

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

The Investigative Judgment

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Having previously set forth what Seventh-day Adventists teach about the investigative judgment and about Satan as the antitype of the Old Testament scapegoat, I should like in this appendix to subject these doctrines to a Scriptural evaluation. The very first thing we should remember about these teachings is that they arose as the result of a mistake. It was William Miller's erroneous interpretation of Daniel 8:14, it will be recalled, which was the occasion for the formation of these theological constructions. Miller understood the "cleansing of the sanctuary" of Daniel 8:14 to mean Christ's return to earth; he further understood the 2300 evenings and mornings mentioned in this passage as standing for 2300 years; and, using the year 457 B.C. as the starting date for the 2300 years, he predicted that Christ would return from heaven some time between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. Later Miller, following the leadership of Samuel Snow, moved the date ahead to October 22, 1844.¹

When Christ did not return to earth on this date, Miller himself was convinced that he had been mistaken. On the following morning, however, Hiram Edson had a vision of Christ entering the holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary. On the basis of this vision he now began to reinterpret Miller's prediction as having had reference not to Christ's return to earth, but to Christ's entrance into the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary in order to cleanse it. This reinterpretation was adopted by Adventist leaders and became the basis for Seventh-day Adventist teachings on the investigative judgment and on Satan as the antitype of the scapegoat.² Mrs. White had a vision confirming this reinterpretation in February of 1845, and Mr. Crosier expanded this reinterpretation into an article in an Adventist periodical in February of 1846—and thus the doctrine was firmly entrenched as an irrevocable part of Seventh-day Adventist theology.

No Bible expositor, however, had ever found this teaching in the Bible previous to this time. No individual or group outside the Seventh-day Adventists has ever taught it since that time. As we shall see, there is no Biblical basis for this doctrine. The conclusion is inescapable that Seventh-day Adventist teaching on the investigative judgment was simply a way out of an embarrassing predicament. Instead of admitting, as Miller himself did, that a very serious error had been made in Scripture interpretation, these Adventist

¹ Hoekema, A.A. (1963). *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism* (pp. 89–92). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

² *Ibid*, pp. 92–94.

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leaders clung frantically to the date Miller had set, and gave to that date a meaning which he himself never acknowledged. The doctrine of the investigative judgment, therefore, one of the key doctrines of Seventh-day Adventism, was a doctrine built on a mistake!

Closer scrutiny of the eighth chapter of Daniel's prophecy will reveal that verse 14 says nothing about either the return of Christ from heaven or His entrance into the holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary. The chapter itself indicates that the two-horned ram which Daniel saw in his vision (v. 3) stood for the kings of Media and Persia (v. 20). The he-goat (v. 5) is interpreted by the angel as standing for the king of Greece (v. 21). Obviously, then, the casting down of the ram by the he-goat (v. 7) stands for the defeat of the Medo-Persian empire by Greece. It is presumed by most interpreters that the coming up of four horns on the head of the he-goat instead of the one great horn (v. 8) stands for the division of Alexander the Great's empire into four kingdoms after the latter's death (see v. 22).

What, now, is to be understood by the "little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land" (v. 9)? Verse 23 gives us the answer: this little horn stands for a person, "a king of fierce countenance." In the light of what verses 11 and 12 tell us, we may be reasonably sure that this person was Antiochus Epiphanes, ruler of Syria from 175–164 B.C., who did cast down the Jewish sanctuary (v. 11) by profaning it, and who did take away the continual burnt offering (v. 11) by stopping all Jewish sacrifices in the temple and substituting pagan sacrifices for them. Daniel now hears one holy one asking another, "How long shall be the vision concerning the continual burnt-offering, and the transgression that maketh desolate, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden underfoot?"³

The answer to this question is given in verse 14: "And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (ASV). It has been noted previously that the Hebrew word translated *cleansed* is actually the Niphal form of the verb *tsadaq*, which in the Qal means *to be right or righteous*; in the Niphal the verb therefore means *to be put right*.⁴ It is unfortunate that the word came to be translated *be cleansed*, since the Hebrew verb usually rendered *cleansed* is not used here at all.⁵ The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon suggests that this part

³ Verse 13, in the ASV. The expression "to be trodden underfoot" is a translation of a Hebrew noun, *mirmas*, and means literally, "for trampling." The reader's attention is called to this word, since it is obvious that the sanctuary here spoken of is not a heavenly one. A heavenly sanctuary cannot be trampled underfoot.

ASV American Standard Version

⁴ Hoekema, p. 91, n. 6.

⁵ *Taheer* in the Pi'el. It is significant that it is this verb which is used in Lev. 16—the chapter which describes the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement. It is used once (v. 19) of the cleansing of the altar

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of the verse be translated: “the holy place shall be put right” (p. 842); the RSV, as previously observed, renders: “then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.” The thought of this verse is not cleansing from sin, but restoration to its right and proper condition or use.

The part of verse 14 which gives the length of time designated reads literally as follows: “Until evening morning two thousand and three hundreds.” The words for evening and morning are in the singular, and there is no connective between them. The previous reference to the continual burnt offering—offered every morning and every evening—implies that these words in verse 14 have reference to these two daily sacrifices. The fact that these offerings had been stopped, and that the question was asked, “How long?” implies that the answer will be in terms of the number of these daily burnt offerings. Thus the obvious and natural interpretation of the words “until evening morning two thousand and three hundreds” is: until 2300 morning and evening burnt offerings. Since two of these occurred every day, this means 1150 days.

This number of days, according to Jewish reckoning, would be equivalent to three years and some 50 or 60 days. By comparing 1 Maccabees 1:54 and 59 with 4:52–53, we learn that a period of exactly three years elapsed between the offering of the first heathen sacrifice upon the altar of burnt offering in the temple court and the resumption of regular sacrifices on this altar after the temple had been won back from Antiochus Epiphanes by Judas Maccabeus (from Dec. 25, 168 B.C. to Dec. 25, 165 B.C.). However, the order to stop offering the regular morning and evening sacrifices on this altar had been given some time prior to Dec. 25, 168 B.C.; thus we can account for the additional 50 or 60 days.⁶ In the light of what was said above about the meaning of the verb here used, does it not seem natural and obvious that Daniel 8:14 predicts the restoration of the earthly sanctuary to its rightful and proper use after a period of desecration by a heathen king? The 2300 evenings and mornings, then, picture the period of a little more than three years during which this desecration occurred, and the “putting right” of the sanctuary refers to the end of this period of desecration, on the 25th day of December, 165 B.C.⁷

which is before Jehovah (probably the altar of burnt-offering), and once (v. 30) of the cleansing of the people from their sins. Certainly if Daniel meant to refer to the kind of cleansing which was done on the Day of Atonement, he would have used *taheer* instead of *tsadaq*.

RSV Revised Standard Version

⁶ G. Ch. Aalders, *Het Boek Daniel* (in *Korte Verklaring* series; 2nd printing; Kampen: Kok, 1951), pp. 178–79.

⁷ This interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is the one advanced by Aalders, the late Professor of Old Testament at the Free University in Amsterdam, in the volume mentioned above. See also J. K. Van Baalen, *Chaos of Cults* (4th ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 233, n. 9. C. F. Keil, in his *Commentary on Daniel* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1891) and Edward J. Young in his *Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) are both of the opinion that the 2300 evenings and mornings must be interpreted, not as 1150 days, but as

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The doctrine of the investigative judgment, as taught by Seventh-day Adventists, ought therefore to be rejected by all Christians, and by the Adventists themselves, as unscriptural and untrue. For this assertion I advance the following reasons:

(1) The doctrine of the investigative judgment *is based on a mistaken interpretation of Daniel 8:14*. It has been shown above that when Seventh-day Adventists find in Daniel 8:14 a prediction of a cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary by Christ, which cleansing was to begin on October 22, 1844, they are reading something into this passage which simply is not there.

(2) This doctrine *is based on a mistaken understanding of the Old Testament sacrificial system*. This misunderstanding reveals itself, first, in the supposition that the sprinkling of the blood of the daily or occasional sacrifices by the Old Testament priests polluted the sanctuary, whereas the sprinkling of the blood of the goat slain on the Day of Atonement cleansed the sanctuary. We have noted above that Crosier advanced this conception in his *Day-Star* article, and that L. E. Froom, in his own elaboration of Crosier's ideas, likewise accepted it (above, p. 93). We find this same conception in *Questions on Doctrine* (pp. 431–32). Why, however, should the sprinkling of sacrificial blood in one instance pollute the sanctuary, and in the other instance cleanse it? Why should such sprinkling of blood mean, in one instance, that the sin involved was now recorded in the sanctuary, and, in the other instance, that the sin was removed from the sanctuary?

We may press this point a bit further. If the blood of sin offerings, for instance, when sprinkled upon the altar of burnt offering, served to transfer the offerer's guilt to the altar and thus to pollute the altar, why should not the blood of the slain goat on the Day of Atonement, when sprinkled upon the mercy seat, serve to transfer the guilt of the people to the mercy seat and thus to pollute the mercy seat? On the other hand, if the blood sprinkled upon the mercy seat served to remove guilt, why should not blood sprinkled upon the altar of burnt offering at the time of every ordinary sin-offering serve to remove guilt?

When Seventh-day Adventists say, "When the blood was sprinkled, the sin was recorded in the sanctuary," adding that it was only on the Day of Atonement that the accumulated record of the sins of the year was removed from the sanctuary,⁸ we must reply that they

2300 days. Yet both understand the "cleansing" or "putting right" of the sanctuary as referring to its restoration to proper use after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. Both therefore agree basically with the interpretation advanced above (though differing on the time period involved), and disavow the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of this passage.

Questions on Doctrine. Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine. An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief. (1957). Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald.

⁸ *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 432.

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have completely failed to grasp the significance of the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood upon the altar. The Bible itself makes quite clear what the significance of this sprinkling was. After warning the people against eating blood, the Lord through Moses gave the reason for this prohibition: “For the life (*nephesh*) of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement (*kapper*) for your souls (*naphshootherekhem*); for it is the blood that maketh atonement (*yekappeer*) by reason of the life (*nephesh*)” (Lev. 17:11). The verb *kipper* in the Pi’el means to cover over, or to make propitiation. The verse just quoted states clearly that the blood upon the altar made propitiation for the souls of the offerers; there is no indication whatever that this happened only on the Day of Atonement. If this blood when applied to the altar made propitiation for the offerer and covered his sin, on what ground can Adventists claim that the application of blood to the altar meant that the sin of the offerer was now recorded in the sanctuary?

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Note how Patrick Fairbairn, whose two-volume *Typology of Scripture* is one of the classic works on this subject, explains the symbolism of the sprinkling of blood upon the altar:

Having with his own hands executed the deserved penalty on the victim, the offerer gave the blood to the priest, as God’s representative. But that blood had already paid, in death, the penalty of sin, and was no longer laden with guilt and pollution. The justice of God was (symbolically) satisfied concerning it; and by the hands of His own representative He could with perfect consistence receive it as a pure and spotless thing, the very image of His own holiness, upon His table or altar. In being received there, however, it still represented the blood or soul of the offerer, who thus saw himself, through the action with the blood of his victim, re-established in communion with God, and solemnly recognized as received back to the divine favor and fellowship.⁹

One might still ask, however: If the daily sacrifices served to propitiate for sin so that no record of these sins was left in the sanctuary, why was a Day of Atonement necessary? What Seventh-day Adventists teach on this point will be evident from the following quotation:

On the Day of Atonement, when the blood of the goat was sprinkled upon all the furniture of the sanctuary as well as upon the altar of burnt offering, the

⁹ II, 275. The quotation is from the 10th ed. (New York: Tibbals, n.d.). Cf. Louis Berkhof, *Biblical Archaeology* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Smither, 1928), p. 146; and G. F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. George E. Day (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), pp. 276–281. The last author adds the thought that the sprinkling of the blood represents symbolically the self-surrender of the offerer to God. See also J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), pp. 1120–22.

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accumulated record of the sins of the year were [should be: was] removed.... The sins of the Israelites, recorded in the sanctuary by the shed blood of the sacrificial victims, were removed and totally disposed of on the Day of Atonement.¹⁰

In reply, it may be pointed out that, according to Leviticus 16:33, the high priest on the Day of Atonement had to make atonement (*kipper*) for the holy sanctuary, the tent of meeting, the altar (of burnt offering), the priests, and “all the people of the assembly.” If, now, as Seventh-day Adventists claim, the purpose of these ceremonies was to remove accumulated sins which had been recorded, they would have to grant that these accumulated sins had been recorded upon the people as well as in the sanctuary. But the whole thrust of their argumentation is that by the daily sacrifices the guilt of these sins was taken from the people and transferred to the sanctuary.¹¹ It should also be noted that both in verse 16 and verse 33 of this chapter the Hebrew word used to describe the atonement that was made for the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement is *kipper*. In this chapter, according to the Adventists, *kipper* means the complete removal of sins from the sanctuary. But why, then, does the word not have the same meaning in Leviticus 17:11, quoted above, where it refers to every application of blood upon the altar?

If, however, the daily sacrifices did serve to propitiate for sin (on the basis, of course, of the sacrifice of Christ which was to come), why were the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement necessary? To this question a twofold answer may be given: (i) This general expiation for sin would serve to cover those sins, both of the people and of the priests, for which offerings had not been made during the previous year;¹² and (ii) the entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies was a prediction of the future removal of the evil which separated the people from God, and an anticipation of the work of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who was to enter in “once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12).¹³ We conclude, therefore, that the contention of Seventh-day Adventists, that the daily offerings served to transfer sins to the sanctuary, and that the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement served to remove these sins and thus to cleanse the sanctuary, is not in harmony with the facts. Since this contention is basic to their

¹⁰ *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 432.

¹¹ “The individual sinner was forgiven and thus freed from his sin, but in the bloodstains of the sanctuary he could perceive in type a record of the misdeeds that he would fain see blotted out and removed forever” (*Questions on Doctrine*, p. 432).

¹² C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: Clark, 1891), II, 395.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 402. We could add that this communal sin-offering bore the same general relation to the individual offerings of the people that a congregational confession of sin on Sunday morning bears to the individual confessions of the members. Neither the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement nor the public confession of sin implies that the sins confessed individually were not previously forgiven and removed from God’s record.

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construction of the investigative judgment, we observe at this point that one of the pillars on which this doctrine rests has been overthrown.

A second misunderstanding of the Old Testament sacrificial system found among Seventh-day Adventists is the view that the morning and evening sacrifices of the continual burnt-offering represented atonement *provided*, whereas the individual sacrifices brought by the worshipers represented atonement *appropriated*.¹⁴ For the continual burnt-offering, the so-called *tamidh*, was not primarily an expiatory sacrifice; rather, in common with all burnt-offerings, it was a sacrifice which typified the consecration of the worshiper to God. Thus this offering was better calculated to symbolize atonement *appropriated* than atonement *provided*. On the other hand, among the individual sacrifices brought by the worshipers in Old Testament times were the sin-offerings, aimed at providing expiation for sins whose effects terminated primarily on the individual himself, and the trespass-offerings which concerned sins whose effects terminated primarily on others. Since the basic idea behind both of these sacrifices was that of expiation and propitiation, these offerings certainly symbolized atonement *provided* much more vividly than atonement *appropriated*. So we see that the distinction Adventists make between these two types of offerings—a distinction which is basic to their doctrine of the investigative judgment—is also not in harmony with the facts.

(3) A third reason why the doctrine of the investigative judgment is to be rejected is that this doctrine *is based on a mistaken application of the Old Testament sacrificial system to Christ*. This, of course, naturally follows from the previous point. If Seventh-day Adventists misunderstand the Old Testament sacrificial system, it follows that they will also misapply that sacrificial system to the work of Christ. Let us now look at this matter in detail.

First, the Adventists mistakenly apply the Old Testament sacrificial system to Christ by insisting that Christ only forgave sins previous to 1844 but did not blot them out. It will be recalled that Crosier taught this in his *Day-Star* article (see above, p. 94), and that Seventh-day Adventists today still teach this (above, p. 117). This view ties in with their understanding of the meaning of the Old Testament sacrifices, as the following quotation will show:

In the sanctuary in heaven, the record of sins is the only counterpart of the defilement of the earthly sanctuary. That the sins of men are recorded in heaven, we shall show in the next section. It is the expunging, or blotting out, of these sins from the heavenly records that fulfills the type set forth in the services on the Day

¹⁴ *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 361.

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of Atonement. In that way the sanctuary in heaven can be cleansed from all defilement.¹⁵

The thrust of these words is that, previous to 1844, the sins of penitent believers, though forgiven, were recorded in the heavenly sanctuary; it was not until after 1844 that the process of blotting out these sins was begun.

In refutation, we reply that the conception of sins being recorded in the sanctuary is one which has been shown to rest on a misunderstanding of the Old Testament sacrificial system. Further, the thought that Christ did not blot out sins previous to 1844 is without one shred of Scriptural support. On the contrary, David exclaims in Psalm 103:12, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed (*hirchiq*, Hiphil perfect of *rachaq*, indicating completed action) our transgressions from us.”¹⁶ In Isaiah 44:22 we read, “I have blotted out (*machithi*, perfect tense, indicating complete action), as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins...” If in the Old Testament we are already told that God has blotted out the sins of His people, how can one say that Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, could not blot out sins in the New Testament era previous to 1844?

In fact, the entire distinction between the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of sins—which is basic to Seventh-day Adventist theology—is foreign to the Scriptures. Does David suggest that there is any such distinction when he prays, in Psalm 51:1, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness; According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions”? In the New Testament the word commonly used for *forgive* is *aphieemi*. The root meaning of this word is to *let go* or to *send away*; hence it has acquired the additional meaning: to *cancel*, *remit*, or *pardon* sins.¹⁷ Is there, now, any justification for the view that one’s sin can be canceled without being blotted out? When Jesus, for example, said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven” (Mt. 9:2), did He mean: your sins are now forgiven, but not yet blotted out; if you do not continue to live up to all my commandments, these sins may still be held against you? Why should the paralytic have been of good cheer, if this was the meaning of these words?

Seventh-day Adventists try to justify this distinction by appealing to the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18:23–35. They contend that, since the king in the parable revoked his cancellation of the unmerciful servant’s debt, God may also withdraw

¹⁵ *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 435.

¹⁶ On p. 443 of *Questions on Doctrine* the authors admit that this figure is one used in Scripture to express the complete obliteration of sin.

¹⁷ Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 125.

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forgiveness once granted—hence the forgiveness of sins does not necessarily mean the blotting out of sins.¹⁸ The flaw in this reasoning is that an earthly king cannot read hearts, whereas God can. The point of the parable is not that God may revoke forgiveness once bestowed, but that we must be ready to forgive others if we expect to be forgiven by God. Christ Himself expresses this point very clearly when He says, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt. 6:14, 15). In other words, a man who does not forgive those who have sinned against him has *never really had his sins forgiven* by God, though he may think so.

We conclude that the Seventh-day Adventist distinction between the forgiveness of sin and the blotting out of sin is completely foreign to Scripture and robs the believer of all assurance of salvation.

Secondly, the idea that Christ has been engaged since 1844 in a work of investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary is completely without Biblical support. For, according to the Scriptures, the present work of Christ in heaven is a work of intercession, not a work of judging. Note, for example, how clearly this is taught in Hebrews 7:25, “Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” The basic meaning of the verb *entugchanoo*, which is here used, is to *plead for someone* or to *intercede for someone*.¹⁹ The thought of judging, of examining records, of determining whether individuals are worthy of salvation or not, is completely foreign to this word. The same verb is used in Romans 8:34, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” In both passages, the verb *entugchanoo* is in the present tense, indicating that this intercession is a continuing activity. In Hebrews 7:25, in fact, the infinitive phrase *eis to entugchanein* shows that this intercession constitutes the very purpose for which Christ now lives! On what Scriptural ground, therefore, can Adventists say that Christ is now engaged in a work of judgment?²⁰

It is, of course, true that there shall be a judgment of all men. But this judgment will occur after Christ has returned, not before. Note what our Lord Himself tells us, in Matthew

¹⁸ *Questions on Doctrine*, pp. 439–40.

¹⁹ Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

²⁰ Adventists grant that Christ is our Advocate and that He pleads the cases of His own people in the investigative judgment (*Questions on Doctrine*, pp. 441–42). Since, however, by their own definition, the work Christ is doing since 1844 is a work of *judgment*, we can only conclude that their theology evinces a serious confusion between Christ’s work as Priest and Christ’s work as Judge. How can He both plead the cases of His people and judge them at the same time?

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25:31–32, “But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all the nations....” Christ then goes on to describe the nature of this judgment and the standard whereby men shall be judged, ending his description with the familiar words, “And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life” (v. 46). Here, indeed, we read about an “investigative judgment”—a judgment based on an investigation of the lives of those arraigned before the throne; but this judgment takes place after Christ has returned in glory. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9 we read: “And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord....” The work of Christ as judge is here pictured as occurring after His return from heaven. In Revelation 20:11–15 we also read about the judgment. It is described as being before the great white throne (v. 11), as involving all the dead (vv. 12 and 13)—this implies that the resurrection must have occurred before this time—and as being based on works (v. 12). At the end of this judgment, we are told, death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire (v. 14); from 21:4 we learn that the cessation of death shall be a mark of the final state. We also learn that those who are not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire—this, too, is an event which points to the end of time. From every indication, therefore, we observe that the judgment here pictured is not one which is going on now, but one which will take place just before the final state is ushered in. From the other passages cited we conclude that this must be after Christ’s return to earth.

What Scriptural warrant do Seventh-day Adventists have for teaching that there will be a judgment according to works before the return of Christ? The Scripture passages alluded to in parentheses at the end of Article 16 of the *Fundamental Beliefs* (an article dealing with the investigative judgment) do not give the slightest support for this doctrine. The first one, 1 Peter 4:17–18, “For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God,” simply states, in harmony with the context, that Christians may often have to be chastised by God in this world in order that they may become more holy; it says nothing about any judgment in the heavenly sanctuary. The second passage, Daniel 7:9 and 10, pictures the Ancient of Days seated on a throne, and a judgment which involves the opening of books. This vision, however, which is to be understood in the light of the rest of the chapter, and particularly in the light of verses 13 and 14 (the giving of dominion and glory to the Son of Man), does not depict any investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary, but vividly symbolizes the overthrow of earthly empires and powers that are opposed to God and the establishment of Christ’s everlasting reign. The third passage, Revelation 14:6–7, describes the message of the first angel: “Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come.” One needs a great deal of

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imagination to see in this verse a reference to an investigative judgment by Christ in the heavenly sanctuary! The last text mentioned is Luke 20:35, where Jesus is reported as saying, “But they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.” Jesus is simply saying that those who will be privileged to enjoy the resurrection of believers will not marry; He gives not the slightest suggestion that their worthiness to attain this state will be determined by an investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary. Anyone who sees an investigative judgment taught in the verses just examined is seeing something in these passages which simply is not there!

(4) A fourth reason why the doctrine of the investigative judgment is to be rejected is *that it violates Scriptural teaching about the sovereignty of God*. It is clearly stated, in Article 16 of the *Fundamental Beliefs*, that “this investigative judgment determines who of the myriads sleeping in the dust of the earth are worthy of a part in the first resurrection, and who of its living multitudes are worthy of translation.” This statement, however, stands in violent contradiction to what is said on page 420 of *Questions on Doctrine*: “... As Sovereign God, He ... knows just who will accept and who will reject His ‘great salvation.’ ” If this is so, why should God or Christ have to examine books of record to *determine* who may be raised in glory or translated into glory? Seventh-day Adventists cannot have their cake and eat it: either God does know who will accept His great salvation, and in that case the investigative judgment is unnecessary—or He must conduct an investigation to find out who is saved, and then He cannot be said to foreknow this!

Let us see what Mrs. White, the prophetess of Seventh-day Adventism, has to say about this matter:

... There must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement. The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation,—a work of judgment. This work must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people; for when He comes, His reward is with Him to give to every man according to his works.²¹

This statement leaves us with a God who has to do homework before He can know who are entitled to the benefits of the atonement, and with a Christ who, like an earthly professor, must mark his examination papers before He knows what grade to give to each

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²¹ Ellen Gould White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1911 (first pub. in 1888). (Vol. 1 of the Conflict of the Ages Series), p. 422.

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student! What resemblance is there between this God and this Christ on the one hand, and the God and Christ of the Scriptures on the other? We learn from Ephesians 1:4 that the destinies of the saved are not only foreknown by God but have been predetermined from eternity: “Even as he chose us in him [in Christ] before the foundation of the world.” Crystal clear on this point is Romans 8:29–30: “For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom he foreordained, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Why should God have to conduct an investigative judgment about those whom He has foreordained from eternity to be justified and glorified?

What about Christ? The Bible tells us that Christ knows His sheep, and has given them eternal life, so that no one can snatch them out of His hand (Jn. 10:27–28); that He prayed not for the world but for those whom the Father had given Him (John 17:9); that it is the will of Him that sent Christ that of all that which the Father had given Him He should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day (Jn. 6:39). Does this Christ, now, have to conduct an investigation to determine which of the inhabitants of the earth shall be raised in glory?

Adventists try to get around this difficulty by saying:

Were God alone concerned, there would be no need of an investigation of the life records of men in this judgment [the investigative judgment], for as our eternal Sovereign God, He is omniscient.... But that the inhabitants of the whole universe, the good and evil angels, and all who have ever lived on this earth might understand His love and His justice, the life history of every individual who has ever lived on the earth has been recorded, and in the judgment [the investigative judgment] these records will be disclosed.²²

But here is confusion worse confounded! In the first place, the above statement is not consistent with the assertion previously quoted, that the purpose of the investigative judgment is to *determine* who are worthy of resurrection to glory and translation. Further, what is said above makes sense if we think of the final judgment, which is public, in which the reasons for the final destinies of men will be made known to all. But it makes no sense when applied to the investigative judgment, which is not public, and which is therefore not witnessed by men!

(5) A fifth reason why the doctrine of the investigative judgment is to be rejected is that *it jeopardizes the Biblical teaching that we are saved by grace alone*. We have already touched

²² *Questions on Doctrine*, pp. 420–21.

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upon this point (see above, pp. 125–28). Let us look at this matter a bit more closely. Mrs. White describes those who “pass” in the investigative judgment as follows:

All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life.²³

The stipulation that the characters of these individuals must be found to be in harmony with the law of God before their sins can be blotted out suggests that they must have attained a certain legal righteousness of their own before they will receive full salvation.

In a chapter in which he discusses the investigative judgment, William Henry Branson says:

A Christian who through faith in Jesus Christ has faithfully kept the law’s requirements will be acquitted [in the investigative judgment]; there is no condemnation, for the law finds no fault in him. If, on the other hand, it is found that one has broken even a single precept, and this transgression is unconfessed, he will be dealt with just as if he had broken all ten.²⁴

In this astounding statement a prominent Seventh-day Adventist writer tells us that the basis for acquittal in the investigative judgment is the perfect keeping of the law’s requirements! This is surely a far cry from the Apostle Paul’s assertion, “We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Rom. 3:28). To the Galatians, who were being tempted to base their hope for salvation in part on works which they did themselves, came Paul’s stern warning: “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace” (Gal. 5:4). If the determining factor in being accepted in the investigative judgment is the faithfulness with which one has kept the law’s requirements, then certainly salvation is no longer by grace alone. And if the failure to confess even a single transgression of the law will result in damnation, one wonders what will happen to the Psalmist who exclaimed, “Who can discern his errors?” (Ps. 19:12). We conclude that the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment does not permit Adventists to continue to claim that they teach salvation by grace alone.²⁵

²³ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 483, quoted in *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 443.

²⁴ Wm. H. Branson, *The Drama of the Ages*. Nashville: Southern Pub. Association, 1950, p. 351.

²⁵ Hoekema, A.A. (1963). *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism* (pp. 144–158). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.