

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## The Scapegoat Doctrine

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The other aspect of Seventh-day Adventist teaching in relation to the investigative judgment that remains to be evaluated is the view that the sins of mankind will be laid on Satan just before Christ's return to earth. It is my conviction that this doctrine, too, is completely without Scriptural support. For this judgment I advance the following four reasons:

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(1) It is not at all certain that the word *Azazel* in Leviticus 16:8, and following verses, means Satan. Seventh-day Adventists insist that this is what the word means, citing a number of authorities to support their claim.<sup>1</sup> The plain fact of the matter, however, is that no one knows exactly what this strange word means. The early tradition rendered the word *la'aza'zeel* as follows: "for removal." The Septuagint translation of this expression was *too apompaiou*: for the one to be sent away. From this was derived the Vulgate translation, *capro emissario*: for the goat to be sent forth. It is from this tradition that the King James rendering originated: "scapegoat" (literally, "escape-goat"). This ancient tradition still has many supporters. The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon suggests that the word *Azazel* means "entire removal." The article on *Azazel* found in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* suggests the same interpretation.<sup>2</sup> Others, however, argue from the juxtaposition of *Azazel* with *Jahwe* that the former must be a proper name. Following this interpretation, some hold that it must refer to Satan, and others suggest that it designates a wilderness demon. One must simply confess that, until further light is given, no one can be dogmatic as to the meaning of this word. It may mean Satan, but it may also mean something else.

(2) Even if it be granted, for the sake of argument, that *Azazel* does mean Satan, it does not at all follow that the second goat in the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement stood for Satan. For it is specifically stated in Leviticus 16:10 that the second goat was to be sent into the wilderness *la'aza'zeel: to or for Azazel*. If *Azazel* means Satan, the second goat was sent *to or for Satan*; to say that the

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<sup>1</sup> *Questions on Doctrine. Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine. An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (1957) (pp. 391-95). Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. James Orr (rev. ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), I, 342-44.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

second goat *stood for Satan* is to make an unwarranted leap from the entity to whom or for whom the goat was sent to the goat himself.

- (3) It is, further, impossible to regard the second goat as standing for Satan since, according to Leviticus 16:5, the two goats represented one sin-offering. In the last-named verse we read, "And he [the high priest] shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two he-goats for a sin-offering (*lechatta'th*)."<sup>3</sup> It is not just the slain goat, in other words, that constitutes the sin-offering; it is the two goats together. This means that both goats pictured the propitiation that was to be offered by Christ. The slain goat pictured the fact that Christ was to shed His blood to redeem us from sin, whereas the goat sent into the wilderness pictured the fact that by His atoning work Christ was to remove our sins from us. To suggest, as Seventh-day Adventists do, that the second goat stood for Satan is to transfer a work of Christ to the Prince of Darkness!

Note what Fairbairn has to say about this second goat:

What took place with the live goat was merely intended to unfold, and render palpably evident to the bodily eye, the effect of the great work of atonement. The atonement itself was made in secret, while the high priest alone was in the sanctuary; and yet ... it was of the utmost importance that there should be a visible transaction, like that of the dismissal of the scapegoat, embodying in a sensible form the results of the service. Nor is it of any moment what became of the goat after being conducted into the wilderness. It was enough that he was led into the region of drought and desolation, where ... he should never more be seen or heard of. With such a destination, he was obviously as much a doomed victim as the one whose life-blood had already been shed and brought within the veil; he ... exhibited a most striking image of the everlasting oblivion into which the sins of God's people are thrown, when once they are covered with the blood of an acceptable atonement.<sup>3</sup>

- (4) That Satan will be punished for his sins is certainly taught in Scripture, but that our sins or the sins of all men will be placed on Satan is nowhere taught in Scripture. This idea rests, as we have just seen, on a misunderstanding of the role of the second goat in the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement. Further, this

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<sup>3</sup> Fairbairn, Patrick, *Typology of Scripture*, II, 340–41. Cf. also W. Moeller in the *I. S. B. E.* article referred to above: "Both goats ... represent two sides of the same thing. The second is necessary to make clear what the first one, which has been slain, can no longer represent, namely, the removal of the sin ..." (I, 343).

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

conception is in direct conflict with 1 Peter 2:24, where we read the following concerning Christ: “Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree....” It was therefore Christ who bore our sins and thus removed them; not Satan. To suggest that Christ still has to take our sins from the heavenly sanctuary at the end of time in order to lay them on Satan implies that He has not previously borne them away, and that His atoning work was therefore inadequate for the complete removal of sin. Moreover, if Christ lays the sins of unbelievers on Satan as well, why must they still suffer for them? If, on the other hand, they do suffer for them, why must *their sins* still be laid on Satan? Finally, if it is necessary for these sins to be laid on Satan before they can be obliterated from the universe, Satan plays an indispensable part in the blotting out of sin. Though Seventh-day Adventists deny that Satan makes atonement for our sins in any way, they are nevertheless guilty of ascribing something to Satan which should only be ascribed to Christ: the obliteration of our sins.

We conclude that the doctrines of the investigative judgment and of the laying of sins on Satan are false teachings. Not only do they lack all Scriptural support; they actually go contrary to Scripture at various points, as has been shown. If Seventh-day Adventists honestly wish to be true to Scripture alone in their teachings, they should repudiate both of these doctrines.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The reader is further referred to Herbert Bird's *Theology of Seventh-day Adventism*, pp. 72–92, and to Norman F. Douty's *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism*, pp. 118–29, for competent evaluations of both the investigative judgment doctrine and the scapegoat teaching.

<sup>5</sup> Hoekema, A. A. (1963). *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism* (pp. 158–160). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.