. He was a kind of prime minister, a keeper of the seal.

As in an earthly government a document or law must have the seal attached to it in order to be valid, so in God's government a seal is used. God seems to have apportioned to the angels their work, the same as He has given to man his work. One angel is in charge of the fire. (Rev. 14:18.) Another angel has charge of the waters. (Rev. 16:5.) Another has charge of "the seal of the living God." Rev. 7:2. Although, as stated above, the reading of Ezekiel 28:12 is not entirely clear, some feel justified in translating it, "Thou attacheth the seal to the ordinance." If this position is tenable, if Lucifer were prime minister and keeper of the seal, it gives an additional reason why he should wish to substitute his own mark for that of God's seal when he left his first abode.

That Satan has been very active against the law is evident. If God's law is a transcript of His character, and if this character is the very opposite of Satan's, Satan stands condemned by it. Christ and the law are one. Christ is the law lived out, the law become flesh. For this reason His life constitutes a condemnation. When Satan warred against Christ, he warred also against the law. When he hated the law he also hated Christ. Christ and the law are inseparable.

An interesting statement is found in the fortieth psalm. Christ speaking, says, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Verse 8. Though this is doubtless a poetic expression and should not be pressed too far, it is interesting, nevertheless, as an indication of the exalted position of the law. "Thy law is within My heart." A stab at the law is a stab at the heart of Christ. A stab at the heart of Christ is a stab at the law. At the cross Satan so intended. But God meant the outcome to be otherwise. The death of Christ was a tribute to the law. It immeasurably magnified the law and made it honorable. It gave men a new vision of its sacredness and worth.

If God would let His Son die; if Christ would willingly give Himself rather than abrogate the law; if it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one jot or tittle of the law to fail, how very sacred and honorable the law must be!

When Christ died on the cross He had demonstrated in His life the possibility of keeping the law. Satan had not succeeded in leading Christ into sin. Possibly he did not expect to be able to do that. But if he could have induced Christ to use His divine power to save Himself, He would have accomplished much. Had Christ done so, Satan could have claimed that this invalidated the demonstration God intended to make, namely, that it was possible for men to keep the law. As it was, Satan was defeated. But till the very last he continued the same tactics. Judas hoped Christ would free Himself, thus using His divine power to save Himself. On the cross Christ was taunted: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." But Christ did not falter. He could have saved Himself, but He did not. Satan was baffled. He could not understand. But he knew that when Christ died without his having been able to make Him sin, his own doom was sealed. In His death Christ was victor.

But Satan did not give up. He had failed in his conflict with Christ, but he might yet succeed with men. So he went to "make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Rev. 12:17. If he could overcome them he might not be defeated.

#### GOD'S DEMONSTRATION

The demonstration which God intends to make with the last generation on earth means much, both to the people and to God. Can God's law really be kept? That is a vital question. Many deny that it can be done; others glibly say it can. When the whole question of commandment keeping is considered, the problem assumes large proportions. God's law is exceedingly broad; it takes cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It judges motives as well as acts, thoughts as well as words. Commandment keeping means entire sanctification, a holy life, unswerving allegiance to right, entire separation from sin, and victory over it. Well may mortal man cry out, Who is sufficient for these things!

Yet, to produce a people that will keep the law is the task which God has set Himself and which He expects to accomplish. When the statement and challenge are issued by Satan: "No one can keep the law. It is impossible. If there be any that can do it or that have done it, show them to me. Where are they that keep the commandments?" God will quietly answer, Here they are. "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Rev. 14:12.

Let us say it reverently: God must meet Satan's challenge. It is not God's plan, or a part of His purpose, to subject men to tests that only a chosen few can survive. In the Garden of Eden, God subjected Adam and Eve to the lightest test conceivable.

No one can say that our first parents fell because the test was too hard for them. If they fell, it was not because the test was hard or because they had not been provided with the strength to resist. The temptation was not held before them constantly. Satan was not permitted to molest them everywhere. He had access to them at only one place, namely, at the tree of knowledge. That place they knew. They could stay away from it if they wanted to. Satan could not follow them everywhere. If they went where Satan was, it was because they wanted to. But even if they went there to examine the tree, they need not have remained there. They could walk away. And even if Satan offered them the fruit, they need not take it. But they took it and ate. And they ate it because they wanted to, not because they had to. They deliberately transgressed. There was no excuse. God could not have devised an easier test.

When God commands men to keep His law, it does not serve the purpose He has in mind to have only a few men keep it, just enough to show it can be done. It is not in line with God's character to pick outstanding men of strong purpose and superb training, and demonstrate through them what He can do. It is much more in harmony with His plan to make His requirements such that even the weakest need not fail, so that none can ever say that God demands that which can be done by only a few. It is for this reason that God has reserved His greatest demonstration for the last generation. This generation bears the results of accumulated sins. If any are weak, they are. If any suffer from inherited tendencies, they do. If any have an excuse because of weakness of any kind, they have. If, therefore, these can keep the commandments, there is no excuse for anyone in any other generation not doing so also.

But this is not enough. God intends in His demonstration to show, not merely that ordinary men of the last generation can successfully pass a test such as He gave to Adam and Eve, but that they can survive a test much harder than such as falls to the lot of common men. It will be a test comparable to the one Job passed through, and approaching that which the Master underwent. It will test them to the utmost.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James 5:11. Job passed through some experiences that will be repeated in the lives of the chosen ones of the last generation. It may be well to consider them.

#### JOB'S TEST

Job was a good man. God trusted him. Day by day he offered sacrifices for his sons. "It may be that my sons have sinned," he said. Job. 1:5. He was prosperous and enjoyed the blessing of God.

Then came "a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." Verse 6. A conversation is recorded between the Lord and Satan that concerned Job. The

Lord says that Job is a good man, which Satan does not deny, but urges that Job is God-fearing merely because it pays him to be so. He states that if God will take away His mercies, Job will curse God. The statement is in the form of a challenge, and God accepts it. Satan is given permission to take away Job's property and otherwise to cause him sorrow, but not to touch Job himself, Satan immediately proceeds to do what he is permitted to do. Job's property is all swept away, and his children are killed.

When this happened, "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Job 1:20-22.

Satan is defeated, but he makes another attempt. At the next meeting with the Lord, without admitting defeat, he claims that he had not been permitted to touch Job himself. If he had, he claims, Job would have sinned. The statement is again a challenge, and God accepts it. Satan is given permission to torment Job but not to take his life. He immediately departs on his mission.

All that the evil one can do, Satan does to Job. But Job stands fast. His wife counsels him to give up, but he does not waver. Under intense physical pain and mental anguish he remains steadfast. Again it is recorded that Job stood the test. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Job 2:10. Satan is defeated and does not appear any more in the book.

In the succeeding chapters in the book of Job we are given a little insight into the struggle going on in Job's mind. He is greatly perplexed. Why has all this calamity come upon Him? He is not conscious of any sin. Why, then, should God afflict him? He, of course, does not know of the challenge of Satan. Neither does he know that God is depending upon him in the crisis through which he is passing. All he knows is that out of a clear sky disaster has come upon him till he is left without family or property, and with a loathsome disease that nearly overwhelms him. He does not understand, but he retains his integrity and faith in God. This God knew he would do. This Satan said he would not do. In the challenge God won.

Humanly speaking, Job had not deserved the punishment that came to him. God Himself says it was without cause. "Thou movedst Me against him, to destroy him without cause." Job 2:3. The whole experiment can therefore be justified only by considering it as a specific test devised for a specific purpose. God wanted to silence Satan's charge that Job served God only for profit. He wanted to demonstrate that there was at least one man whom Satan could not control. Job suffered as a result of it, but there seemed to be no other way. A reward was afterward given him.

Job's case is recorded for a purpose. While we grant its historicity, we believe that it has also a wider

meaning. God's people in the last days will pass through an experience similar to Job's. They will be tested as he was; they will have every earthly stay removed; Satan will be given permission to torment them. In addition to this the Spirit of God will be withdrawn from the earth, and the protection of earthly governments removed. God's people will be left alone to battle with the powers of darkness. They will be perplexed, as was Job. But they, as did he, will hold fast their integrity.

In the last generation God will stand vindicated. In the remnant Satan will meet his defeat. The charge that the law cannot be kept will be met and fully refuted. God will produce not only one or two who keep His commandments, but a whole group, spoken of as the 144,000. They will reflect the image of God fully. They will have disproved Satan's accusation against the government of heaven.

#### GOD'S GOVERNMENT ON TRIAL

A serious situation arose in heaven when Satan made his charges against God. The accusations in reality constituted an impeachment. Many of the angels believed the charges. They ranged themselves on the side of the accuser. One third of the angels—and that must have been millions—faced God with their leader, the highest among the angels, Lucifer. It was no small crisis. It threatened the very existence of God's government. How should God deal with it?

The only way the matter could be satisfactorily settled so that no question would ever arise again, was for God to submit His case to the ordinary rules of evidence. Was, or was not, God's government just? God said it was; Satan said it was not. God could have destroyed Satan. That would not prove His cause just but would, in fact, count against Him. There was no other way than for each side to present its evidence, produce its witnesses, and rest its case on the weight of testimony adduced.

The picture, then, is that of a court scene. God's government is at stake. Satan is the accuser; God Himself is the accused and is on trial. He has been charged with injustice, with requiring His creatures to do that which they cannot do, and yet punishing them for not doing it. The law is the specific point of attack, but the law being merely a transcript of God's character, it is God and His character that are the points at issue.

In order for God to sustain His contention, it is necessary for Him to show that He has not been arbitrary, that the law is not harsh and cruel in its requirement, but contrariwise, that it is holy, just, and good, and that men can keep it. It is necessary for God to produce at least one man who has kept the law. In the absence of such a man, God loses and Satan wins. The outcome therefore hinges on the production of one or more who keep the commandments of God. On this God has staked His government.

While it is true that many from time to time have dedicated their lives to God and lived without sin for

periods of time, Satan claims that these are special cases, as was Job's case, and do not come under the ordinary rules. He demands a clear-cut case where there can be no doubt, and where God has not interfered. Can such an instance be produced?

#### THE LAST GENERATION

God is ready for the challenge. He has bided His time. The supreme exhibition has been reserved until the final contest. Out of the last generation God will select His chosen ones. Not the strong or the mighty, not the honored or the rich, not the wise or the learned, but common, ordinary people will God take, and through and by them make His demonstration. Satan has claimed that those who in the past have served God have done so from mercenary motives, that God has pampered them, and that he, Satan, has not had free access to them. If he were given full permission to press his case, they also would be won over. But he charges that God is afraid to let him do this. "Give me a fair chance," Satan says, "and I will win out."

And so, to silence forever Satan's charges; to make it evident that His people are serving Him from motives of loyalty and right without reference to reward; to clear His own name and character of the charges of injustice and arbitrariness; and to show to angels and men that His law can be kept by the weakest of men under the most discouraging and most untoward circumstances, God permits Satan in the last generation to try His people to the utmost. They will be threatened, tortured, persecuted. They will stand face to face with death in the issuance of the decree to worship the beast and his image. (Rev. 13:15.) But they will not yield. They are willing to die rather than to sin.

God removes His Spirit from the earth. Satan will have a greater measure of control than he has ever had before. True, he may not kill God's people, but that seems to be the only limitation. And he uses every permission he has. He knows what is at stake. It is now or never.

God, to make the demonstration complete, does one more thing. He hides Himself. The sanctuary in heaven is closed. The saints cry to God day and night for deliverance, but He appears not to hear. God's chosen ones are passing through Gethsemane. They are having a little taste of Christ's experience those three hours on the cross. Seemingly they must fight their battles alone. They must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor.

But though Christ has finished His intercession, the saints are still the object of God's love and care. Holy angels watch over them. God provides them shelter from their enemies; He provides them with food, shields them from destruction, and supplies grace and power for holy living. (See Psalms 91.) Yet they are still in the world, still tempted, afflicted, tormented.

Will they stand the test? To human eyes it seems impossible. If only God would come to their rescue, all would be well. They are determined to resist the evil one. If need be they will die, but they will not sin. Satan has no power—and never has had—to make any man sin. He can tempt, he can seduce, he can threaten; but he cannot compel. And now God demonstrates through the weakest of the weak that there is no excuse, and never has been any, for sinning. If men in the last generation can successfully repel Satan's attack; if they can do this with all the odds against them and the sanctuary closed, what excuse is there for men's ever sinning?

#### THE 144,000

In the last generation God gives the final demonstration that men can keep the law of God and that they can live without sinning. God leaves nothing undone to make the demonstration complete. The only limitation put upon Satan is that he may not kill the saints of God. He may tempt them, he may harass and threaten them; and he does his best. But he fails. He cannot make them sin. They stand the test, and God puts His seal upon them.

Through the last generation of saints God stands finally vindicated. Through them He defeats Satan and wins His case. They form a vital part of the plan of God. They go through terrific struggles; they battle with unseen powers in high places. But they have put their trust in the Most High, and they will not be ashamed. They have suffered hunger and thirst, but now "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7:16, 17.

They "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Rev. 14:4. When at last the doors of the temple shall swing open, a voice will sound forth: "Only the 144,000 enter this place."—*Early Writings*, p. 19. By faith they have followed the Lamb here. They have gone with Him into the holy place; they have followed Him into the most holy. And in the hereafter only those who have thus followed Him here will follow Him there. They will be kings and priests. They will follow Him into the most holy, where only the High Priest can ever enter. They will stand in the unveiled presence of God. They shall follow Him "whithersoever He goeth." They will not only be "before the throne of God" and "serve Him day and night in His temple," but they will *sit* with Him in His throne, even as He also overcame, and is set down with His Father in His throne. (Rev. 7:15; 3:21.)

The matter of greatest importance in the universe is not the salvation of men, important as that may seem. The most important thing is the clearing of God's name from the false accusations made by Satan. The controversy is drawing to a close. God is preparing His people for the last great conflict. Satan is also getting ready. The issue is before us and will be

decided in the lives of God's people. God is depending upon us as He did upon Job. Is His confidence well placed?

It is a wonderful privilege vouchsafed this people to help clear God's name by our testimony. It is wonderful that we are permitted to testify for Him. It must never be forgotten, however, that this testimony is a testimony of life, not merely of words. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." John 1:4. "The life was the light." It was so with Christ, it must also be so with us. Our life should be a light, as His life was. To give people the light is more than to hand them a tract. Our *life* is the light. As we *live*, we give light to others. Without life, without our living the light, our words abide alone. But as our life becomes light, our words become effective. It is our life that must testify for God.

May the church of God appreciate the exalted privilege given her! "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord." Isa. 43:10. There must be "no strange god among you: *therefore* ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God." Verse 12. May we be witnesses indeed, testifying what God has done for us!

All this is closely connected with the work of the Day of Atonement. On that day the people of Israel, having confessed their sins, were completely cleansed.

They had already been forgiven; now sin was separated from them. They were holy and without blame. The camp of Israel was clean.

We are now living in the great antitypical day of the cleansing of the sanctuary. Every sin must be confessed and by faith be sent beforehand to judgment. As the high priest enters into the most holy, so God's people now are to stand face to face with God. They must know that every sin is confessed, that no stain of evil remains. The cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven is dependent upon the cleansing of God's people on earth. How important, then, that God's people be holy and without blame! In them every sin must be burned out, so that they will be able to stand in the sight of a holy God and live with the devouring fire. "Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge My might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaking uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Isa. 33:13-16.