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# The Soteriology of Ellen G. White Compared with the Lutheran Formula of Concord: a Study of the Adventist Doctrine of the Final Judgment of the Saints and Their Justification Before God

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**Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary**

**THE SOTERIOLOGY OF ELLEN G. WHITE COMPARED WITH  
THE LUTHERAN FORMULA OF CONCORD: A STUDY  
OF THE ADVENTIST DOCTRINE OF THE FINAL  
JUDGMENT OF THE SAINTS AND THEIR  
JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD**

**A Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Theology**

**by  
Gunnar Pedersen  
November 1995**

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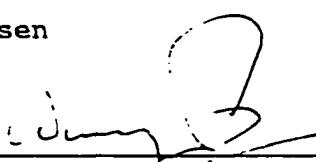
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## **ABSTRACT**

# **THE SOTERIOLOGY OF ELLEN G. WHITE COMPARED WITH THE LUTHERAN FORMULA OF CONCORD: A STUDY OF THE ADVENTIST DOCTRINE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE SAINTS AND THEIR JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD**

**by**

**Gunnar Pedersen**

**Adviser: Hans K. LaRondelle**

## **ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH**

### **Dissertation**

**Andrews University**

**Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary**

**Title: THE SOTERIOLOGY OF ELLEN G. WHITE COMPARED WITH THE LUTHERAN FORMULA OF CONCORD: A STUDY OF THE ADVENTIST DOCTRINE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE SAINTS AND THEIR JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD**

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**Date completed:** November 1995.

#### **The Topic**

The Adventist doctrine of judgment is part of a larger salvation-historical perspective that in Adventist theology is termed the Sanctuary Doctrine. This doctrine depicts the post-ascension soteriological work of Christ as reaching its consummation in the judgment and the parousia. Critics of the Adventist doctrine of judgment consider it perplexing and even incompatible with the basic principles undergirding the classical Protestant doctrine on forensic justification, understood as a present, complete reception and possession of salvation both existentially and forensically.

### The Purpose

This study aimed at investigating to what degree the classical Protestant principles of grace alone, Christ alone, and faith alone are shared by the Seventh-day Adventist soteriology, as presented by Ellen G. White, with regard to the doctrines of justification and judgment. The design of the study includes four major sections. Chapter 1 presents the basic principles of Lutheran soteriology as reflected in The Formula of Concord as a basis for comparison with Adventist soteriology. Chapter 2 analyzes the unique features of the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine with special focus on the place and meaning of Christ's post-ascension mediatorial work in relationship to the present-existential and eschatological-judicial dimensions in Adventist soteriology. Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the loci of the themes of faith, sanctification, and works in relationship to the Adventist perception of justification and judgment. Chapter 4 systematizes the constituent elements of Ellen G. White's soteriology and summarizes its basic principles as compared with the Lutheran tradition.

### Conclusions

The Adventist perception of the post-ascension mediatorial work of Christ, which reaches its consummation in the judgment, is in this study identified as the unique christological dimension by which Adventist soteriology may be viewed from either a present-existential or an eschatological-judicial perspective without contradiction. Justification, understood as a complete, present, existential reception and possession of salvation, may in this christological context be interpreted as mediated eschatology. Finally, this study concludes that the Lutheran-Protestant principles of grace alone, Christ alone, and faith alone are in all their essentials fully shared by the Seventh-day Adventist tradition as presented by Ellen G. White.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Inst</u>	<u>Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion</u>
<u>LW</u>	<u>Luther's Works, American Edition</u>
<u>RH</u>	<u>Review and Herald</u> <sup>1</sup>
<u>SDA</u>	<u>Seventh-day Adventist</u>
<u>ST</u>	<u>Signs of the Times</u>
<u>WA</u>	<u>Luther's Works, Weimar Ausgabe</u>

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<sup>1</sup>This periodical went through several changes in nomenclature. At its inception in 1840 the name was Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald; in 1851 the name changed to The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald; in 1861 it was changed to Review and Herald; in 1971 it went back to the old name Advent Review and Sabbath Herald; and finally in 1978 it assumed its current name, Adventist Review. The name most widely used to identify the magazine is Review and Herald.

## INTRODUCTION

The genesis of the Seventh-day Adventist movement dates back to the early nineteenth century when a growing interest in biblical eschatological prophecy among Protestants developed into the inter-denominational second-advent awakening in New England called the Millerite Movement.<sup>1</sup> This awakening was based on the prophetic-apocalyptic texts in the books of Daniel and Revelation in general and on the prophetic chronologies in Dan 7-9 in particular. As the hermeneutics of the Protestant historicist school of prophetic interpretation were applied to these texts, the conviction emerged among Protestants in the early nineteenth century that the great goal and consummation of salvation history was imminent. According to their historicist hermeneutics, they reached the conclusion that the eschatological event predicted in Dan 8:14 must be

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<sup>1</sup> At its peak the second-advent revival in North America in the years 1843-44 counted approximately 2000 ministers and approximately 50,000 confessing believers. The weaker European branch of the advent awakening never grew into a coherent movement and was already declining and deteriorating when the American movement reached its peak in 1843-44. For a thorough discussion of the historical and hermeneutical-exegetical reasons for the rise of Adventism within the Protestant tradition in the early nineteenth century, consult the following works: Arthur W. Spalding, Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1962); Jerome L. Clark, 1844, 3 vols., Religious Movements, vol. 1, Social Movements, vol. 2, Intellectual Movements, vol. 3 (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1968); Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-nineteenth-Century America (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Gerard Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977); LeRoy E. Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946, 1948, 1950, 1954); David L. Rowe, Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985); Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1911); George R. Knight, Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1993).

understood christologically and thus point to the consummation of world history at the second advent of Christ, and that this event would occur in the year 1844, according to the chronological content of the prophecies in question.<sup>1</sup>

This conviction was eventually supported by a christological interpretation of the yearly cycle of the ancient Mosaic sanctuary service, which was seen as a type with regard to the inaugurate and consummative work of Christ in the Christian dispensation. The terminal event described as the cleansing or justification of the sanctuary in Dan 8:14 was, according to this principle, understood as the eschatological reality, of which the ancient Yom Kippur was a prophetic type. While the temporal aspect of the sanctuary motif was thus interpreted christologically, the sanctuary itself was conceived as an earthly or ecclesiological reality.<sup>2</sup> From the given premises the Millerite Adventists accordingly concluded that the cleansing or justification of the sanctuary must be a prophetic reference to an eschatological consummative act of Christ in the earthly sphere; that is, the cleansing of the earth with fire at the second

<sup>1</sup>The historicist school of prophetic-apocalyptic interpretation still dominated the Reformation-Protestant tradition at the time Adventism arose and constitutes the hermeneutical key to the rise of this movement. The rise to prominence of the Preterist and Futurist schools of prophetic interpretations among Protestants antedates the rise of Adventism; Froom, The Prophetic Faith, 4: 429-827; Gerard Damsteegt, Foundations, 17-46; Gordon M. Hyde, ed., A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1974), 109-125. Modern Seventh-day Adventism still follows the basic principles of the Protestant historicist school of prophetic interpretation. For a modern scholarly presentation of the Adventist understanding and application of this principle, consult the following source: William H. Shea, Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982).

<sup>2</sup>The terrestrial interpretation of the sanctuary motif represents a continuation of the predominant Christian tradition in their day. Their typological understanding of the sanctuary motif and its christological terrestrial application is described in the following sources: Froom, The Prophetic Faith, 4: 810-22; Damsteegt, Foundations, 95-6; White, The Great Controversy, 399-403; F. D. Nichol, The Midnight Cry: A Defense of William Miller and the Millerites (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1944).

advent of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The non-occurrence in the autumn of 1844 of the expected parousia naturally caused so severe a crisis within the Millerite movement that it was threatened with disintegration and even extinction.<sup>2</sup>

The Millerite expectation regarding the return of Christ in 1844 was based on a christological understanding of the event predicted in Dan 8:14 in conjunction with their terrestrial interpretation of sanctuary motif. Two major schools of thought emerged among the disillusioned Millerites in response to the non-occurrence of the parousia. The majority of the advent believers reached the consensus that since Christ did not return at the expected time, the error must be linked to the interpretation of the chronological aspects of prophecy and not to the interpretation of the expected event.<sup>3</sup> A minority reached the conclusion that since they could not discern any error in the applied hermeneutics or in the application of the chronological aspects of prophecy, the error must be linked to the interpretation of the nature of the expected event.

<sup>1</sup>This expectation was met with an increasing opposition from the major sections of the Protestant world, an opposition which eventually resulted in the formation of an independent confessional group called Adventists. It was not so much their emphasis upon the imminence of the expected event that stirred a severe rejection and opposition but rather their identification of the expected event. The predominant view with regard to the parousia on the American religious scene was post-millennial and it was generally expected that a glorious earthly millennium would soon materialize, while the Adventists were pre-millennialists stressing the idea that the parousia and the Day of Judgment were imminently at hand and not the glorious earthly millennium. See Damsteegt, Foundations, 11-16, 46-50, 78-83; Froom, The Prophetic Faith, 4: 411- 426, 761-784; Knight, Millennial Fever, 15-24.

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed historical description of the 1844 crisis within Adventism and its aftermath, as a result of the non-occurrence of the parousia, consult the following sources: Froom, The Prophetic Faith, 4: 855-77; Damsteegt, Foundations, 103-34; White, The Great Controversy, 401-8; Knight, Millennial Fever, 217-326.

<sup>3</sup>The majority of the advent believers followed the position taken at the Albany conference which met on April 29, 1845. They concluded that some mistake in the calculations must account for the non-occurrence of the Second Coming of Christ. See Froom, The Prophetic Faith, 834-35; Damsteegt, Foundations, 134-35; Ellen White, The Great Controversy, 409-11; Knight, Millennial Fever, 267-294. Froom states that "the main group decided that the end of the 2300 days was still future, extending to the literal advent," The Prophetic Faith, 4: 831.

They accordingly engaged in a thorough theological reappraisal of the possible biblical meaning of this motif--a study that eventually revolutionized their understanding of the place and meaning of the predicted eschatological event in Dan 8:14. The pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism discovered that Christ's post-ascension ministry is seen as transpiring in a real heavenly sanctuary according to the type and pattern of the earthly Mosaic sanctuary service. Thus the post-ascension ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary was gradually seen as the salvation-historical reality of which the mediatorial service in the Mosaic sanctuary was a prophetic type. This identification of the New Covenant sanctuary and its ministry as a celestial and not a terrestrial reality eventually revolutionized their thinking with regard to the eschatological event predicted in Dan 8:14.<sup>1</sup> This new approach constitutes the historical and theological foundation for the subsequent rise of post-1844 Seventh-day Adventism.

The logical implications of this type of analogical reasoning led the pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism to the conclusion that just as the daily mediation in the Mosaic sanctuary climaxed in a distinct yearly-consummative mediatorial work at a time called the Day of Atonement, so the corresponding post-ascension mediation of Christ would climax in a distinct consummative mediatorial act in the heavenly sanctuary prior to the parousia. This christological, soteriological, and eschatological insight regarding the location and role of the New Covenant sanctuary and its ministry has in Seventh-day Adventist theology been designated the Sanctuary Doctrine.

<sup>1</sup> The pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism reached their new interpretation of the terminal event in Dan 8:14 through a slow and laborious process. In the year 1848, a group of advent believers, who shared a common conviction with regard to the new christological understanding of the sanctuary motif and the validity of the seventh-day Sabbath, decided to meet in a series of conferences in order to study more thoroughly the various questions and objections. From 1848 to 1850 they held 22 conferences at which modern Seventh-day Adventism was eventually established and formulated. See Froom, The Prophetic Faith, 4: 855-1048; Damsteegt, Foundations, 103-163; White, The Great Controversy, 409-22; Knight, Millennial Fever, 295-326.

The pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism thus reached the conclusion that instead of being a reference to the parousia, the predicted event in Dan 8:14 was a reference to the eschatological terminal phase in the mediatorial work of Christ; a work by which the eternal destiny of man would be judicially settled at the divine tribunal immediately prior to the parousia. They entitled this eschatological dimension of the Sanctuary Doctrine the Investigative Judgment.<sup>1</sup> It is the apparent soteriological implications of this doctrine that have made it the most disputed part of Seventh-day Adventist theology.

#### The Critical Aspects of the Sanctuary Doctrine

Although the rationale and meaning of the Adventist doctrine of judgment cannot be fully comprehended apart from the entire christological and soteriological structure of which it is seen as the consummative part, yet its major soteriological

<sup>1</sup>The transition from the pre-1844 to the post-1844 Adventist understanding of the meaning of the terminal event in Dan 8:14, however, was complex and gradual, stretching over more than a decade. James White did not fully accept the idea that the terminal event in Dan 8:14 was a reference to an eschatological priestly-kingly role of Christ in a pre-advent judgment of the saints until 1857. See Damsteegt, Foundations, 167. Subsequently, however, this interpretation became generally accepted among Seventh-day Adventists and thus became an inseparable part of Adventist christology, soteriology, and eschatology. For a comprehensive account of the historical and theological rationale for the development of the Sanctuary Doctrine, including its crucial theology of judgment, consult the following sources: Paul A. Gordon, The Sanctuary, 1844, and the Pioneers (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1983), 15-56; Froom, The Prophetic Faith, 4: 877-913; idem, Movement of Destiny (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1971), 541-560; Damsteegt, Foundations, 29-45, 103-35, 165-76; Robert Haddock, "A History of the Doctrine of the Sanctuary in the Advent Movement 1800-1905" (B.D. thesis, Andrews University, 1970); Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief, Prepared by a Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist Leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1957), 244-295, 341-364, 389, 429-33; Uriah Smith, The Sanctuary and the Twenty-Three Hundred Days of Dan. VIII, 14 (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn., 1877), 197-262; White, The Great Controversy, 317-42, 409-32, 479-491.

implications may be explicitly outlined. Such Adventist pioneers as James White, John N. Andrews, and Uriah Smith unanimously spoke of the Final Judgment as the event at which God would pronounce the sentence that settles the eternal destiny of all the saints. James White declared that this is the time at which the "decision is passed on all the saints before the second coming."<sup>1</sup> J. N. Andrews expressed a similar conviction when he stated that "the examination and decision of the cases of the righteous takes place before the advent of Christ." He added: "The resurrection of the righteous to immortality is decisive proof that they have already passed the test of the judgment, and have been accepted by the Judge."<sup>2</sup> In the year 1875, Uriah Smith explicitly said that "our cases are then decided and we are sealed for everlasting life."<sup>3</sup> Eleven years later in 1886 he amplified this insight when he stated that "the last work He performs as Mediator for his people is to confess their names before the Father and the Holy angels (Rev 3:5), and then their cases are forever decided."<sup>4</sup> J. N. Andrews clearly designated the divine sentence, pronounced on the saints at the Final Judgment, as a forensic verdict of acquittal when he declared that "this act of accounting men worthy of a part in the kingdom of God is the very act of acquitting them in the judgment. The investigative judgment in the cases of the righteous is, therefore, passed before their resurrection."<sup>5</sup> This forensic soteriological dimension of the investigative judgment reappears in his statement that "the justification of the judgment must be when the

<sup>1</sup>James White, "The Judgment," RH, 29 Jan. 1857, 100.

<sup>2</sup>J. N. Andrews, "The Order of Events in the Judgment," RH, 9 Nov. 1869, 156.

<sup>3</sup>Smith, The Sanctuary, 260.

<sup>4</sup>Uriah Smith, "The Judgment Now Passing," RH, 23 Mar. 1886, 181.

<sup>5</sup>Andrews, "The Order of Events in the Judgment," 156.

righteous are accounted worthy of a part in the first resurrection."<sup>1</sup>

Ellen G. White, who summarized the position of the pioneers, repeatedly stated that the eschatological judgment, which she understood as a pre-advent event, would be the time and place at which the eternal destiny of all believers would be judicially settled.<sup>2</sup> She would say:

At the time appointed for the judgment--the close of the 2300 days, in 1844-- began the work of investigation and blotting out of sins. All who have ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ must pass its searching scrutiny. Both the living and the dead are to be judged 'out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.'<sup>3</sup>

Ellen White sharpened her expression with regard to the decisiveness of this event, saying: "when the work of the investigative Judgment closes the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death."<sup>4</sup> She further amplified this assertion by saying that "as the books of record are opened in judgment . . . our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is

<sup>1</sup>J. N. Andrews, "The Order of Events in the Judgment," RH, 23 Nov. 1869, 187.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White did not originate the theological content of the Sanctuary Doctrine but basically summarized the Adventist pioneers' position and then interpreted it in the context of the larger soteriological and salvation historical themes of the great controversy between truth and error. Her first major exposition was published in 1884. See Ellen G. White, The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 4, The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Controversy (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn., 1884). Her views were republished in 1888 in a book entitled The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan during the Christian Dispensation, rev. and enl. (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald, 1888). Although this work went through several editions in her lifetime, the latest edition being published in 1911, she never changed its doctrinal content. In this research, all references are to her 1911 edition. Ellen G. White is hereafter referred to as Ellen White.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 486.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 490.

mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected."<sup>1</sup> She added that only "those who in the judgment are 'accounted worthy' will have a part in the resurrection of the just."<sup>2</sup> Ellen White's assignment of a decisive soteriological significance to the Final Judgment may logically speaking seem to imply that the eternal destiny of all believers must somehow remain judicially undecided prior to this event. This implication was more explicitly expressed as follows: "The righteous dead will not be raised until after the judgment at which they are accounted worthy of 'the resurrection of life.' Hence they will not be present in person at the tribunal when their records are examined, and their cases decided."<sup>3</sup>

The assertion that the eternal destiny of even believers remains judicially undecided prior to the Final Judgment is further confirmed by her qualification of the approving or disapproving eschatological verdict of God by the classical forensic concepts to justify and to condemn. She specifically said that "our acts, our words, even our most secret motives all have their weight in deciding our destiny for weal or woe. Though they may be forgotten by us, they will all bear their testimony to justify or condemn."<sup>4</sup> Such usage of the forensic concepts to justify and to condemn as a description of what she called "the final irrevocable decision . . . pronounced in the sanctuary above"<sup>5</sup> does not appear to be incidental. In the following statement Ellen White further described the approving eschatological verdict of God as a soteriological

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 483.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 482.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 486-87.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 491.

declaration of pardon and justification. She stated:

The deepest interest manifested among men in the decisions of earthly tribunals but faintly represents the interest evinced in the heavenly courts when the names entered in the book of life come up in review before the Judge of all the earth. The divine intercessor presents the plea that all who have overcome through faith in his blood be forgiven their transgressions, that they be restored to their Eden home and crowned as joint heirs with Himself to 'the first dominion.' Micah 4:8. Satan in his efforts to deceive and tempt our race has thought to frustrate the divine plan in man's creation; but Christ now asks that this plan be carried into effect as if man had never fallen. He asks for his people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in his glory and a seat upon his throne.<sup>1</sup>

The divine verdict, for which Christ thus makes a request in the judgment, is thus clearly expressed by means of the biblical soteriological terms forgiveness, pardon, and justification. Ellen White concluded her description of the proceedings at the Final Judgment, including a description of Christ's consummative mediatorial application of His merits on behalf of believers, by declaring that "thus will be realized the complete fulfilment of the new-covenant promise: 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more'."<sup>2</sup> In the context of the Sanctuary Doctrine Ellen White apparently assigned a soteriological significance to the Final Judgment of the saints, which appears similar to the soteriological meaning expressed by classical Protestant theology in the article on forensic justification.

#### The Importance of the Sanctuary Doctrine in Adventist Theology

It is a basic Adventist conviction that the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation remained incomplete and that Seventh-day Adventism constitutes its modern continuation and potential consummation. Ellen White expressed this conviction in her book The Great Controversy, where she outlined some of the major events in church

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 483-84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 485.

history, including some of the major theological developments from the time of the Apostles to the emergence of Seventh-day Adventism. With reference to the progressive character of the reformative process that began in the sixteenth century she said: "Scattered over many lands, they [the Waldenses] planted the seed of the Reformation that began in the time of Wycliffe, grew broad and deep in the days of Luther, and is to be carried forward to the close of time by those who are willing to suffer all things for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> While Ellen White often expressed her agreement with the major contributions of the Protestant Reformation, especially in the sphere of soteriology,<sup>2</sup> she nevertheless maintained the position that they had not made a full rediscovery of all facets of Scriptural teachings. She said:

The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world's history. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures, and new truths have been constantly unfolding.<sup>3</sup>

In her book The Great Controversy, Ellen White furthermore identified the rise of Adventist teachings, especially the eschatological dimension of the Sanctuary Doctrine, as the continuation and consummation of all previous rediscoveries of the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen White, in a description of the religious situation at the time of John Wesley, expressed her approval of the essential truthfulness of the soteriological discoveries made by Luther. She declared that "the great doctrine of justification by faith, so clearly taught by Luther had been almost wholly lost sight of; and the Romish principle of trusting good works for salvation, had taken its place." Ibid., 253. She further affirmed her appreciation for the Reformer's insight into the core of the gospel when she said that "Wesley's life was devoted to the preaching of the great truths which he had received--justification through faith in the atoning blood of Christ, and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, bringing forth fruit in a life conformed to the example of Christ." Ibid., 256. Adventism was strongly influenced by Wesleyan terminology and theological emphasis. This influence may be seen in Ellen White's continual concern for genuine sanctification and Christian living.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 148-49.

biblical truth.<sup>1</sup> Her historical and doctrinal presentation in this book reflects no awareness of any essential conflict, tension, or incompatibility between her doctrine of judgment and the essence of the Protestant doctrine of justification of which she freely approves. Neither did she ever seem to abandon or modify her position with regard to the substance of the Sanctuary Doctrine. As late as the year 1906, Ellen White still stressed the central importance of this doctrine for Seventh-day Adventist theology when she declared that "the correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith."<sup>2</sup> The soteriological, eschatological, and christological views expressed in the Sanctuary Doctrine in accordance to her thinking apparently relate to the essence of Protestant thought as a confirmation and completion and not as a contradiction. This thesis, however, has lately been severely challenged by critics from both outside and inside the Adventist tradition.

#### The Objections of the Critics

Critics from outside and inside the Adventist community encounter great difficulties with the soteriological implications of the Adventist doctrine of judgment, which clearly represents a novel dimension in Protestant thought. Critics claim that this doctrinal idea is controversial not only from a biblical-exegetical perspective but especially from a doctrinal point of view. They argue that the apparent soteriological

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 317-491. LeRoy Froom in his apologetic work for Seventh-day Adventism entitled Movement of Destiny expressed a similar conviction with regard to the historical and eschatological role of Seventh-day Adventism as a continuation and consummation of the Reformation. See Froom, Movement of Destiny, 28, 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Letter 208, 1906, quoted in idem, Evangelism as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1971), 221. The same conviction regarding the centrality of this doctrine within Adventism is echoed by Le Roy Froom who declares that "the one distinctive, separative, structural truth--the sole doctrinal teaching that identifies and sets Seventh-day Adventists apart from all other Christian bodies past and present--is what we have always designated the 'Sanctuary truth'." Froom, Movement of Destiny, 37.

implications of this doctrine collide directly with the essence of the Protestant doctrine of forensic justification and all that it signifies as a present complete reality.

The non-Adventist critic Herbert Bird stated the problem as follows: "Far from inculcating the glorious tidings that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law, the sanctuary position tends to a legalism as deadly, if not as explicit, as the Galatian Judaizer's own."<sup>1</sup> Another non-Adventist critic, Anthony H. Hoekema, also believes that the Adventist doctrine constitutes a severe problem in terms of Protestant soteriology. He states: "While seeking to maintain that men are saved by grace alone, Seventh-day Adventists have cast a shadow over that claim by their view of the investigative judgment." Hoekema objects to the fact that the Final Judgment apparently "determines whether a person shall be saved or not."<sup>2</sup> A sympathetic non-Adventist critic, Walter R. Martin, sums up the issue as follows:

Some tenets of Christian theology as historically understood and the interpretation of Mrs. White do not agree; indeed, they are at loggerheads. . . . We must disagree with Mrs. White's interpretation of the sanctuary, the investigative judgment and the scapegoat.

Holding as . . . they [SDAs] do to the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment, it is extremely difficult for us to understand how they can experience the joy of salvation and the knowledge of sins forgiven.<sup>3</sup>

A growing degree of unease has been experienced within Adventism itself with regard to the theological integrity of the Sanctuary Doctrine. In the year 1942, M. L. Andreasen, then a teacher at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Washington, D. C., in a report to the leaders at his church's headquarters, stated that

<sup>1</sup>Herbert S. Bird, Theology of Seventh-day Adventism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1961), 92.

<sup>2</sup>Anthony H. Hoekema, The Four Major Cults (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), 122.

<sup>3</sup>Walter R. Martin, The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1960), 112-13, 183.

"a large numbers of our ministers have serious doubt as to the correctness of the views we hold on certain phases of the Sanctuary."<sup>1</sup> The achievements of the ad hoc committee, officially known as the Daniel Committee, formed by the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in the early 1960s, for the purpose of giving study to the theological and exegetical rationale of the Sanctuary Doctrine, illustrate the growing concerns regarding some of the vital aspects of this doctrine. After having studied the issues for four years (1962-66), the committee "adjourned without reaching a consensus and without issuing a report."<sup>2</sup> In a challenging article in the year 1980, Raymond Cottrell described this developing uncertainty and critique within Adventist scholarly circles, regarding the soteriological and eschatological implications of the Sanctuary Doctrine. This growing critique eventually erupted in an open challenge of the Sanctuary Doctrine from within Adventism itself.<sup>3</sup>

The critical issues generated controversy within the Adventist Church in the spring of 1979 when the long-time dissident Robert Brinsmead publicly abandoned the judicial eschatological dimensions of the Sanctuary Doctrine in a book entitled

<sup>1</sup>M. L. Andreasen to J. L. McElhany and W. H. Branson, 25 Dec. 1942, Ellen. G. White Research Center, Andrews University.

<sup>2</sup>See Raymond F. Cottrell, "A Hermeneutic for Daniel 8:14," [1978], Department of Archives and Statistics, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington, D.C., 15. For a survey of Adventist misgivings in regard to key aspects of the Sanctuary Doctrine, see also Desmond Ford, Daniel 8:14. The Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment (Casselberry, Fla.: Euangelion Press, 1980), 34, 47-105.

<sup>3</sup>Raymond F. Cottrell, "Sanctuary Debate: A Question of Method," Spectrum 10 (March 1980): 16-26. Cottrell has served for years as a leading editor within Adventist circles. In his article he reviews the historical and scientific process, through which a large segment of Adventist scholars, himself included, as a result of the usage of the historical-linguistic-contextual method in the study of Scripture, gradually has come to the conviction that this doctrine is without exegetical-doctrinal foundation. For a detailed historical description of the various phases in the related doctrinal ferment on soteriology within post-1850 Adventism, see also Geoffrey J. Paxton, The Shaking of Adventism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977), 85-156.

1844 Re-examined.<sup>1</sup> This rejectionist tendency gained momentum within Adventist circles when the prominent Adventist theologian Desmond Ford in response to Brinsmead's critique<sup>2</sup> publicly expressed his essential agreement. Although Ford and Brinsmead object to this doctrine on biblical-exegetical grounds,<sup>3</sup> it is nevertheless its supposed incompatibility with the classical Protestant doctrine on forensic justification that generates their most severe opposition. Ford says:

When we discuss the traditional Adventist teaching on the Sanctuary and the investigative Judgment--if we are seeing only places and dates we might as well not look. These have never saved a single soul. There is only one reason why any should disturb the peace of the Church by raising questions with reference to such matters. That reason is that the traditional view as usually presented has robbed

<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Brinsmead, 1844 Re-Examined: Syllabus (Fallbrook, Calif.: I. H. I., 1979). Brinsmead troubled the Adventist church during the 1960s with an intra-church agitation known as the 'Awakening message'. In the 1970s he became preoccupied with Luther's and Calvin's doctrines on forensic justification and started a strong agitation of this teaching in a magazine entitled Verdict: A Journal of Theology. The Reformation perspective led him to abandon his previous Awakening message and eventually also led him to abandon the unique doctrinal elements in Adventism. Brinsmead, early in the year 1979, openly began to launch a strong intra-church agitation in opposition to the Adventist system of beliefs in general and against the Adventist doctrine of judgment in particular.

<sup>2</sup> Desmond Ford's public response to Brinsmead's critique took place on October 27, 1979, at a meeting of the Association of Adventist Forums held on the campus of Pacific Union College, California. Desmond Ford, as a result of his public challenge of the Adventist doctrine of Judgment, was subsequently requested to prepare a written defense of his position to be presented at a hearing scheduled to be held from August 10 through to August 15, 1980 at the Glacier View Camp, Colorado. His document consists of almost a thousand pages and is entitled: Daniel 8:14 The Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment. This document contains his objections against the Adventist doctrine of judgment especially its eschatological, soteriological, and christological implications. His document also includes extensive references to the arguments presented by other critics within Adventist scholarly circles. See also Walter Utt, "Desmond Ford Raises the Sanctuary Question," Spectrum A Quarterly Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums 10 (Mar. 1980): 3-8; J. Robert Spangler, ed. "Christ and His Highpriestly Ministry," Special Sanctuary Issue, Ministry, Oct. 1980.

<sup>3</sup> The major theological and exegetical objections raised by Brinsmead and Ford are presented in the following sources: Robert Brinsmead, Judged by the Gospel: A Review of Adventism (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1980); Brinsmead, 1844 Re-Examined; Ford, Daniel 8:14.

Adventists of the precious gospel truth that Christ stands for us in the Judgment as certainly as He stands for us now, and that we can never perish so long as we trust in His imputed merits.<sup>1</sup>

Continuing his critique, he declared that "to teach two phases of heavenly ministry to probation's close cancels out the New Testament emphasis that Christ has already finished the great work of reconciliation."<sup>2</sup> Desmond Ford's attack upon the Adventist doctrine of judgment thus seems to spring from a pastoral concern for the purity of the gospel. He further supports his arguments by saying that "the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment is not biblical and [the] truth must be faced squarely. The healing balm we have is that the great physician of souls has already judged every man of faith worthy of eternal life."<sup>3</sup>

Brinsmead in a book entitled Judged by the Gospel rejects the Adventist doctrine of judgment on the charge that it is irreconcilable with the gospel. He states the logical issue thus: "The New Testament gospel, and the theory of an investigative judgment are not compatible."<sup>4</sup> Brinsmead further explains why he finds the Adventist doctrine of judgment incompatible with the essence of the gospel by saying:

We need look no further for the reason why Adventism has tried to live with a doctrine of justification by faith which falls short of both New Testament and Reformation doctrine. Much like old Judaism, Adventism still looks to the future for a full and complete justification. Adventism believes this will take place in the 'investigative Judgment' when Christ makes a 'final atonement' for His people. If the 'final atonement' is future, then real justification must still be future. Consequently, present assurance of salvation is virtually impossible when this Adventist schema is taken seriously.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Desmond Ford and Gilian Ford, The Adventist Crisis of Spiritual Identity (Newcastle, Calif.: Desmond Ford Publications, 1982), 78.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 79.

<sup>3</sup>"Interview with Desmond Ford," Evangelica, Nov. 1981, 40.

<sup>4</sup>Brinsmead, Judged by the Gospel, 55.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 49.

Brinsmead concludes that the sanctuary schema thus inevitably "leads to a false understanding of the gospel."<sup>1</sup> He thus objects to the eschatological judicial aspect of the Sanctuary Doctrine because it seems to locate the ultimate divine verdict of justification at the Final Judgment. It is thus the apparent soteriological dimension in the Adventist doctrine of judgment that generates the most severe opposition by critics from both inside and outside of the Adventist tradition. The critics claim that this doctrine has a disturbing and even a detrimental effect upon the Adventist appreciation of the Protestant article on forensic justification and all that it signifies as a present complete reality. In the thinking of the critics, the two doctrines apparently constitute an irreconcilable logical contradiction.

#### The Problem

The problem is that in Seventh-day Adventist theology the judicial aspect of salvation, which is classically expressed in the Reformation article on forensic justification, seems to be located as a future eschatological reality, according to the salvation-historical structure of the Sanctuary Doctrine. The doctrinal formulations indicating that the eternal destiny of believers, living and dead, remains judicially undecided prior to the Last Judgment, seem to imply that the forensic aspect of salvation was thus located as a future eschatological reality. This view, however, seems to collide directly with the classical Reformation article on forensic justification, which signifies that the believer will be judicially pronounced worthy of eternal life at the tribunal of God as a presently complete reality.<sup>2</sup> The fact that justification was seen as a presently complete

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> It is unanimously expressed, implicitly and explicitly, in the confessional and creedal statements issued by the classical Protestant tradition, that justification is a forensic reality which settles the eternal destiny of believers and thus provides full and complete salvation as a present act of God. See also Reformed Confessions of the

forensic reality logically implies that at least as long as true faith remains, the believer is fully justified; hence a believer's salvation will in every aspect be instantly complete at the moment that faith is born. The Adventist doctrine of judgment on the other hand seems to imply that salvation remains forensically incomplete prior to the judgment. The critics with a classical Protestant understanding of the gospel unanimously conclude that the soteriological implications of the Adventist doctrine of judgment seem disturbing, controversial, and even incompatible with the classical understanding of forensic justification and all that it signifies as a present complete soteriological reality. The idea that the present status of believers needs an eschatological forensic completion in a judgment involving works not only seems to contradict the classical doctrine of justification, but it also seems to constitute an infringement upon the biblical principle of grace, according to the reasoning of the critics.

This research is guided by the following question: Does the inclusion of an eschatological dimension in Adventist christology and soteriology necessarily imply that the two traditions are mutually exclusive in terms of fundamental soteriological principles, as claimed by the critics, or does a basic unity and continuity exist between the soteriologies of the two traditions, as claimed by Adventism? The answer to this

16th Century, ed. Arthur C. Cochrane (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 203-5, 255-57. See also The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 30-31, 107-24, 292, 473-74, 539-51. Research furthermore affirms that the Reformers and their tradition never assigned any real soteriological meaning to the eschatological judgment. The Final Judgment was consistently seen as a soteriologically non-determinative event. Ole Modalsli concluded his extensive research into the place and meaning of the Final Judgment in the theology of Martin Luther, by saying that "dem Gericht nach den Werken extra locum iustificationis sein Platz angewiesen wird." Ole Modalsli, Das Gericht nach den Werken. Ein Beitrag zu Luthers Lehre vom Gezetz (Drammen, Norway: Harald Lycke & Co., 1963), 95. James P. Martin likewise concludes that the Protestant tradition excluded the Final Judgment from the sphere of soteriology proper. See James P. Martin, The Last Judgment in Protestant Theology from Orthodoxy to Ritschl (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), 5, 27.

question may be of significance not only for the theological self understanding of the Adventist tradition itself but also for a better understanding of the existing theological relationship between Adventism and the historical Protestant tradition.

### Methodology

With regard to the Adventist tradition, this study focuses on its soteriology in the context of the unique Adventist salvation-historical perspective usually termed the Sanctuary Doctrine. The Sanctuary Doctrine is analyzed in its developed form, rather than in the various historical stages in its development. Neither is this study concerned with questions pertaining to the validity of the historicist school of prophetic-apocalyptic interpretations, nor with questions pertaining to the validity of the year 1844 as the time for the commencement of Christ's eschatological mediatorial work at the Final Judgment of the saints. The central focus is on the meaning and relationship of justification by faith and the Final Judgment of the saints.

Ellen White has been chosen as the primary source regarding the Adventist tradition because she has generally been recognized within Adventism as one of its most significant representatives and one of its most influential promoters.<sup>1</sup> Although Ellen White did not originate the theological rationale of the Sanctuary Doctrine, but basically summarized and authorized the Adventist pioneers' position, she nevertheless influenced it. In her mature expositions of this doctrine in 1884 and 1888, including her later references to it, she consistently interpreted, applied, and integrated this

<sup>1</sup>Her influence is linked to the fact that she has generally been recognized in the Adventist community as one who possessed the New Testament gift of the Spirit called the gift of prophecy. While Ellen White was recognized as one who possessed the prophetic gift, her function, role, and authority were formally defined as subordinate to Scripture. For a comprehensive description of her historical role within the Adventist church and her relationship to Adventist doctrines, consult the following sources: Froom, The Prophetic Faith, 4:964-1048; Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1969), 34-54; Questions on Doctrine, 89-98.

doctrine in her soteriology in a manner that transcends that of the Adventist pioneers. In the year 1888, she emerged within the Adventist church as a leading promoter of justification by faith solely through the imputed righteousness of Christ, an emphasis that was expressed in the context of the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine, especially its emphasis upon the mediatorial role of Christ.<sup>1</sup> This research is accordingly based primarily on Ellen White's mature theological insights from 1884 to her death in 1915. The Formula of Concord, as the consolidated stage of Lutheran orthodox theology, has been selected as the comparative basis for this study. The constituent elements of Lutheran orthodox soteriology, including its thematic-logical rationale, are analyzed in order to assess the place and meaning of the doctrines of justification, sanctification, and the Final Judgment in Lutheran thought. Since this study is primarily concerned with the structure and principles of the two soteriologies, no discussion is included of the issues, details, and differences between the two traditions, which have no determinative significance for the primary soteriological principles involved. It should accordingly be noted that the aspects of Adventist eschatology in general and the Sanctuary Doctrine in particular, which reach beyond the determinative moment of the judgment of the saints, seen as a pre-advent event, are excluded from this study.

The design of this research includes four major sections. Chapter 1 presents the basic principles of the classical Protestant tradition regarding justification and sanctification including their undergirding rationale. Chapter 2 analyzes the unique features

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<sup>1</sup>The soteriological themes, especially justification by faith through Christ's imputed righteousness, became a key doctrinal issue at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists held at Minneapolis in 1888 and received a mixed response from the delegates. At this event, Ellen White emerged as a leading promoter of this christological and soteriological emphasis, an emphasis which was presented in the context of her sanctuary insights. For a historical account of the Minneapolis conference, its theological struggles, and the key role of Ellen White, consult the following sources: A. V. Olson, Thirteen Crisis Years 1888-1901: From the Minneapolis Meeting to the Reorganization of the General Conference, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981), 12-147, 248-311; Froom, Movement of Destiny, 187-326.

of the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine with special focus on the place and meaning of Christ's post-ascension mediatorial work in relationship to the present-existential and eschatological-judicial dimensions in Adventist theology. Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the loci of the themes of faith, sanctification, and works in relationship to the Adventist perception of justification and judgment. Chapter 4 systematizes the constituent elements of Ellen White's soteriology and summarizes its basic principles in a concluding comparison with the Lutheran tradition.

## CHAPTER I

### THE BASIC PRINCIPLES IN LUTHERAN ORTHODOX SOTERIOLOGY

This investigation is concerned with the basic principles governing the mature soteriological thinking of the Lutheran tradition, hence the formative historical process from which this tradition emerged is not discussed. This study is thus limited to a systematic exposition and analysis of the major themes constituting the core of historic Lutheran soteriology, including its underlying thematic-logical rationale. The Formula of Concord,<sup>1</sup> as the consolidated stage of Lutheran orthodox theology, has been chosen as a representative expression of this tradition. This section is designed to provide the comparative perspective in which to assess whether or not the unique developments in Adventist christology, soteriology, and eschatology are in basic conflict with the essential principles of classical Protestant soteriology.

#### The Biblical Dimension of Law and Sin

It is a fundamental assertion in the Protestant tradition that, subsequent to the fall of man through the instrument of external moral law, God simultaneously

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<sup>1</sup>This confessional statement has been chosen since it represents the final formulation of the Lutheran faith settling the various controversies following the death of Luther in 1546. The Lutheran churches generally recognize The Formula of Concord (1577) as an authoritative expression of their faith. The Book of Concord, 463-636. For a detailed historical description of the controversies leading up to The Formula of Concord and its authority in the Lutheran churches, consult the following source: F. Bente, Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1965). The terms Lutheran tradition and Lutherans are used as a designation of the Lutheran faith as it is expressed in this document.

revealed His immutable moral will and the sinful condition of man, and thus his need of divine grace. Divine creation and human transgression were the basic perspectives in which the biblical dimension of moral law was seen in the Protestant tradition. The Lutheran orthodox tradition, like the Reformed Calvinist tradition, assigned a threefold function to the law of God in a world of human sinfulness.<sup>1</sup> First of all, the law functions as a guide in the establishment of civil order in an evil world; second, it exposes the reality and gravity of sin in terms of God's judgment; and third, it serves as a guide for the regenerate believing person with regard to Christian sanctification. The second function of the law, however, is the crucial one from a soteriological point of view, as it discloses the nature and gravity of human transgression and thus reveals man's sinfulness and his need of divine grace. This section of the study accordingly focuses on the second function of the moral law in the perspective of divine creation and human sinfulness.

<sup>1</sup> Luther distinguished only between the first and second functions of the law while he nevertheless repeatedly used the moral law in its third function without designating it as such. The subsequent Lutheran tradition therefore accordingly spoke of a threefold function of the law. The Book of Concord, 563-68. See also Wilfried Joest, Gesetz und Freiheit. Das Problem des tertius usus legis bei Luther und die Neutestamentliche Parainese (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1951), 18-129; Modalsli, Das Gericht nach den Werken, 148-77. For Calvin, a positive evaluation of the law allowed the third use of the law to be the primary one, while to Luther the revelatory and condemnatory function of the Law was the chief one. See Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, 2, 7, 1. Edited by John T. McNeill. The Library of Christian Classics. Vols. 20-21. Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1975. Luther's Works: Amerian Edition. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia & Fortress Press, 1957, 26: 304-23. This is not a fundamental theological disagreement, but rather a question of perspective. Calvin views the moral law from the perspective of its divine rationale, its original imprint in the heart of man, and its subsequent function for the regenerate; hence he views its role of exposing sin as accidental to its deepest meaning. Luther, however, usually spoke of law in terms of the rationale for its historic promulgation at Sinai, namely the problem of sin and the need for its disclosure as a preparation for grace. Luther thus, from a soteriological point of view, identified its function of exposing sin as the primary one. Despite this difference in terms of perspective there seems to be no fundamental disagreement with regard to the divine rationale, purpose, and functions of the divine moral law.

**The Law Reveals and Demands  
Original Righteousness**

It was consistently maintained in the Protestant tradition that man originally needed no external code to coerce and guide him to righteousness, since God's moral goodness was originally reflected in man's heart prior to the Fall. The Lutherans continually expressed this anthropological insight in terms of divine creation. In The Formula of Concord it was said that "God created man pure and holy and without sin."<sup>1</sup> It was furthermore declared that to be created in the image of God means that "our first parents even before the Fall did not live without the law, for the law of God was written into their hearts when they were created in the image of God."<sup>2</sup> The biblical dimension of law was accordingly seen as a manifestation of "the unchangeable will of God"<sup>3</sup> by which He continues to reveal and demand original righteousness. This was stated thus: "He [God] employs the law to instruct the regenerate out of it and to show and indicate to them in the Ten Commandments what the acceptable will of God is."<sup>4</sup> The core of the Lutheran Protestant understanding of law and righteousness was summed up as follows:

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 466.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 480. This statement reflects the words of Luther who said that "man was created on the sixth day according to the image and similitude of God, so that his will was good and sound; moreover, his reason or intellect was sound, so that whatever God wanted or said, man also wanted, believed, and understood." LW 1: 141. He added "that righteousness . . . was truly part of his nature, so that it was Adam's nature to love God, to believe God, to know God, etc." LW 1: 165.

<sup>3</sup>The Book of Concord, 481. This view was expressed by Luther when he declared that "whoever wants to know what good works are . . . needs to know nothing more than God's commandments." Selected Writings of Martin Luther, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 1: 105.

<sup>4</sup>The Book of Concord, 566.

We unanimously believe, teach, and confess on the basis of what we have said that, strictly speaking, the law is a divine doctrine which reveals the righteousness and immutable will of God, shows how man ought to be disposed in his nature, thoughts, words, and deeds in order to be pleasing and acceptable to God.<sup>1</sup>

It was thus recognized that the biblical dimension of law was grounded in God's eternal, unchangeable character and that its rationale was thus independent of and prior to the issues of sin and salvation. It was furthermore recognized that the altercentric divine moral disposition was present in man's mind and heart, as man was related to God in trust and love and thus naturally thought and acted in harmony with His will. The divine moral law, according to the Lutherans, thus continues subsequent to the fall of man to demand the presence of the original spiritual relationship with God now lost.

#### Sin as an Inherited Corruption of Man's Spiritual Nature

This section deals with the nature of sin and thus provides the necessary perspective in which to assess the possible soteriological power of the law. The biblical creation perspective, in which man was seen as existing in a spiritual relationship with God, constitutes the dimension in which the Lutherans understood and formulated their doctrine of sin. In The Formula of Concord it was stated that "it is an established truth that Christians must regard and recognize as sin not only the actual

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 561. A similar view may be seen in the following texts of Martin Luther: LW 26: 148; LW 31: 348, 353; LW 34: 118; LW 35: 366. Martin Chemnitz summed up the Lutheran insight with regard to the rationale of the Decalogue when he stated that "this image or conformity to the norm of righteousness in God the divine law requires of all men in the first and last commandment." Martin Chemnitz, Examination of the Council of Trent, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1971), 1: 323. Melanchthon expressed a similar view when he argued that "the law is spiritual, that is, it demands spiritual things--truth, faith glorifying God, love for God." He added that "Christ teaches that an inner disposition is demanded by the law, not only the external pretence of works, for the law prohibits covetousness." Melanchthon and Bucer, ed., Wilhelm Pauck, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 1:19, 80. See also ibid., 75.

transgression of God's commandments but also, and primarily, the abominable and dreadful inherited disease which has corrupted our entire nature. In fact, we must consider this as the chief sin, the root and fountain of all actual sin.<sup>1</sup> The original damage of man's spiritual relationship with God was seen not only as being inherited, it was also seen as being fatal for man's subsequent spiritual performance, according to the Lutheran orthodox position. It was declared that "we believe, teach, and confess that original sin is not a slight corruption of human nature, but that it is so deep a corruption that nothing sound or uncorrupted has survived in man's body or soul, in his inward or outward powers."<sup>2</sup> The Lutherans considered the spiritual damage to be so radical that they declared "that in spiritual matters man's understanding and reason are blind and that he understands nothing by his own powers."<sup>3</sup> Thus they could declare that "in the sight of God original sin, like a spiritual leprosy, has thoroughly and entirely poisoned and corrupted human nature."<sup>4</sup>

When the Lutherans described the damage of original transgression it was done in a twofold way. It was partly described from the perspective of man's original righteousness and relationship with God as a loss of the original, positive spiritual disposition towards God, and partly from the perspective of man's subsequent unrighteousness as the presence of a radically negative spiritual disposition towards God. They strongly emphasized that this spiritual corruption was rooted in the heart, mind, soul, and will. In The Formula of Concord they confessed that "original sin is

<sup>1</sup> The Book of Concord, 509.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 467.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 470.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 509. A similar conviction was expressed by Martin Luther in the following sources: LW 34: 164; LW 32: 226.

the complete lack or absence of the original concreated righteousness of paradise or of the image of God according to which man was originally created . . . , together with a disability and ineptitude as far as the things of God are concerned.<sup>1</sup> This view was amplified by the declaration "that man's unregenerated will is not only turned away from God, but has also become an enemy of God, so that he desires and wills only that which is evil and opposed to God."<sup>2</sup> This description of sin as the absence of the original, positive spiritual disposition towards God and as the presence of a negative evil disposition, manifesting itself in spiritual ignorance, selfishness, and hostility towards God, was stated in The Formula of Concord as follows:

Original sin in human nature is not only a total lack of good in spiritual, divine things, but that at the same time it replaces the lost image of God in man with a deep, wicked, abominable, bottomless, inscrutable, and inexpressible corruption of his entire nature in all its powers, especially of the highest and foremost powers of the soul in mind, heart, and will. As a result, since the Fall man inherits an inborn wicked stamp, an interior uncleanness of the heart and evil desires and inclinations. By nature every one of us inherits from Adam a heart, sensation, and mind-set which, in its highest powers and the light of reason, is by nature diametrically opposed to God and his highest commands and is actually enmity against God, especially in divine and spiritual matters.<sup>3</sup>

It was finally affirmed that the core substance of all human sinfulness was constituted by the disposition of disbelief in God. It was stated that "unbelief is a root and fountainhead of all culpable sin."<sup>4</sup> As far as the Lutheran tradition was concerned,

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 510.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 470.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 510.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 561. In The Preface to the Epistle of Romans Luther identified disbelief as the core substance of an inner, negative spiritual disposition towards God, in contrast to faith, which he defined as the core substance of the inner, positive, spiritual disposition towards God originally present in man. He stated: "Sin, in the Scripture, means not only the outward works of the body but also all the activities that move men to do these works, namely, the inmost heart, with all its powers. . . . Even outward works of sin do not take place, unless a man plunges into it completely with body and soul. And Scripture looks especially into the heart and singles out the root and source of all sin, which is disbelief in the inmost heart. As, therefore faith alone

sin was an inherited spiritual corruption that originated subsequent to Creation. Sin constitutes a severe damage to man's original spiritual nature, resulting in the presence of a radically negative spiritual disposition, of which the core substance is unbelief in God. Although man's spiritual relationship has thus been radically damaged, the moral law nevertheless continues to confront man with its original spiritual, relational, and legal imperatives.

#### The Law Reveals the Radical Consequences of Human Sinfulness

As the biblical dimension of moral law confronts the sinner with the divine moral imperative, he is forced to acknowledge the presence of a deep corruption of his spiritual nature and the reality of divine condemnation. In the Lutheran tradition this function of the law was strongly emphasized because it was recognized that without law, sin is dead; that is, the sinner does not without the aid of law recognize that his spiritual disposition is fundamentally evil and that accordingly he is subject to the wrath and judgment by God. The Lutherans declared that "this damage is so unspeakable that it may not be recognized by a rational process"<sup>1</sup> and that "reason does not know and understand the true nature of this inherited damage."<sup>2</sup> They accordingly

makes a person righteous, and brings the spirit and pleasure in good outward works, so unbelief alone commits sin.

For this reason too, before good or bad works take place, as the good or bad fruits, there must first be in the heart faith or unbelief. Unbelief is the root, the sap, and the chief power of all sin." LW 35: 369. See also LW 1: 147-8, 179. Thus Luther not only identified unbelief and faith as the core substances of either a negative or a positive spiritual disposition towards God, but he did so in the context of his anthropological insight regarding the causal sequence from the inward disposition to the outward action. The outward sins are thus seen as the fruit of an inward, sinful disposition of unbelief, just as outward good acts are seen as the fruit of an inward righteous disposition of faith in Christ.

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 467.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 510.

declared that "in spiritual matters man's understanding and reason are blind and that he understands nothing by his own powers."<sup>1</sup> The spiritual damage is thus perceived by the Lutherans as being so radical that a sinner in his present natural state remains unaware that there is something fundamentally wrong.

It was, furthermore, a fundamental conviction among the Lutherans that the sinner is not only ignorant of the reality of his sinfulness but that he is totally incapable of liberating himself from its power and thus able to fulfil the divine requirements. They emphasized that "before man is illuminated, converted, reborn, renewed, and drawn by the Holy Spirit, he can do nothing in spiritual things of himself and by his own powers."<sup>2</sup> They furthermore declared that "Scripture denies to the intellect, heart, and will of the natural man every capacity, aptitude, skill, and ability to think anything good or right in spiritual matters, to understand them, to begin them, to will them, to undertake them, to do them, to accomplish or to cooperate in them as of himself."<sup>3</sup>

Their conviction was summarized in The Formula of Concord as follows:

We believe that in spiritual and divine things the intellect, heart, and will of unregenerated man cannot by any native or natural powers in any way understand, believe, accept, imagine, will, begin, accomplish, do, effect, or cooperate, but that man is entirely and completely dead and corrupted as far as anything good is concerned. Accordingly, we believe that after the Fall and prior to his conversion not a spark of spiritual powers has remained or exists in man. . . . Hence according to its perverse disposition and nature the natural free will is mighty and active only in the direction of that which is displeasing and contrary to God.<sup>4</sup>

In accordance with this hamartiological insight, the Lutherans maintained that natural man will neither know the goodness of God nor the reality of his own

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 470. See also LW 34: 154; LW 26: 125.

<sup>2</sup>The Book of Concord, 525.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 522.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 521.

sinfulness unless it is revealed to him through the biblical dimension of the moral law. They declared: "Everything that preaches about our sin and the wrath of God, no matter how or when it happens, is the proclamation of the law,"<sup>1</sup> and that "everything that rebukes sin is and belongs to the law, the proper function of which is to condemn sin and to lead to a knowledge of sin."<sup>2</sup> The law even exposes unbelief as the deepest motive and disposition behind all actual sin according to the Lutheran tradition. The Lutherans said: "Since unbelief is a root and fountainhead of all culpable sin, the law reprobates unbelief also."<sup>3</sup> They accordingly defined the spiritual function of the law as follows: "The true function of the law remains, to rebuke sin and to give instruction about good works."<sup>4</sup> The biblical dimension of the moral law was thus consistently seen as the instrument by which God continually seeks to reveal to the sinner the reality and gravity of the sin problem especially in terms of his relationship with God.

This exposing of sinfulness, however, takes place in the context of God's judgment as the moral law continually confronts the sinner with the ultimate existential legal consequences of sin. The Lutherans stated: "Because of the fall of the first man, our nature or person is under the accusation and condemnation of the law of God"<sup>5</sup> which implies that the law "threatens the transgressors of the law with God's wrath

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 560.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 561.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Luther said that "the true function and the chief and proper use of the Law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and the well-deserved wrath of God." LW 26: 309. See also ibid., 148; LW 32: 224.

<sup>5</sup>The Book of Concord, 509.

and temporal and eternal punishment.”<sup>1</sup> They further said “that through the preaching of the law man learns to know his sins and the wrath of God and experiences genuine terror, contrition, and sorrow in his heart.”<sup>2</sup> The biblical dimension of the law thus reveals and exposes that the worst evil of sin is not the radical spiritual corruption of human nature but the legal problem of the divine condemnation and wrath against human guilt.

The biblical dimension of moral the law was thus perceived by Lutherans as the instrument by which God moves a sinner from ignorance to consciousness regarding the divine moral character and regarding the reality, gravity, and totality of man’s spiritual corruption and condemnation before God. Through this process, the sinner is forced to acknowledge that he is so ruled and bound by his evil disposition that he is totally incapable of liberating himself from its legal and existential bondage and thus escape the judgment of God. Thus the law reveals that the spiritual, relational, and legal bondage of man is not partial but total, according to the Lutheran tradition. It was

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 561.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 531. Luther explained how a sinner’s encounter with the law reveals the depth and character of his spiritual bondage; a bondage that implies that even the highest virtues of which fallen humanity is capable is nothing but a manifestation of his inner spiritual depravity before God. He said: “For even though you keep the law outwardly, with works from fear of punishment or love of reward, nevertheless you do all this unwillingly, without pleasure in and love of the law, but with reluctance and under compulsion. For if the law were not there, you would prefer to act otherwise. The conclusion is that from the bottom of your heart you hate the law. What point is there in your teaching others not to steal, if you yourself are a thief at heart, and would gladly be one outwardly if you dared.” LW 35: 366-67. The sinner’s encounter with the moral law, according to Luther, thus ultimately proves that the unregenerate man, even with the aid of the law, is completely powerless in terms of conforming to the will of God, as he further affirmed: “For only when man’s sin is disclosed and increased through the Law does he begin to see the wickedness of the human heart and its hostility towards the Law and towards God, the Author of the Law. Then he seriously feels that he not only does not love but hates and blasphemers God, the supremely good, with His most holy Law. Now he is forced to confess that there is nothing good in him at all. LW 26: 328-29. See also LW 1: 165; LW 26: 125-26, 139-40, 148, 313-15, 329, 331, 336. 345; LW 34: 119; LW 32: 224; LW 35: 377.

a fundamental principle in Lutheran Protestant thought that man's spiritual impotence, in the context of his legal separation from God, constitutes the essence of man's utter helplessness and lostness in terms of fulfilling the legal and relational demands of the divine moral law. The soteriological powerlessness of the law was depicted as arising from the fact that the basic preconditions for performing God's will were completely absent in the post-Fall man. The sinner's encounter with the moral law, instead of resolving the problem of sin, actually reveals the depth of his spiritual depravity, his helplessness in terms of being and doing what God demands, the depth of his spiritual and legal estrangement from God, and the radicalness of the divine wrath against sin, and thus his inability to escape the wrath, condemnation, and judgment of God.

The Threefold Principle of Justification by Grace,  
by Christ, and by Faith

The Lutherans not only maintained that the unregenerate person cannot secure the divine approval by means of the moral law due to his spiritual corruption, they also taught that the actual righteousness of the believing regenerate person does not contribute to man's approval before God. This issue, however, is linked to the implications of the gospel rather than the implications of the moral law; as such a compliance with God's will presupposes the presence of an inward spiritual renewal. The clarification of this issue requires an investigation of the place and meaning assigned by Lutheran theology to the substance and sanctifying function of faith in Christ. From a soteriological perspective, the Lutherans detected a threefold reason why moral law and works of law are excluded from articles of Christian righteousness and justification. They consistently affirmed that righteousness and justification are receivable exclusively as a free gift of God, through grace alone, Christ alone, and faith alone. The Lutherans termed this doctrine "the chief article of the entire Christian

doctrine.”<sup>1</sup> Terms like righteousness, justification, and pardon were continually used in the Lutheran tradition in relationship with the other central soteriological concepts such as grace, Christ, and faith.

### The Meaning of the Concept of Justification

For the Lutherans, the term justification carried a specific meaning that needs to be assessed prior to an investigation of the theological relationships in which the term appears. They defined their understanding of the term by saying that “we believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Scripture the word ‘justify’ means in this article ‘absolve,’ that is, pronounce free from sin.”<sup>2</sup> They affirmed this

<sup>1</sup> The Book of Concord, 540. This view clearly reflects the conviction of the Lutheran Reformers. Luther stated that “this is the chief doctrine of the Christian faith.” He added that “the doctrine of justification must be learned diligently. For in it are included all the other doctrines of our faith; and if it is sound, all the others are sound as well.” LW 26: 282, 83. In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, with regard to the article of justification, Melanchthon wrote that “in this controversy the main doctrine of Christianity is involved.” The Book of Concord, 107.

<sup>2</sup> The Book of Concord, 473. It is important to notice the position of the Reformers with regard to this key Protestant concept. Melanchthon affirmed in the Apology to the Augsburg Confession that “‘to be justified’ here does not mean that a wicked man is made righteous but that he is pronounced righteous in a forensic way.” Ibid., 143. He amplified this insight by saying that “in this passage ‘justify’ is used in a judicial way to mean ‘to absolve a guilty man and pronounce him righteous,’ and to do so on account of someone else’s righteousness, namely, Christ’s, which is communicated to us through faith.” Ibid., 154. Luther said that “the term ‘to be justified’ means that a man is considered righteous.” LW 34: 167. Paul Althaus noticed that the terms to justify and justification in the thinking of Luther basically meant “the judgment of God with which he declares a man to be righteous (*justum reputare* or *computare*).” Paul Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 226. For Luther and Melanchthon, the meaning of the terms to justify or justification clearly referred to a legal act by God at the divine tribunal and not to a divinely induced inner transformation of the sinner. Calvin shared the same fundamental conviction with regard to the forensic meaning of the terms to justify and justification. He declared that “he is said to be justified in God’s sight who is both reckoned righteous in God’s judgment and has been accepted on account of his [Christ’s] righteousness.” Inst. 3. 11. 2. Calvin expressed his basic conviction regarding the legal forensic meaning of the divine act of justification with precision and sharpness in the following statement: “Now he is justified who is reckoned in the condition not of a sinner, but of a righteous man, and for this reason, he stands firm

insight, saying: "We believe, teach, and confess unanimously . . . that a poor sinner is justified before God (that is, he is absolved and declared utterly free from all his sins, and from the verdict of well deserved damnation, and is adopted as a child of God and an heir of eternal life)."<sup>1</sup> Thus they could speak of justification as being "declared just before God."<sup>2</sup> Their reference to Christ's righteousness as the unique ground of man's approval before God's tribunal affirms their forensic understanding of the term to justify. They maintained that "only the righteousness of the obedience, passion, and death of Christ which is reckoned to faith can stand before God's tribunal."<sup>3</sup> The

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before God's judgment seat while all sinners fall. If an innocent accused person be summoned before the judgment seat of a fair judge where he will be judged according to his innocence he is said to be justified before the judge. Thus, justified before God is the man who . . . can meet and satisfy God's judgment." Inst. 3. 11. 2. For Calvin, just like the other Reformers, the meaning of the terms to justify or justification thus clearly refer to a legal judicial act by God at the divine tribunal and not to a divinely induced spiritual transformation of the sinner. The Reformers, however, also used the term justification more comprehensively as a reference to their soteriology in general, which includes the rationale on which justification and acceptance were granted, namely by grace alone, Christ alone, and faith alone. See LW 26: 223, 282-83; Inst. 3. 17. 8; Inst. 3. 11. 2.

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 540.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 549.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 545. Martin Chemnitz, a Lutheran theologian, also located the term justification in the perspective of a divine tribunal at which God passes judgment upon men presently and eschatologically. He maintained that the concept of justification is a "judicial term" and that it refers to a "judicial action"; and that it basically means to "declare righteous" and "pronounce just" as a "judicial act" at the "divine tribunal." Chemnitz, Examination, I: 470-76, 485, 500-1. G. C. Berkouwer, a Reformed theologian, says that the divine act of justification has a forensic and declarative character and that this was the conviction of the Reformers: "We need only state forthrightly that declarative or forensic justification as it was, on biblical grounds, understood by the Reformation, rules out the thought of faith as a meritorious condition of salvation. Forensic justification has to do with what is extra nos, with the imputation of what Christ has done on our behalf. This was indeed the original disposition of the Reformers." G. C. Berkouwer, Faith and Justification (Grand Rapids. Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1954), 91. Berkouwer also speaks of justification as a "divine judgment over man in a merciful pardon," and that "sola fide has to do with a merciful divine judgment of the ungodly." He accordingly locates this act of God in the context "of the tribunal Dei." Ibid., 82, 106, 93.

Lutherans referred to the following biblical rationale for their legal judicial perception of the term to justify:

Accordingly the word 'justify' here means to declare righteous and free from sins and from the eternal punishment of these sins on account of the righteousness of Christ which God reckons to faith (Phil. 3: 9). And this is the usual usage and meaning of the word in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments. 'He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord' (Prov. 17: 15). 'Woe to those who acquit the godless for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right' (Isa. 5: 22). 'Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies' (Rom. 8: 33), that is, absolves and acquits from sins.<sup>1</sup>

The Formula of Concord thus reflects the conviction of the Reformers with regard to the meaning of the terms to justify or justification, as a reference to a judicial declarative act of God at the divine tribunal with regard to the legal status of a person and not as a reference to a divinely induced spiritual transformation of the sinner. Concepts such as remission of sins, acquittal, pardon, forgiveness, accounting, reckoning, and imputation in the Lutheran orthodox tradition were closely correlated with the forensic understanding of justification as a divine verdict of approval. These terms were accordingly used interchangeably with the term justification.<sup>2</sup> While the terms to justify and justification in the Lutheran tradition thus basically referred to a legal forensic act of God and not to a divinely induced effective transformation of the sinner, this does not, however, imply that the Lutheran tradition taught a doctrine of justification that was disjoined from any spiritual renewal in man, as this doctrine includes the spiritual dimension of faith. Faith was seen not only as the dimension by which Christ and His alien righteousness were embraced, received, and possessed by the believer as his primary and foundational righteousness before God, but also as the core of a new spiritual reality in man.

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<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 541-42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 473, 540-47. See also LW 34: 153, 162; LW 26: 204, 230-37, 260, 360; LW 27: 221.

### The Principle of Grace

The Lutheran orthodox tradition continually emphasized that divine grace was the ultimate ground of God's saving activities on behalf of man and thus the sole ground for a believer's justification, sanctification, and glorification. In The Formula of Concord grace is identified as God's favor and loving and merciful disposition towards sinners and not as a divine quality infused in the human soul (gratia infusa). It was declared that God saves by "his pure and unmerited grace and mercy," and that "their salvation rests in the gracious election of God."<sup>1</sup> For the Lutheran tradition grace was first of all a favorable and merciful disposition of God towards sinners--an understanding that is continually reflected in their usage of the term. The Lutherans consistently maintained that a sinner's justification is based exclusively on divine mercy. Statements such as "by sheer grace," and "by pure grace," and "purely by grace"<sup>2</sup> all stressed the exclusiveness of divine grace in terms of man's salvation.

The Lutheran conviction regarding the exclusiveness of divine grace was sharply manifested through their insistence that works, law, and human merits were

<sup>1</sup> The Book of Concord, 626, 631. The primary meaning of the term grace was defined by Luther in his Preface to the Epistle of Romans as a favorable divine attitude towards sinners, which constitutes the root and source of all divine gifts. He declared that "between grace and gift there is this difference. Grace actually means God's favor, or the good will in which in himself he bears towards us, by which he is disposed to give us Christ and to pour into us the Holy Spirit with his gifts." LW 35: 369-70. In his early text Contra Latomus Luther specifically defined grace as divine favor. He stated: "I take grace in the proper sense of the favor of God--not a quality of the souls, as is taught by our more recent writers." LW 32: 227. Martin Chemnitz recognized that the word grace was used in Scripture in a more inclusive sense as a reference not only to a merciful divine disposition but also to all the gifts that issue from this disposition. He declared that "the word 'grace' in Scripture often means favor, good will, or mercy; sometimes, indeed, it also means the gifts which are conferred from good will." Chemnitz, Examination, 494-95. This inclusive usage of the term does not negate the fundamental Protestant meaning of divine grace but rather confirms it, since all gifts are seen as issuing from God's favorable disposition.

<sup>2</sup> The Book of Concord, 541, 543, 544, 623.

excluded from man's acceptance and justification before God. They declared that "a poor sinner is justified before God . . . without any merit or worthiness on our part, and without any preceding, present, or subsequent works, by sheer grace."<sup>1</sup> They also stated that "we are justified and saved without our works and merit, purely by grace."<sup>2</sup> This conviction regarding the exclusiveness of divine grace was further sharpened through their insistence that the merits and achievements of Christ, as a manifestation of divine mercy, constitute the sole ground of man's justification. They said that "a poor sinner is justified . . . by sheer grace, solely through the merit of the total obedience, the bitter passion, the death, and the resurrection of Christ."<sup>3</sup> It was added that "forgiveness of sins . . . is bestowed upon us by pure grace because of the unique merit of Christ, the mediator."<sup>4</sup> The inclusion of the merits and achievements of Christ to the exclusion of law, works, and human merits from the sphere of man's salvation thus constitutes the theological context in which they understood and defined the meaning of divine grace.

In the Lutheran tradition, the term grace was defined as a loving, merciful, and favorable divine disposition towards sinners, manifesting itself in divine acts of saving mercy, and thus as a divine attribute and not as a divine quality infused in the human soul (gratia infusa). It was further maintained that this gracious disposition of God manifested in actions was the sole ground for a believer's justification before God, including the reception of all other divine gifts of grace. According to the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 540-41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 623.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 540-41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 544. Luther continually emphasized the exclusiveness of grace as the sole ground of man's justification. See Luther LW 26: 6, 123, 146, 160, 177, 180, 183, 234, 253, 280; LW 31: 367; LW 32: 227-239; LW 34: 111.

Lutherans, the exclusiveness of the principle of grace thus implies that no law and human achievements or any actual righteousness in the regenerate person may ever contribute to a sinner's justification and acceptance before God.

### The Christ Principle

The soteriological work of Christ was, as already noticed, continually related to divine grace in the Lutheran tradition. The atoning work of Christ was seen as a manifestation of divine grace and not as a cause of it. Expressions such as "pure grace in Christ,"<sup>1</sup> "by sheer grace, solely through the merit . . . of Christ,"<sup>2</sup> and "for the sake of his obedience we have forgiveness of sins by grace"<sup>3</sup> clearly relate divine grace with the soteriological work of Christ. This relationship was further expressed as follows: "Scripture teaches that the righteousness of faith before God consists solely in a gracious reconciliation or the forgiveness of sins, which is bestowed upon us by pure grace because of the unique merit of Christ."<sup>4</sup> In the Lutheran tradition, the saving activities of Christ, through His incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection, were thus generally related to divine grace as the visible manifestation of the favorable, loving, and merciful disposition and attitude of God towards sinful humanity.

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 496.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 541.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 544. Especially Luther recognized a causal relationship between divine grace and the atoning work of Christ. He called Christ "the Dispenser of grace, the Saviour, and the Pitier. In other words, He is nothing but sheer, infinite mercy, which gives and is given." LW 26: 178. He also stated that "'God so loved the world.' This is an inexpressibly beautiful message; that God, the heavenly Father, had compassion on us and in His mercy and pity gave us His Son." He added that this "was done, not in view of any piety or merit in us but out of sheer grace. And to whom was this grace shown? To 'the world,' that is, to those who were condemned and lost." LW 22: 373; see also LW 27: 274.

### The Atoning Work of Christ

The mediatorial work by Christ, embodied in His incarnation, passion, and resurrection, received extensive attention by the Lutheran tradition due to the central soteriological significance of Christ's personal righteousness and atoning death. It was emphasized that it was God who, through the atoning work of Christ, provided the necessary solution to the predicament of sinful humanity. The divine law, human lostness, and the sinner's need for a righteousness that can stand in the judgment of God constitute the basic theological perspective in which the Lutherans understood the meaning of the atoning work of Christ.

The moral as well as the penal demands of the divine law constituted the basis on which the Lutherans perceived the meaning of the righteousness and merits of Christ. They spoke of the "obedience, which Christ rendered to his Father from his birth until his ignominious death on the cross for us."<sup>1</sup> The substance of this obedience was specified as follows: "Therefore his [Christ's] obedience consists not only in his suffering and dying, but also in his spontaneous subjection to the law in our stead and his keeping of the law."<sup>2</sup> It was specifically indicated that the righteousness of Christ, achieved through His life, passion, and death, perfectly matched the spiritual and penal demands of the moral law, as follows:

We believe, teach, and confess that the total obedience of Christ's total person, which he rendered to his heavenly Father even to the most ignominious death of the cross, is reckoned to us as righteousness. For neither the obedience nor the

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<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 543.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 541. It was added that "the righteousness which by grace is reckoned to faith or to the believers is the obedience, the passion, and the resurrection of Christ when he satisfied the law for us and paid for our sin." Ibid. See also ibid., 540, 543, 545.

passion of the human nature alone, without the divine nature, could render satisfaction to the eternal and almighty God for the sins of all the world.<sup>1</sup>

The life, passion, and death of Christ were thus seen by the Lutherans as a perfect match to the ultimate spiritual and penal demands that the moral law requires of fallen humanity. It was thus axiomatic for the Lutheran tradition that Christ perfectly fulfilled the ultimate spiritual and penal demands of the divine moral law as an act of substitution through active legal fulfilment and passive penal satisfaction. The mediatorial work of Christ, embodied in His life, passion, and death, thus constituted one indivisible and complete reality continuously referred to by the Lutherans as the righteousness and merits of Christ.

### The Righteousness of Christ

The righteousness and merits residing in Christ's person were seen in the Lutheran orthodox tradition as the exclusive grounds on which a repentant, believing sinner would be granted forgiveness and justification before God as a legal act of imputation. The Lutherans maintained that there existed a fundamental correspondence between the merits of Christ, the demands of God's moral law, and the sinner's needs in terms of justification. The righteousness demanded from the sinner at the tribunal of

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 549. They expanded this insight, saying: "Since, as was mentioned above, it is the obedience of the entire person, therefore it is a perfect satisfaction and reconciliation of the human race, since it satisfied the eternal and immutable righteousness of God revealed in the law." Ibid. Luther reflected a similar conviction when he said that "he [Christ] has done no sin; . . . that is, he fulfilled the law." He added that the "will of God which Christ fulfills can be nothing else than the very obedience of Christ." LW 34: 119. Luther also stated that the gospel teaches him "what someone else has done for me, namely, that Jesus Christ, the son of God, has suffered and died to deliver me from sin and death." LW 26: 91 Thus, according to Luther, Christ "with His blood . . . rendered satisfaction for sin, death, and hell." LW 22: 392. Luther sums up the idea that the righteousness of Christ fully matches the deepest need of the sinner before God by saying that "by this fortunate exchange with us He took upon Himself our sinful person and granted us His innocent and victorious Person. Clothed and dressed in this, we are freed from the curse of the law, because Christ Himself voluntarily became a curse for us." LW 26: 284. See also LW 26: 277.

God had been provided by Christ through His personal fulfillment of the positive spiritual and the negative penal demands of the divine moral law. The personal righteousness of Christ was seen as having a legal substitutional function with regard to the sinner. They declared that "solely for the sake of his obedience we have forgiveness of sins by grace [and] are accounted righteous."<sup>1</sup> They added that "we hold that Christ with his perfect obedience covers all our sins."<sup>2</sup> Statements such as "Christ alone is our righteousness," and "the righteousness of Christ's obedience," and "that Christ is our righteousness"<sup>3</sup> all fundamentally expressed the exclusive legally substitutional significance of Christ's righteousness.

Furthermore, Christ was, in the Lutheran tradition, referred to as mediator in relationship to a believer's personal appropriation of Christ's righteousness. The Lutherans declared that "renewal and sanctification are a blessing of Christ, the mediator,"<sup>4</sup> and that "Abraham was justified before God through faith alone for the sake of the Mediator without the addition of his own works."<sup>5</sup> While the biblical theme

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 541.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 543.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 472, 473, 539. Luther referred to the legal efficacy of Christ's righteousness and merit when he said that "this is an infinite righteousness, and one that swallows up all sins in a moment, for it is impossible that sin should exist in Christ. On the contrary, he who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; he is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as he." LW 31: 298. See also LW 26: 127, 233, 295; LW 22: 393; LW 32: 236.

<sup>4</sup>The Book of Concord, 544.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 545. See also ibid., 543, 549. Luther specifically declared that "Christ has gone to the Father and is now invisible; that He sits in heaven at the right hand of the Father . . . , that He is our High Priest, interceding for us and reigning over us and in us through grace." LW 26: 8. Luther added that "God forgives and is merciful to us because Christ, our advocate and priest, intercedes and sanctifies our beginning in righteousness." LW 34: 153. Luther emphasized the soteriological

regarding Christ as a present mediating High Priest at the right hand of God, continually serving as man's living substitute, received limited attention in the Lutheran tradition, in terms of the believer's personal appropriation of His righteousness, it remained nevertheless a fundamental theme in Lutheran thought.

Legal imputation or reckoning was seen by the Lutherans as the manner in which the personal righteousness of Christ might be legally shared by the believing sinner. They declared that "the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to us,"<sup>1</sup> and "that a poor sinner is justified before God . . . by sheer grace, solely through the merit of the total obedience . . . of Christ, our Lord, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness."<sup>2</sup> They were convinced that this was the only legal ground on which a sinner could stand before God and accordingly said that "only the righteousness of the obedience, passion, and death of Christ which is reckoned to faith can stand before God's tribunal."<sup>3</sup> The whole idea was more comprehensively stated as follows:

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significance of Christ's present mediatorial function in terms of the application of His righteousness, as follows: He declared: "But it consists of spiritual things through which he by an invisible service intercedes for us in heaven before God, there offers himself as a sacrifice, and does all things a priest should do, as Paul describes under the type of Melchizedek in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Nor does he only pray and intercede for us but he teaches us inwardly through the living instruction of his Spirit." LW 31: 354. Luther also penned that "sin is always present, and the godly feel it. But it is ignored and hidden in the sight of God, because Christ the Mediator stands between; because we take hold of Him by faith, all our sins are sins no longer." LW 26: 133.

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 543.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 540-41.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 545. This insight fully correlates with the assertion that "in justification before God faith trusts neither in contrition, nor in love nor in other virtues, but solely in Christ and (in him) in his perfect obedience with which he fulfilled the law of God in our stead and which is reckoned to the believer as righteousness." Ibid., 544.

Therefore they maintained that the righteousness of faith is forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and the fact that we are adopted as God's children solely on account of the obedience of Christ, which, through faith alone, is reckoned by pure grace to all true believers as righteousness, and that they are absolved from all their unrighteousness because of this obedience.<sup>1</sup>

The Lutherans, accordingly, believed that when the sinner legally shared the personal righteousness and merits of Christ through a divine act of imputation, then his sinfulness would be legally neutralized and forgiven before God. The Lutherans thus recognized that the personal righteousness of Christ is the only reality that can meet the divine judicial standard, and that it is the only valid basis on which a sinner might be declared righteous before God, to the exclusion of all human achievements prior to or after conversion, and that it will only have saving effect for the sinner through divine imputation. Divine mercy was thus seen as providing a satisfactory legal basis for man's justification through Christ's fulfillment of the spiritual and penal demands of the moral law. Christ's fulfillment, termed His merits and righteousness, was seen as a purely objective reality that existed exclusively in His person and thus independently of the sinner, but which, through the act of imputation would be legally shared by all who believed in Him.

The Lutherans thus defended the thesis that the righteousness and merits attached to Christ's person constitute the only and exclusive legal ground on which a sinner may receive pardon and justification before God, including the reception of all other gifts of grace. The Lutherans emphasized the logical exclusiveness of the Christ-principle just as emphatically as they stressed the logical exclusiveness of the grace-principle. These principles correlate perfectly with the unique Protestant thesis that, due to the spiritual impotence of man and the divine wrath, no law and human efforts

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 540.

may ever have a contributory role in man's justification before God. From these principles it logically follows that anything that might infringe upon the all-sufficiency of God's mercy in Christ must be excluded from the sphere of man's justification.

### The Principle of Faith

The assertion that Christ, as a present living mediator, possesses in His person the righteousness by which the sinner may be legally accepted as righteous before God provides the theological perspective in which the Lutherans emphasized faith as the sole medium through which the sinner will legally be made a participant in Christ's privileges. While the grace and Christ principles, like the dimension of justification itself, in principle belong to the objective sphere of God's soteriological work for man, the dimension of faith belongs in principle to the subjective sphere of God's work in the heart of man. This subjective dimension necessitates an analysis of the following characteristics of faith in Lutheran soteriology: That faith is a gift of grace, that faith alone relates the sinner to Christ and thus alone justifies, and that this faith in Christ is the constituent core of a new inner spiritual disposition towards God and thus has a sanctifying effect.

### Faith as a Gift of Grace

The Lutherans recognized that faith was the core of man's original spiritual disposition towards God and that, subsequent to Adam's transgression, humanity has lost this core of his original spirituality. True spirituality, therefore, can only be restored as a divinely induced rebirth of faith, according to Lutheran thought. They declared that "faith is a gift of God whereby we rightly learn to know Christ,"<sup>1</sup> and that "God himself must draw man and give him new birth. Without this our heart

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 541.

of itself does not once think to turn to the holy Gospel and to accept it.”<sup>1</sup> The reality of faith thus belongs to the subjective sphere of God’s work in the heart of man, a work that issues from the gracious disposition of God towards sinners. They declared that “he [man] is and remains an enemy of God until by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word which is preached and heard, purely out of grace and without any cooperation on his part, he is converted, becomes a believer, is regenerated and renewed.”<sup>2</sup> The spiritual regeneration of faith was thus perceived by the Lutherans as divinely induced and motivated by God’s gracious disposition towards the sinner and not as a human achievement, a position that fully correlates with their radical view on the spiritual impotence of the sinner.

#### Faith generated by means of the Word and the Spirit

The Lutherans were specific in their description of the spiritual instruments by which God seeks to impress the human mind. Concerning the rebirth of faith, they pointed to the unique instrumental function of the divine Word and Spirit by saying that “he [the sinner] is and remains an enemy of God until by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word which is preached and heard . . . , he is converted, becomes

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 529.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 521. See also ibid., 526-7. That the grace of God is the supreme ground on which God grants the gift of faith was clearly stated by Luther. He said that “it is up to God alone to give faith contrary to nature, and ability to believe contrary to reason. . . . Faith is a gift of God.” LW 34: 160. He also stated that “no one can give himself faith, neither can he take away his own unbelief.” LW 35: 371. Luther specifically identified faith as a gift of the Grace that manifested itself through Christ’s atoning work. He declared that the Apostle Paul “calls faith in Christ --which he more often calls a gift--the gift in the grace of one man, for it is given through the grace of Christ . . . so that he might merit for us this gift and even this grace.” LW 32: 228. Luther reaffirmed this insight when he stated “that this faith is the gift of God, which the grace of God obtains for us, and which purging away sin, makes us saved and certain.” LW 32: 236.

a believer, is regenerated and renewed."<sup>1</sup> They affirmed this insight by declaring that "the Holy Spirit kindles faith in us in conversion through the hearing of the Gospel,"<sup>2</sup> and that "when the Holy Spirit has brought a person to faith and has justified him, a regeneration has indeed taken place."<sup>3</sup> They summed up their conviction as follows:

God the Holy Spirit, however, does not effect conversion without means; he employs to this end the preaching and the hearing of God's Word as, it is written that the Gospel is a 'power of God' for salvation; likewise, that faith comes from the hearing of God's Word (Rom. 10:17).<sup>4</sup>

The Word of God concerning His mercy and forgiveness in Christ, made effective through the Holy Spirit, was thus seen by the Lutherans as the instrumental cause of faith, while divine Grace itself remains the ultimate cause of faith. The rebirth

<sup>1</sup> The Book of Concord, 521. The Lutherans also referred to the work of the Word and Spirit in connection with baptism and thus spoke of baptism as a means of grace. The association with baptism, however, does not change the main principle that God initiates faith essentially by means of the Word and the Spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 546.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 542. The Spirit, however, is not only operative through the Word but is actually received through the Word. They declared that "in this way the Holy Spirit, who works all of this, is introduced into the heart." Ibid., 531. See also ibid., 565-6. Luther held a similar view, saying: "When we are glad to hear the proclamation about Christ . . . , then with and through that proclamation God surely sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts." LW 26: 377. He also said that "the Holy Spirit is not given except in, with, and by faith in Jesus Christ." LW 35: 368.

<sup>4</sup> The Book of Concord, 470. The instrumental function of the Word and Spirit of God was further described, as follows: It was stated that "through this means (namely, the preaching and the hearing of his Word) God is active, breaks our hearts, and draws man, so that through the preaching of the law man learns to know his sins and the wrath of God and experiences genuine terror, contrition, and sorrow in his heart, and through the preaching of and the meditation upon the holy Gospel of the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ there is kindled in him a spark of faith which accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel." Ibid., 531. Luther expressed a similar view, saying: "Just as in society a son becomes heir merely by being born, so here faith alone makes men sons of God, born of the Word, which is the divine womb in which we are conceived, carried, born, reared, etc." LW 26: 392. He added that "faith must arise at all times from this same Word and from no other source and in our day, too." Selected Writings of Martin Luther, I: 120-21. He also said that no one "believes . . . unless it is given to him by the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the Gospel. For the Holy Spirit must be both the Preacher of this message and the Author who inscribes it in my heart, so that I believe." LW 22: 286. See also LW 27: 263.

of faith in the sinner was thus seen as the unique and dynamic work of God and not as human achievement--as God through the Spirit's use of the divine Word of grace, initiates, increases, and maintains the disposition of faith, which was seen as the sole instrument through which His grace and gifts are to be received and possessed. Thus the divine Grace in Christ not only awaits its reception by the sinner, but it actually, through the instrumentality of the Word and the Spirit, creates in the sinner the very disposition through which it is received. The Lutherans thus identified two efficient causes of faith through which God liberates man from his spiritual bondage.

#### The Justifying Function of Faith

Faith, in the Lutheran tradition, was assigned a purely instrumental function and never a contributory role in terms of man's justification. The exclusiveness of faith with regard to man's justification was emphasized as follows: "Faith is the only means whereby we can apprehend, accept, apply them [the promises of the Gospel] to ourselves, and make them our own."<sup>1</sup> Thus "faith justifies solely for this reason and on this account, that as a means and instrument it embraces God's grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel."<sup>2</sup> The Lutherans, accordingly, stated that "it is evident from the Word of God that faith is the proper and the only means whereby righteousness and salvation are not only received but also preserved by God."<sup>3</sup> Faith

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 541.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 557.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. The exclusiveness of faith as the only and unique medium through which the believer receives and possesses the saving benefits of Christ was greatly emphasized in the Lutheran tradition. It was declared that "he [Paul] attributes to faith alone the beginning, the middle, and the end of everything." Ibid., 556. See also ibid., 472, 540, 543, 544. Luther expressed the basic conviction of the Reformation, with reference to this soteriological exclusiveness of faith, when he said: "*Sola fides Justificat*, faith alone justifies." LW 35: 364. He also declared that "God our Father has made all things depend on faith so that whoever has faith will have everything, and whoever does not have faith will have nothing." LW 31: 349. See also LW 26: 223, 253; LW 35: 363.

was thus recognized as the exclusive spiritual instrument by which the righteousness of Christ would become legally effective in terms of a sinner's justification before God.

#### The spiritual-relational function of faith

The assertion in the Lutheran tradition that the righteousness of God that alone justifies is outside the believer and located in Christ's person and appropriated exclusively through faith strongly implies that salvation is receivable only through a spiritual relationship with the person of Christ. The following references affirm that this was indeed the position in the Lutheran tradition. They said that "we poor sinners are justified before God and saved solely by faith in Christ, so that Christ alone is our righteousness."<sup>1</sup> For the Lutherans this meant that "in justification before God faith trusts neither in contrition nor in love nor in other virtues, but solely in Christ and (in him) in his perfect obedience . . . which is reckoned to the believers as righteousness."<sup>2</sup> According to Lutheran thought "faith does not justify because it is so good a work and so God-pleasing a virtue, but because it lays hold on and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel."<sup>3</sup> The instrumental function of faith thus seems to be

<sup>1</sup> The Book of Concord, 472. They further declared that "this righteousness [Christ's] . . . is applied, appropriated, and accepted by faith." *Ibid.*, 541.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 544.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 541. Luther greatly emphasized the personal relational function of faith in the following texts: He said that "faith justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the present Christ." LW 26: 130. He also described this role of faith by the analogy of marriage. He declared that "faith unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom." LW 31: 351. He also used the wedding ring as a metaphor of the spiritual function of faith when he said: "By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride's." LW 31: 351. He summarized his convictions regarding the spiritual-relational function of faith by saying that "faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present, enclosing Him as the ring encloses the gem. And whoever is found having this faith in the Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous. This is the means and merit by which we obtain the forgiveness of sins and righteousness." LW 26: 132. See also LW 26: 168. Faith was thus seen by Luther as a spiritual bond that unites the believer and Christ in a legally binding covenant that is as real and firm as a biblical marriage.

understood in terms of relating the sinner to the person of Christ in whom resides the righteousness that alone justifies before God.

The Lutheran emphasis upon faith as trust in the person and work of Christ further supports their understanding of the relational function of faith. They declared that "faith is a gift of God whereby we rightly learn to know Christ as our redeemer in the Word of the Gospel and to trust in him."<sup>1</sup> The Lutherans accordingly maintained that "this faith is not a mere knowledge of the stories about Christ, but the kind of gift of God by which in the Word of the Gospel we recognize Christ aright as our redeemer and trust in him."<sup>2</sup> Quoting Martin Luther, they described faith as "a vital, deliberate trust in God's grace, so certain that it would die a thousand times for it. And such confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes us joyous, mettlesome, and merry toward God and all creatures."<sup>3</sup> Saving faith according to the Lutheran tradition was thus more than a doctrinal conviction (credulitas) or a mental assent (assensus), it was first of all trust (fiducia) in the person and promises of God.

At the deepest psychological level trust or distrust is, logically speaking, the only possible response to a person's promise with regard to a free gift. Since the benefits of the gospel, such as forgiveness, pardon, and justification, are exclusively an objective gift of God, offered exclusively through a divine word of promise, it logically follows that the only manner of reception is through a response of faith in the

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 541.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 473.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 553. Luther repeatedly emphasized that true faith is a complete personal trust and confidence in Christ. He said: "Therefore read these words 'me' and 'for me' with great emphasis, and accustom yourself to accepting this 'me' with a sure faith and applying it to yourself." LW 26: 179. Luther accordingly described the human response to the gracious promises and acts of God with phrases such as "him whom we trust" and "the soul firmly trusts God's promises." LW 31: 350. See also LW 34: 109-11; LW 35: 370-71.

sense of personal trust and confidence in the giver. The Lutheran assertion that the core of genuine faith is a personal trust in Christ's person, His righteousness, and His promises supports their view that faith is the sole spiritual bond that relates the believer with Christ and His righteousness. Since faith exists exclusively by the divine Word of grace in Christ, it follows that this reality is the constituent cause of true faith and that all other qualities of faith flow from this foundational reality. The spiritual substance of faith is thus never independent of its constituent cause, which is the mercy of God in Christ received and believed as man's only saving righteousness before God.

#### The time of justification

The Lutheran view of the threefold principles of grace, Christ, and faith has important implications for their understanding of the moment at which a sinner is in possession of justification. The temporal implications of their basic soteriological principles are reflected in their descriptions of the relationship between justification and sanctification. They declared: "Good works do not precede faith, nor is sanctification prior to justification. . . . Faith apprehends the grace of God in Christ whereby the person is justified. After the person is justified, the Holy Spirit next renews and sanctified him."<sup>1</sup> The rebirth of faith was thus identified as the moment that a sinner

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 546. They repeated this insight by saying that "good works do not precede justification; rather they follow it, since a person must first be righteous before he can do good works." Ibid., 543-44. Luther maintained that faith in Christ would provide a complete pardon, acceptance, and justification before God. He said that "whoever is justified is still a sinner; and yet he is considered fully and perfectly righteous by God who pardons and is merciful." LW 34: 152-53. Luther spoke more specifically of the temporal aspect of justification when he stated that "good works come from a person who has already been justified beforehand by faith, just as good fruits come from a tree which is already good beforehand by nature." LW 34: 111. Luther further emphasized the continuity in man's justification when he said that "the forgiveness of sins is a continuing divine work, until we die. Sin does not cease. Accordingly, Christ saves us perpetually." LW 34: 190. Thus he could say that "forgiveness of sins is not a matter of a passing work or action, but of perpetual duration." LW 34: 164. See also LW 26: 155, 204, 275; LW 34: 140, 162, 164, 190.

possessed justification and the gift of the Spirit, and thus as the moment that a sinner's status is changed before God. The Christian life was therefore seen as issuing from the new relation to Christ and not as preceding justification. Thus they could say that "we hold that Christ with his perfect obedience covers all our sins which throughout this life still inhere in our nature."<sup>1</sup> This insight into the continuous justified status of a true believer further affirms that the righteousness of Christ becomes soteriologically effective for the sinner from the moment he believes in Christ. Complete justification, pardon, and acceptance were therefore seen by the Lutherans as being obtained at the very moment that faith in Christ is restored and remains a continual possession as long as faith endures. Since justification is based exclusively on the gracious provisions in Christ and received exclusively by the means of faith in Christ, it follows that justification must be full and complete at the very moment that a sinner by faith is related to Christ and that justification must remain complete as long as this faith in Christ endures, even to the terminal point of death.

The personal righteousness of Christ imputed to the sinner and received in faith is thus the believer's proper and foundational righteousness before God by which the curse and condemnation of the law are legally overcome and by which the believer is received into forgiveness and divine favor. The saving righteousness is thus an alien righteousness--an imputed righteousness that is experienced and possessed exclusively through faith. Where genuine faith embraces the divine mercy in Christ there the believer perceives himself in the mercy of God and there the power of sin to accuse and condemn not only before God but also in the conscience is broken. Where faith-righteousness thus abides, sin loses its power to accuse and coerce the conscience.

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<sup>1</sup> The Book of Concord, S43. They added that "they are regarded as holy and righteous through faith and for the sake of Christ's obedience . . . , even though, on account of their corrupted nature, they are still sinners and remain sinners until they die." Ibid.

### The Sanctifying Effect of Faith

Faith was recognized, in the Lutheran tradition, as having both a justifying and sanctifying function. The sanctifying function of faith was seen as being directly related to its justifying function, as faith does not exist apart from its constituent cause, namely the divine Word of grace in Christ received, believed, and possessed as man's only saving righteousness before God. This is the constituent cause apart from which faith does not exist and thus the foundation for all its effects. The Lutherans, however, recognized that since faith is a positive, trustful response to the saving grace in Christ, faith accordingly constitutes the presence of a new orientation and attitude towards God--a new spiritual reality in the soul that was seen as being unable to coexist peacefully with sin and thus accordingly would have a sanctifying effect.

### The spiritual substance of faith

The Lutherans continually described the faith-righteousness obtained in Christ as the core of a new spiritual disposition, orientation, and attitude towards God, which will have a sanctifying effect in the justified person. They described the spiritual disposition of a true believer as follows:

But after a man is converted, and thereby enlightened, and his will is renewed, then he wills that which is good, in so far as he is reborn or a new man, and he delights in the law of God according to his inmost self (Rom 7: 22). And immediately he does good. . . . This impulse of the Holy Spirit is no coercion or compulsion because the converted man spontaneously does that which is good.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the believer not only has a willing, obedient, and repentant mind but he actually delights in doing the will of God by the impulse of the Holy Spirit. This change of spiritual disposition was seen as being so radical that it was declared that "there cannot be genuine saving faith in those who live without contrition and sorrow

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.. 533.

and have a wicked intention to remain and abide in sin, for true contrition precedes and genuine faith exists only in or with true repentance."<sup>1</sup> In Lutheran tradition, faith was seen not only as one of the spiritual qualities present in the regenerate person, it was actually seen as the very core of the new willing, obedient, and repentant disposition characterizing a genuine believer. They said that "faith alone is the mother and source of the truly good and God-pleasing works that God will reward both in this and in the next world. For this reason St. Paul calls them fruits of faith of the Spirit."<sup>2</sup> By a quotation from Martin Luther's description of genuine faith they summed up their position as follows:

'Faith is a divine work in us that transforms us and begets us anew from God, kills the Old Adam, makes us entirely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good.'<sup>3</sup>

According to the Lutheran tradition, faith itself thus constitutes so radical a change of mind that the disposition of the regenerate persons will now be characterized

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 543.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 552.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 552-53. For the source of this quotation see also: LW 35: 370. Martin Luther declared that God "will give you a new birth . . . that will cause a regeneration or a renewal of your being. For the Holy Spirit works faith in us, and through this faith we regain the image of God which we lost in paradise." LW 22: 285. Luther thus held that according to its spiritual substance, faith represents a radical change in a person's attitude towards God. It is so radical that he now mentally "delights in the law of God [Rom. 7: 22], and serves the Law of God with his mind [v. 25]." LW 32: 237. This change of disposition is a work "which the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God who has shown him his grace." LW 35: 371. In the following texts Luther further characterized faith as the presence of a real inward spiritual righteousness in the heart which constitutes the root and cause of outward good works. LW 26: 229-35; LW 27: 231; LW 32: 227; LW 35: 371. Luther thus considered genuine faith, according to its substance, to be the core of a real spiritual righteousness, loyalty, and obedience to God; an insight clearly reflected in the subsequent Lutheran tradition.

by a willing, obedient, repentant, and trustful mind that spontaneously delights in doing good. Since faith justifies by virtue of its relational function and apparently sanctifies by virtue of its spiritual substance, it follows that a true believer cannot possess faith-righteousness in Christ without simultaneously experiencing a real sanctification.

#### The visible manifestations of faith

The conviction that sanctification is a reality that by intrinsic necessity emerges from the new spiritual disposition of faith in Christ was strongly emphasized by the Lutheran tradition. They declared that “we should not imagine a kind of faith in this connection that could coexist and co-persist with a wicked intention to sin and to act contrary to one’s conscience. On the contrary, after a person has been justified by faith, a true living faith becomes ‘active through love’ (Gal. 5:6).”<sup>1</sup> To underline the intrinsic connection between the disposition, of which faith in Christ is the core, and actual sanctification, they furthermore stated that “thus good works always follow justifying faith and are certainly to be found with it, since such faith is never alone but is always accompanied by love and hope.”<sup>2</sup> Accordingly they maintained that “love is a fruit which certainly and necessarily follows true faith.”<sup>3</sup> The order, the sequence, and intrinsic causal relationship between the new spiritual disposition of faith and the outward compliance with God’s will were clearly perceived by the Lutherans. The good works of sanctification were consistently seen as the necessary fruit and visible manifestations of genuine faith, and never as an optional addition to such faith. They

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 474.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 543. See also ibid., 474, 554.

expressed this understanding by quoting the famous description of faith by Luther in his Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. They quoted Luther as follows:

'Faith is a divine work in us that transforms us and begets us anew from God, kills the Old Adam, makes us entirely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good. Likewise, faith does not ask if good works are to be done, but before one can ask, faith has already done them and is constantly active. Whoever does not perform such good works is a faithless man, blindly tarrying around in search of faith and good works without knowing what either faith or good works are, and in the meantime he chatters and jabbers a great deal about faith and good works. Faith is a vital, deliberate trust in God's grace, so certain that it would die a thousand times for it. And such confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes us joyous, mettlesome, and merry toward God and all creatures. This the Holy Spirit works by faith, and therefore without any coercion a man is willing and desirous to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything for the love of God and to his glory, who has been so gracious to him. It is therefore as impossible to separate works from faith as it is to separate heat and light from fire.'<sup>1</sup>

Faith was described as the essential core of a positive spiritual disposition towards God from which by intrinsic necessity the visible good works will proceed. Thus the Lutherans recognized the existence of such an inseparable relationship between justification and sanctification that they could not imagine that "justification and sanctification are separated from each other in such a way as though on occasion true faith could coexist and survive for a while side by side with a wicked intention."<sup>2</sup> They added that "it is indeed correct to say that believers who through faith in Christ

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 552-53. See LW 35: 370-71. Luther stated that "from faith thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss." LW 31: 367. He further explicated the implications of this insight by saying that "a sincere faith manifests itself in good works and makes it impossible for a person to remain a fornicator, an adulterer, or any other kind of rogue or knave." LW 22: 395. Luther thus maintained that "in theology, therefore, 'doing' necessarily requires faith itself as a precondition." LW 26: 262. He could accordingly declare that "faith without works--that is, a fantastic idea and mere vanity and a dream in the heart--is a false faith and does not justify." LW 26: 155. See also LW 26: 255, 257, 260; LW 31: 361; LW 32: 227, 229, 233.

<sup>2</sup>The Book of Concord, 546.

have been justified possess in this life, first, the reckoned righteousness of faith and second, also the inchoate righteousness of the new obedience or of good works."<sup>1</sup>

Given the premise that faith in Christ is the constituent core of a loving, obedient, and willing disposition toward God, it logically follows that sanctification by intrinsic necessity must proceed from the very essence of this disposition. A true believer's actual life is simply the visible and necessary manifestation of the renewed spiritual disposition, of which faith in Christ is the core.

While sanctification was thus seen as an intrinsic and necessary effect of genuine faith in Christ, it was nevertheless perceived as non-contributory to man's acceptance by God. The Lutherans asserted that "we believe, teach, and confess that the contrition that precedes justification and the good works that follow it do not belong in the article of justification before God."<sup>2</sup> They further stated that "when St. Paul says, 'We are justified by faith apart from works' (Rom. 3:28), he indicates thereby that neither the preceding contrition nor the subsequent works belong in the article or matter of justification by faith."<sup>3</sup> While sanctification was never seen as contributory to man's acceptance, it was nevertheless seen as evidence of man's gracious acceptance in Christ, as they further affirmed: "The good works are testimonies of the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 544-45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 474.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 543. They further emphasized that sanctification cannot contribute to man's acceptance by God since acceptance in Christ constitutes the precondition for genuine sanctification, saying: "Good works do not precede justification; rather they follow it, since a person must first be righteous before he can do good works." Ibid., 543-44. Luther expressed a similar view in the following text: He said that "Paul expressly states here that a man is not justified by the deeds of the Law, whether they are those that precede (of which he is speaking here) or those that follow justification." LW 26: 127. See also LW 26: 4, 5, 123, 137, 141, 145, 282; LW 35: 363.

Holy Spirit's presence and indwelling.<sup>1</sup> This radical exclusion of sanctification from the sphere of man's justification before God thus logically follows from the Lutheran understanding of the principle of faith and fully correlates their understanding of the Christ-principle and the grace-principle. The sanctifying effect of faith must, however, be more closely analyzed, as the Lutherans maintained that according to its substance sin would still be present in the believer subsequent to his spiritual regeneration.

#### The continued presence and power of sinfulness

While the Lutherans maintained that the spiritual regeneration would have radical effects on the sinner, they simultaneously argued that the old sinful inclinations would not be removed. They emphasized that, according to its substance, sin will still remain in the regenerate person throughout his life. They characterized the continued presence of evil in the regenerate person as follows, saying: "The Holy Spirit has begun the mortification of the Old Adam and their renewal in the spirit of their minds, nevertheless the Old Adam still clings to their nature and to all its internal and external powers."<sup>2</sup> They explained this assertion by arguing that "in fact, it [regeneration] has only begun, and in the spirit of their mind the believers are in a constant war against their flesh (that is, their corrupt nature and kind), which clings to them until death."<sup>3</sup> While regeneration represented a radical spiritual renewal of the mind, according to the

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 477.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 565. The Lutherans spoke of sinfulness as the "Old Adam, who inheres in people's intellect, will, and all their powers." Ibid., 480. They also spoke of "all our sins which throughout this life still inhere in our nature." Ibid., 543.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 480. With regard to man's sinfulness, Luther argued that it "is not a quiescent quality, but a restless evil which labors day and night, even in those who sleep." LW 34: 182. He also stated that "the gifts and the Spirit increase in us every day, but they are not yet perfect since there remain in us the evil desires and sins that war against the Spirit." LW 35: 369.

Lutheran tradition, it did not represent a total and immediate renewal of the believer in all respects during this life.

The substance of evil not only remains in man subsequent to his spiritual renewal, it actually constitutes a powerful counterpart. The Lutherans accordingly argued that "the conflict and warfare of the flesh against the Spirit continues also in the elect and truly reborn."<sup>1</sup> They explicated this insight by arguing that "there remains also in the regenerated a resistance, of which the Scriptures say that the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and likewise that the passions of the flesh wage war against the soul, and the law in our members is at war with the law of our mind."<sup>2</sup> They identified this struggle as the normal and lasting experience of all the saints. Every genuine believer will accordingly experience a ceaseless hostile activity, arising from the remaining evil inclinations in his flesh which will continually attempt to fight, retard, and restrain the sanctifying power of the new spiritual disposition present in the believer. The role of the Law in terms of man's sanctification needs close examination in view of the incompleteness of man's regeneration and thus the continued presence and opposition of evil inclinations.

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 534.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 537. Luther referred to this problem when he declared that "there remain in us the evil desires and sins that war against the Spirit." LW 35: 369. He also argued that "Paul himself with his flesh served the law of sin (Rom. 7:25) and the spirit of the congregation in Galatia is forced to endure the opposition of the flesh (Gal. 6:12-16)." LW 34: 118. Luther called this force an "evil guest [which] dwells within . . . our flesh [and which] daily disturbs us, hindering our way, even tormenting us." LW 32: 249. See also LW 32: 249, 251. He furthermore identified this spiritual battle as unique to the Christian experience, saying: "It not only exists, not only lives, not only wills, not only acts, not only is at war--but it even rages and makes captive. . . . Who does not forever experience the raging thoughts and impulses of anger and of evil desire--and this no matter how unwilling and reluctant one may be? Its fury is untamed--no, on the contrary (and this will astonish you), it does not thus rage in the ungodly, because they do not sustain its onslaught. They yield and obey it, and so never experience how much labor and how much trouble it is to resist and control it." LW 32: 251-52.

### Divine law and sanctification

The Lutherans continually maintained that although a truly regenerate man will spiritually delight in the law of God, he nevertheless needs the continual guidance of external law. They argued that "although truly believing Christians, having been genuinely converted to God and justified, have been freed and liberated from the curse of the law, they should daily exercise themselves in the law of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> While they defended this function of law, they nevertheless maintained that if the sinner had been completely regenerated and delivered from all sinful tendencies, he would not have needed the guidance from an external law. They said that "if believers . . . were perfectly renewed in this life through the indwelling Spirit in such a way that in their nature and all its powers they would be totally free from sins, they would require no law, no driver."<sup>2</sup> The Lutherans, however, argued that because of the continued presence of sinfulness, even the regenerate persons need the guidance of external law. They argued that "because of the desires of the flesh the truly believing, elect, and reborn children of God require in this life not only the daily teaching and admonition, warning and threatening of the law, but frequently the punishment of the law as well, to egg them on so that they follow the Spirit of God."<sup>3</sup>

The Lutherans in accordance with this insight argued that the moral law is the standard of holiness and sanctification. They said that "the law indeed tells us that

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 564.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 564. They added: "Of themselves and altogether spontaneously, without any instruction, admonition, exhortation, or driving by the law they would do what they are obligated to do according to the will of God, just as the sun, the moon, and all the stars of heaven regularly run their courses according to the order which God instituted for them once and for all, spontaneously and unhindered, without any admonition, exhortation, compulsion, coercion, or necessity, and as the holy angels render God a completely spontaneous obedience." Ibid., 564-65.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 565.

it is God's will and command that we should walk in the new life, but it does not give the power and ability to begin it or to do it."<sup>1</sup> Once a person has received the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel and has been renewed in his heart, God will then employ "the law to instruct the regenerate out of it and to show and indicate to them in the Ten Commandments what the acceptable will of God is (Rom. 12:2) and in what good works, which God has prepared beforehand, they should walk (Eph. 2:10)"<sup>2</sup> The true function of the law in terms of the regenerate persons was more explicitly described as follows:

But when a person is born anew by the Spirit of God and is liberated from the law (that is, when he is free from this driver and is driven by the Spirit of Christ), he lives according to the immutable will of God as it is comprehended in the law and, in so far as he is born anew, he does everything from a free and merry spirit. These works are, strictly speaking, not works of the law but works and fruits of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

The Lutherans claimed that the regenerate persons need the law for the following reasons. First of all, they would need the guidance of the law because the genuine "believers are not fully renewed in this life but the Old Adam clings to them down to the grave."<sup>4</sup> Second, the believers would need the guidance of the law "so that they will not be thrown back on their own holiness and piety and under the pretext of the Holy Spirit's guidance set up a self-elected service of God without his Word and command."<sup>5</sup> Third, they "require the teaching of the law in connection with their good works, because otherwise they can easily imagine that their works and life are

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 566.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 566-67.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 567.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

perfectly pure and holy."<sup>1</sup> Thus the law holds a significant role as a standard and guide in terms of sanctification because man's regeneration will remain partial and because the substance of sin will remain throughout life. While the remaining evil inclinations were seen as hindering the believer in doing the will of God as freely, instantly, and spontaneously as the Spirit desires and the law demands, yet, it was maintained in the Lutheran tradition that these inclinations will no longer rule the conscience or dominate the actual life of the believer.

#### The dominion of the new spiritual disposition

According to the Lutheran tradition, the remaining urge towards sin no longer dominates the actual life of the genuine believer, although it will continually attempt to do so. The remaining evil in the regenerate person will itself be progressively subdued and governed by the spiritual disposition of which faith in Christ is the core. It was stated that "this repentance continues in Christians until death, for it contends with the sin remaining in the flesh throughout life, as St. Paul says in Rom. 7:23, that he wars with the law in his members and that he does so not by his own powers but through the gift of the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup> They added that "the converted man does good, as much and as long as God rules him through his Holy Spirit, guides and leads him, but if God should withdraw his gracious hand man could not remain in obedience to God for one moment."<sup>3</sup> Thus true obedience was not seen as an optional addition to faith but as the effect of the presence of Holy Spirit that continually urges the regenerate person towards obedience contrary to his evil inclinations.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. This is so because "the law of God prescribes good works for faith in such a way that, as in a mirror, it shows and indicates to them that in this life our good works are imperfect and impure." Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 527-28.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 534.

While the spiritual life of faith in Christ will dominate and rule the actual life of the believer, this dominion will not materialize without a fierce battle with the remaining evil inclinations. Although the evil tendencies in the regenerate will not be eradicated nor completely paralyzed, they will be subdued and resisted so that they no longer rule and dominate the actual life of the believer. They said that "he [the Old Adam] must be coerced against his own will not only by the admonitions and threats of the law, but also by its punishments and plagues, to follow the Spirit and surrender himself a captive."<sup>1</sup> Regarding the subjection of the evil inclinations, they further argued that "concerning this unwilling and recalcitrant flesh, Paul says, 'I pommel my body and subdue it' (I Cor. 9: 27), and again, they who belong to Christ have crucified (that is, killed) their flesh with its passions, desires, and deeds (Gal. 5: 24; Rom. 8: 13)."<sup>2</sup> The Lutherans summarized the characteristics of sanctification, saying:

According to their inmost self they do what is pleasing to God not by coercion of the law but willingly and spontaneously from the heart by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, they continue in a constant conflict against the Old Adam. For the Old Adam, like an unmanageable and recalcitrant donkey, is still a part of them and must be coerced into the obedience of Christ, not only with the instruction, admonition, urging, and threatening of the law, but frequently also with the club of punishments and miseries, until the flesh of sin is put off entirely and man is completely renewed in the resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 480.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 554.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 568. Luther expressed a similar view in the following texts: He said: "So we see that these three chapters (6-8) drive home the one task of faith, which is to slay the old Adam and subdue the flesh." LW 35: 378. Luther also said that the remaining vices in the flesh "are forced to serve the Spirit, who dominates them so that they do not rule; yet this does not happen without a struggle." LW 26: 189. He stated this conviction with greater sharpness when he declared that "the start of a new creature accompanies this faith and the battle against the sin of the flesh, which this same faith in Christ both pardons and conquers." LW 34: 153. Luther affirmed that "we still feel sin in us, and it is also certain that sin still remains in the saints of God; but it does not reign over them. Faith subdues and curbs sin so that it cannot burst into the open unhindered." LW 22: 394. He further qualified this assertion, saying: "You will know that it is one thing for sin to rule, and another thing for it to be ruled." LW 32: 210. See also LW 25: 375; LW 32: 207, 252, 255.

While the remaining evil inclinations were seen as an opposing force that would seek to hinder a true believer in doing the will of God as freely, instantly, and spontaneously as the Spirit desired and the law demanded, the new spiritual disposition, of which faith in Christ constitutes the core, was nevertheless seen as the superior of the two contending forces. The new spiritual disposition with all its constituent elements was accordingly seen as progressively ruling, dominating, directing, and sanctifying the actual life of a genuine believer.

#### The incompleteness of sanctification

The Lutherans argued that the continual presence of evil tendencies in the regenerate signified that man's renewal and sanctification despite its progressive character will remain partial and incomplete in this life. This incompleteness was affirmed as follows: "Although they [believer's] are indeed reborn and have been renewed in the spirit of their mind, such regeneration and renewal is incomplete in this world."<sup>1</sup> They argued that the good works of believers "are still imperfect and impure because of the sin in our flesh"<sup>2</sup> and that "in this life sanctification is never wholly pure and perfect on account of our corrupted flesh."<sup>3</sup> The Lutherans thus attributed the imperfections of the regenerate ones to the continued presence of evil inclinations. The very presence of such an evil counterpart was itself a testimony of the incompleteness of their renewal according to the Lutheran tradition. While they saw sanctification as partial, they simultaneously perceived it as being progressive in character, saying: "The Holy Spirit remains with the holy community of Christendom . . . , whereby he initiates and increases sanctification so that we grow daily and become strong in faith

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Concord, 480.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 567.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 544. See also ibid., 568.

and in its fruits, which he creates.”<sup>1</sup> The new spiritual disposition in the regenerate person was thus seen as progressively ruling, directing, and dominating the actual life of the believer by coercing the flesh to comply with the movings of the Spirit, while the remaining evil tendencies were seen as a power that renders the good works of faith impure and imperfect as it hinders the believer in doing the will of God as freely, instantly, and spontaneously as the Spirit desires and the law demands.

#### Partial sanctification and justification

The incompleteness with regard to sanctification requires a deeper analysis of the relationship between sanctification and justification in Lutheran soteriology. On the basis of the threefold principles of Christ, grace, and faith, the Lutherans argued that sanctification cannot contribute to man’s acceptance because acceptance in Christ is a precondition for the presence of sanctifying faith. While sanctification thus does not contribute to man’s acceptance, its incompleteness due to his remaining sinfulness

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 528. Luther described this incompleteness as follows: “We have received the first fruit of the Spirit but not the tithes. . . . We conclude, therefore, that righteousness does indeed begin through faith and that through it we have the first fruits of the Spirit.” LW 26: 229-30. He also said that “we have an initial, yet not perfect, righteousness.” LW 34: 190. Luther specifically commented on the possibility that God would grant so much of his Spirit that the sinful inclinations of the flesh would either be paralyzed or totally erased in this life. He said: “It greatly disturbed this man that I said that even in grace not all the commandments of God are perfectly fulfilled in this life. . . . Now when I said this does not happen, I did not deny that it could happen. This splendid sophist has not learned his logic well enough to know that, ‘does not happen’ differs from ‘cannot happen.’ He infers, ‘Therefore you say it cannot happen.’ Yet who doubts that God could give someone so much grace that he would fulfil [the Law] completely (as we believe he did in the case of the Blessed Virgin), granted that he does not do it in every case?” LW 32: 157. Luther thus refutes the idea that such a perfection is necessary for eternal life. When Luther said that “we shall indeed receive the greater portion, even the fullness of the Spirit, in the future,” he did not anticipate that this would generally happen as a collective experience of the Church prior to the Parousia. LW 31: 358. Luther, apparently, did not anticipate that at any time this side of the parousia God would generally grant so much of the Spirit to believers that the church would collectively experience a complete eradication or paralysis of the remaining sinful inclinations in the flesh, not because it soteriologically speaking could not happen, but because on the basis of the Scriptures he did not expect it to happen.

might still render him unacceptable to God. Their perception of the continuous imputation of Christ's righteousness resolves this problem. They asserted that "we hold that Christ with his perfect obedience covers all our sins which throughout this life still inhere in our nature."<sup>1</sup> They affirmed this insight by saying that there is no "controversy among us as to how and why the good works of believers are pleasing and acceptable to God, even though they are still impure and imperfect in this flesh of ours. We agree that this is so for the sake of the Lord Christ through faith, because the person is acceptable to God."<sup>2</sup> The actual good works of a genuine believer are thus acceptable to God, not by virtue of any intrinsic value but by virtue of divine grace, which qualifies the believing person as good before God. In the following text they more fully stated their understanding, saying:

For because this inchoate righteousness or renewal in us is imperfect and impure in this life on account of the flesh, no one can therewith and thereby stand before the tribunal of God. Only the righteousness of the obedience, passion, and death of Christ which is reckoned to faith can stand before God's tribunal. Hence even after his renewal, after he has done many good works and leads the best kind of life, a person is pleasing and acceptable to God and is adopted to sonship and the inheritance of eternal life only on account of Christ's obedience.<sup>3</sup>

It was thus axiomatic in the Lutheran tradition that divine grace, by which man would be initially acceptable to God prior to his sanctification, would also be the

<sup>1</sup> The Book of Concord, 543.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 552. See also ibid., 565, 567, 568.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 545. In the following texts Luther expressed the same conviction regarding the continuous imputation of Christ's righteousness as the antidote to the continuous presence of sinfulness and incompleteness in sanctification. He said that "we have an initial, yet not perfect, righteousness. For the forgiveness of sins is a continuing divine work, until we die. Sin does not cease. Accordingly, Christ saves us perpetually." LW 34: 190. He also said that "his [Christ's] righteousness, since it is without defect and serves us like an umbrella against the heat of God's wrath, does not allow our beginning righteousness to be condemned." LW 34: 153. Thus he could declare that "because faith is weak, it is not perfected without the imputation of God. Hence faith begins righteousness but imputation perfects it until the day of Christ." LW 26: 229-30. See also LW 26: 231-35; LW 27: 231.

reality by which he would be continually acceptable throughout life despite the incompleteness of his sanctification. The Lutheran understanding concerning the incompleteness of man's regeneration prior to the parousia fully corresponds with their emphasis upon the necessity of a present continuous imputation of the righteousness of Christ as a permanent shield against the condemnatory power of the imperfections caused by the remaining sinfulness. Partial sanctification does not contribute to a believer's acceptance, nor does the incompleteness of sanctification condemn him, according to the soteriological principles governing the Lutheran tradition.

Faith was recognized, in the Lutheran tradition, as having both a justifying and sanctifying function. The sanctifying function of faith was seen as directly related to its justifying role, as faith does not exist apart from its constituent cause, namely the divine Word of grace in Christ received, believed, and possessed as man's only saving righteousness before God. Whereas faith justifies instantly as it relates the sinner to Christ, it simultaneously begins to sanctify him, as faith in Christ also constitutes a new spiritual disposition and attitude towards God. The Lutherans argued that where the sanctifying struggle of faith against sin is absent, there is no real faith in Christ, and where real faith is absent, there is no justification. The good works of sanctification are thus visible signs that reveal and vindicate the presence of that faith in Christ, which sanctifies progressively according to its spiritual substance, while it justifies instantly through its relational function. The place and meaning of sanctification in Lutheran soteriology are thus both clear and consistent. On the threefold principles of Christ, grace, and faith, the Lutherans argued that sanctification cannot contribute to man's acceptance, pardon, and justification before God because the acceptance in Christ is the root, course, and source of true sanctification. But as sanctification is the visible effect of faith as a new disposition towards Christ, it proves, vindicates, and demonstrates by intrinsic necessity that faith in Christ is genuine. The presence of real

sanctification thus demonstrates to the world and the universe that the believer is truly in Christ and thus rightfully possesses justification fully and completely.

A Summary of the Basic Elements Constituting  
the Lutheran Orthodox Soteriology

The Lutherans maintained that man was originally created in the image of God and that he was endowed with the spiritual and moral qualities characterizing his creator. They held that Adam's transgression caused so radical a change in man's relationship with God that man's spiritual disposition was subsequently inclined to evil and negatively disposed towards God. The spiritual implications of the Fall were thus seen as being so radical that the sinner would be in complete bondage to his evil disposition and accordingly incapable of understanding and performing the will of God.

The Lutherans identified the biblical dimension of the moral law as a revelation of the eternal, unchangeable moral-relational principles that were intrinsic to God's being, and which were exemplified by the life of Christ, and which were reflected in man's mind, heart, and soul at creation. The biblical dimension of the moral law was, furthermore, seen by the Lutherans as an instrument by which God would continually confront fallen humanity with the divine imperative that man's relationships to God and man must still conform to the will of God, otherwise man would ultimately be subject to the curse of God. They accordingly maintained that the sinner's encounter with the moral law, instead of resolving the problem of sin, actually reveals the depth of his spiritual depravity, his helplessness in terms of being and doing what God demands, the depth of his spiritual and legal estrangement from God, the radical implications of the divine wrath against sin, and thus his inability to escape the wrath, condemnation, and judgment of God. Thus God through the instrument of law exposes the two related evils of sin, namely spiritual corruption and divine condemnation--the latter being fatal for man's relationship with God.

### Justification and the Threelfold Principles of Grace, Christ, and Faith

Lutheran orthodox soteriology basically understood the term justification in a legal and judicial sense as a declaration of pardon pronounced by the highest authority in the universe. The Lutherans maintained that the divine verdict of justification would be based exclusively on divine grace, manifested in the merits and righteousness of Christ, and received by the believer exclusively through the relation of faith. The term justification thus refers to a forensic-relational reality and not to a divinely induced moral transformation. In the Lutheran tradition, the sinner's spiritual renewal and healing are linked to the dimension of faith, as the believer's relationship with God is restored by Christ's imputed righteousness received by faith.

The Lutherans identified the term grace as a relational concept expressive of a loving, merciful, and favorable divine disposition towards sinners manifesting itself in soteriological actions. Furthermore, they recognized that divine grace would be the basic and exclusive ground for a believer's salvation, and that all human endeavors would accordingly be excluded from the ground of man's acceptance and justification.

The Lutherans argued that the gracious disposition of God reached its ultimate expression through Christ's soteriological work, as God provided the solution to the double problem of sin through Christ's incarnation, life, passion, and death. The life and death of Christ were described as substitutional, as they provided a full satisfaction of the broadest legal and penal demands of the moral law. It was thus maintained by the Lutherans that Christ by virtue of His personal righteousness and merits provided the only and exclusive meritorious basis on which a penitent sinner could be granted acceptance, pardon, and justification before God.

While the principles concerning grace and Christ belong to the objective sphere of God's work outside man, the principle regarding faith belongs to the

subjective sphere of God's work in the heart of man. Faith was primarily understood as a personal trust in Christ and His promises. Since faith exists exclusively by virtue of the divine Word of grace in Christ, it follows that this reality is the constituent core of true faith and that all other qualities of faith flow from this foundational reality. The spiritual substance of faith is thus never independent of its constituent cause, which is the divine mercy in Christ received and believed as man's only saving righteousness.

The following assertions with regard to the principle of faith were basic to the Lutheran understanding: First of all, spiritual restoration was seen as a gift of divine grace because the spiritual damage, in the context of divine condemnation, was so radical that fallen man was neither capable of restoring his lost spiritual disposition of faith nor was capable of liberating himself from the negative disposition of unbelief. Second, true justifying faith does not exist apart from its constituent cause, namely the divine Word of grace in Christ received, believed, and possessed as man's proper and foundational righteousness before God. Genuine faith was, therefore, seen as God's unique and dynamic work by means of the Holy Spirit, which would initiate, restore, increase, and maintain faith through the divine Word of love, mercy, and grace in Christ, and thus liberate man from his spiritual bondage. Third, faith in Christ was, accordingly, described as the core of a new spiritual disposition, orientation, and attitude, which by intrinsic necessity would manifest itself in a genuine response of love and obedience to the One trusted. Fourth, faith by virtue of its spiritual cause and attributes, being unable to coexist peacefully with sin, was accordingly seen as having a regenerative function, which would progressively sanctify the believer despite the opposing forces of evil still present in him. Finally, the Lutherans argued that faith, despite its spiritual attributes and progressive sanctifying effect, would never have a contributory role with regard to justification. This conviction was based on the rationale that grace in Christ, which constitutes the believer's foundational righteousness before

God, was itself the constituent cause of the faith by which it was received, believed, and possessed. Since faith itself was seen as a gift of the grace in Christ which alone justifies, it cannot contribute to man's justification despite its apparent spiritual and moral attributes; hence faith would be limited by the principles of grace and Christ to a purely instrumental, relational, and receptive function in terms of man's justification.

The personal righteousness of Christ imputed to the sinner and received in faith was thus seen as the believer's proper and foundational righteousness before God, by which the curse and condemnation of the law were seen as legally overcome and by which the believer was seen as received into divine favor. Accordingly, the saving righteousness was seen as an alien righteousness--an imputed righteousness that would be experienced and possessed in faith alone. Where faith embraces the divine mercy in Christ, there the believer, according to the Lutheran tradition, sees himself in the mercy of God, and there the power of sin to accuse and condemn is broken--not only before God but also in the conscience. Where faith-righteousness thus abides, sin loses its power to accuse and coerce the conscience.

While faith thus embraces Christ as the believer's foundational righteousness before God, faith itself constitutes the beginning of a new real spiritual righteousness in the believer. Thus there exists a dynamic relationship between the two kinds of righteousness. The imputed and imparted righteousness may be distinguished in terms of order and function, but they cannot be separated. Although the sanctifying effects of faith have no meritorious value, nevertheless, by intrinsic necessity, they testify to the presence of true faith and thus to man's possession of justification, acceptance, and pardon in Christ. The presence of true sanctification will thus prove, vindicate, and demonstrate to the believer, the world, and the universe that faith in Christ is genuine. The Lutherans consistently maintained that since justification is based exclusively on the gracious provisions in Christ that are received exclusively by the means of faith, it

follows that justification must be full and complete at the very moment a sinner by faith is related to Christ and that justification must by necessity remain complete as long as faith endures, even to the terminal point of death.

#### The Location of the Final Judgment in Lutheran Soteriology

It is noteworthy to recognize that the Protestant confessions, including The Formula of Concord, contain little or no discussion concerning the biblical dimension of the Final Judgment according to works. While divine wrath and judgment serves as the conceptual framework for their doctrine of salvation, the Lutherans never fully integrated this idea in their soteriology proper.<sup>1</sup> Although the relationship between the biblical doctrines of the Final Judgment, justification, and sanctification received only limited and peripheral attention by the Lutherans, it is nevertheless possible to assess the meaning that could be assigned to this event according to their soteriology.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In The Formula of Concord it was stated that “only the righteousness of the obedience, passion, and death of Christ which is reckoned to faith can stand before God’s tribunal.” The Book of Concord, 545. While the Gospel thus provides the means that will satisfy the requirements of God in the judgment, the judgment itself remains peripheral to their doctrine of justification. In the Augsburg Confession, the Final Judgment was simply referred to as an eschatological event linked to the visible return of Christ. They said that “our churches also teach that at the consummation of the world Christ will appear for judgment and will raise up all the dead. The godly and elect he will give eternal life and endless joy, but ungodly men and devils he will condemn to be tormented without end.” Ibid., 38. See also 224.

<sup>2</sup>This observation was confirmed by James P. Martin in his historical study regarding the place and meaning of the Final Judgment in the Protestant tradition. He said that the Protestant Orthodox “stress on the benefits of justification makes the Last Judgment unnecessary.” Martin, The Last Judgment, 15. He added that “the possibility of a real loss for the believer in the judgment could not be seriously entertained. The benefits of justification took care of this, and also the Canons of Dort.” Ibid., 17-18. He concluded that “the Last Things with the exception of death were not really necessary for orthodox soteriology.” Ibid., 27. See also ibid., 40-41, 47. He thus observed that, according to the Protestant tradition, nothing would happen in the Last Judgment which would have any real soteriological significance for the believer. The Lutheran scholar Ole Modalsli demonstrates in his study of Martin Luther’s theology of judgment that while Luther referred to the Final Judgment in the context of his doctrine of salvation, he nevertheless excluded this doctrine from his soteriology. With regard to

Justification seen as a presently complete forensic reality logically implies that at least as long as true faith remains, the believers will remain fully justified; hence their status at the moment of death will not only be existentially fixed but it will also remain forensically complete before God and thus not subject to any future changes, additions or qualifications. According to the principles, governing the time and completeness of a believer's justification within the Lutheran tradition, it logically follows that nothing can happen at the Last Judgment that may alter what God has previously granted and which the believer has previously possessed. Thus no contributory or determinative soteriological significance may be assigned to sanctification in terms of the Last Judgment without infringement upon the principle of the believer's present possession of complete salvation. The good works of sanctification could, however, be seen as reaching their ultimate role of universally revealing and vindicating the presence of the faith-righteousness, which alone makes the believer worthy of eternal life.

Luther's theology of judgment, Modalsli declared that "Allein der Glaube an den Christus pro nobis crucifixus empfängt die Vergebung der Sünden in der Busse und in der Todesstunde. Die Werke gehören auch im Blick auf das Gericht am Jüngsten Tag nicht in den locus iustificationis." Modalsli, Das Gericht nach den Werken, 83. He added: "So energisch Luther gegen den Gedanken der verdienstlichen Werke in Bezug auf den locus iustificationis kämpft ebenso bestimmt behauptet er den Lohn der guten Werke extra locum iustificationis." Ibid., 90. Modalsli made the following comment: "Indem dem Gericht nach den Werken extra locum iustificationis sein Platz angewiesen wird, behält letztlich auch das durch Evangelium abgelöste und aufgehobene Gerichtswort noch einen Platz hinter und jenseits des Evangeliums." Ibid., 95. He thus stated that in harmony with his theology of justification and sanctification Luther located the meaning and significance of the Final Judgment outside the sphere of man's justification before God. Justification was seen as the solution to the problem created by the judgment while the judgment itself had no real soteriological significance, according to Martin Luther. The Final Judgment was seen by Luther as the ultimate existential consequence of human transgression according to the following texts. LW 26: 179, 309, 213, 317, 239, 312; LW 27: 121; LW 22: 95; LW 1: 175; LW 51: 281. For how Luther related the Final Judgment to his understanding of justification see also: LW 22: 380, 382, 384-86. For how Luther related the doctrine of the Final Judgment to his view on sanctification see also: LW 22: 95; LW 27: 120-121; LW 34: 161; D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimer: Hermann Böhlau, Hof-Buchdruckerei, 1883), 12: 289; WA 36: 342-354, 447, 454. While Luther in these texts saw the Final Judgment as non-contributory to man's salvation, he nevertheless perceived it as a cosmic event that will reveal the presence and absence of true faith and thus vindicate and reward the saints before the universe.

## CHAPTER II

### JUDGMENT AND JUSTIFICATION ACCORDING TO ELLEN WHITE

Although Ellen White did not originate the theological rationale of the Sanctuary Doctrine, but basically summarized and authorized the Adventist pioneers' position, she nevertheless influenced it. In her mature expositions of this doctrine in 1884 and 1888, including her later references to it, she consistently interpreted, applied, and integrated this doctrine in her soteriology in a way that transcends that of the Adventist pioneers. In the year 1888 she emerged within the Adventist church as a leading promoter of justification by faith solely through the imputed righteousness of Christ, an emphasis she expressed in the context of the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine, especially its emphasis upon the mediatorial role of Christ. This research is accordingly based primarily on Ellen White's mature theological insights from the year 1884 to her death in 1915.<sup>1</sup> Since Ellen White's soteriology, in general, is presented in the larger salvation historical framework of her Sanctuary theology, with its temporal distinctions between the past, present, and future in terms of Christ's mediatorial ministry, this research aims at penetrating her doctrines with regard to the believers' justification and judgment in terms of this larger perspective.

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<sup>1</sup>See above pp. 7, 18-19. She continually emphasized the importance of the Sanctuary Doctrine for Adventist beliefs. As late as 1906 she stated that "the correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith." White, Letter 208, 1906, 221. Since this study is limited to a research of the place, meaning, and interrelationship of the believers' present justification and final judgment, in terms of Ellen White's soteriology, all eschatological elements included in her Sanctuary doctrine that reaches beyond the terminal event of the pre-advent judgment of the saints are excluded from this study.

### The Sanctuary Doctrine

The post-1844 Seventh-day Adventist christological-soteriological understanding of the biblical sanctuary motif was directly related to the pre-1844 Millerite Adventist focus on this motif in the book of Daniel and its relationship to their christological interpretation of the terminal event predicted in Dan 8:14, an event the pre-1844 Millerite Adventists expected to materialize in the parousia of Christ in the year 1844. Post-1844 Seventh-day Adventist theology developed in a response to the non-occurrence of the Millerite expectations on the basis of a renewed investigation of the theological meaning of the biblical sanctuary motif. No attempts to investigate post-1844 Adventist christology, soteriology, and eschatology may safely ignore this historical, exegetical, and theological perspective.<sup>1</sup> Ellen White described the theological transition from the pre-1844 to the post-1844 understanding of the sanctuary motif, which became formative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as follows:

The scripture which above all others had been both the foundation and the central pillar of the advent faith was the declaration: ‘Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.’ Daniel 8: 14. . . . These prophetic days had been shown to terminate in the autumn of 1844. In common with the rest of the Christian world, Adventists then held that the earth, or some portion of it, was the Sanctuary. They understood the cleansing of the sanctuary was the purification of the earth by the fires of the last great day, and that this would take place at the second advent. Hence the conclusion that Christ would return to the earth in 1844.<sup>2</sup>

When the expected event did not materialize, various responses to the non-occurrence of the parousia emerged among advent believers. Ellen White recounts how the majority of the Millerites renounced their former reckoning of the prophetic periods by arguing that “if the prophetic days had ended in 1844, Christ would then have returned to cleanse the sanctuary by the purification of the earth by fire; and since

<sup>1</sup> See above pp. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> White, The Great Controversy, 409.

he had not come, the days could not have ended."<sup>1</sup> This conclusion rested on the assumption that the purification of the sanctuary was identical with the purification of the earth by fire, and since that did not materialize, the temporal aspect of the prophecy must have been misinterpreted. A small minority of Millerite Adventists, however, eventually reached a different conclusion with regard to the non-occurrence of the expected parousia. Ellen White recounts that this group "could see no error in their reckoning of the prophetic periods," as they were convinced that "they had adopted sound principles of interpretation in their study of the prophecies, and that it was their duty to hold fast the truth already gained, and to continue the same course of biblical research."<sup>2</sup> This approach "led them to examine more closely the subject of the sanctuary,"<sup>3</sup> a study that provided a whole new theological perspective in which to assess the meaning of the predicted terminal event in Dan 8:14. She said:

In their investigation they learned that there is no Scriptural evidence sustaining the popular view that the earth is the sanctuary; but they found in the Bible a full explanation of the subject of the sanctuary, its nature, location, and services; the testimony of the sacred writers being so clear and ample as to place the matter beyond all question.<sup>4</sup>

Ellen White thus described how this group of advent believers, through an investigation of the biblical meaning of the sanctuary motif, reached the conclusion that the error was not in the historicist hermeneutics applied to the temporal elements of the prophecies, but in their interpretation of the sanctuary symbolism itself. Ellen

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 409-10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 411.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Ellen White declared that "the mistake had not been in the reckoning of the prophetic periods, but in the event to take place at the end of the 2300 days." Ibid., 424. She added that "through this error the believers had suffered disappointment, yet all that was foretold by the prophecy, and all that they had any Scripture warrant to expect, had been accomplished." Ibid.

White thus recounts how the founders of Seventh-day Adventism found their solution to the 1844 disappointment through a study of the biblical sanctuary motif, a motif that they saw as a key to the meaning of the event predicted in Dan 8:14.

### A Realistic Conception of a Transcendent Heavenly Sanctuary

As post-1844 Adventists searched for the biblical meaning of the sanctuary motif, they learned that the Holy Scriptures spoke not only of the Mosaic sanctuary as a prophetic type of the work of Christ, but also spoke of a transcendent heavenly sanctuary in which Christ serves as a mediating High Priest. Ellen White summarized their new insight regarding the Mosaic sanctuary and the Solomonic temple by saying that "this is the only sanctuary that ever existed on the earth, of which the Bible gives any information. This was declared by Paul to be the sanctuary of the first covenant. But has the new covenant no sanctuary?"<sup>1</sup> She summarized how post-1844 Adventists answered this question as follows:

Turning again to the book of Hebrews, the seekers for truth found that the existence of a second, or new-covenant sanctuary, was implied in the words of Paul already quoted: 'Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.' And the use of the word 'also' intimates that Paul has before made mention of this sanctuary. Turning back to the beginning of the previous chapter, they read: 'Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.' Hebrews 8:1, 2.

Here is revealed the sanctuary of the new covenant. The sanctuary of the first covenant was pitched by man, built by Moses; this is pitched by the Lord, not by man. In that sanctuary the earthly priests performed their service; in this, Christ, our great High Priest, ministers at God's right hand. One sanctuary was on earth, the other is in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

Ellen White accordingly declared that the founders of the Seventh-day

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 412-13. Ellen White assumed Paul to be the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, following the title in her Bible. Ibid., 347, 411, 420.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 413.

Adventist Church discovered that “the term ‘sanctuary,’ as used in the Bible refers, first, to the tabernacle built by Moses . . . , secondly, to the ‘true tabernacle’ in heaven, to which the earthly sanctuary pointed.”<sup>1</sup> Ellen White further referred to this double realism with regard to the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries by saying that “the sanctuary in heaven, in which Jesus ministers in our behalf, is the great original, of which the sanctuary built by Moses was a copy.”<sup>2</sup> The Adventist pioneers thus arrived at the conviction that just as the first covenant has a real earthly sanctuary, so the new covenant has a real heavenly transcendent sanctuary in which Christ serves as personal mediator in behalf of the believers. She accordingly concluded her description of the post-1844 Adventist search for the meaning of the biblical sanctuary motif by saying that “those who were studying the subject found indisputable proof of the existence of a sanctuary in heaven.”<sup>3</sup>

Post-1844 Adventists thus reached the conclusion that Scripture portrayed the existence of a tangibly real, although transcendent, heavenly sanctuary belonging to the order of the new covenant. She summarized the basic exegetical arguments on which this conviction was based as follows: “Moses made the earthly sanctuary after a pattern which was shown him. Paul teaches that that pattern was the true sanctuary which is in heaven. And John testifies that he saw it in heaven.”<sup>4</sup> Here the term sanctuary is used strictly as a reference to the structure represented by the temple and tabernacle proper, excluding the courtyard to which the people had access and in which the sacrificial service took place. This new insight, with regard to the existence

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 417.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 414. Ellen White further supported the idea that there is a real celestial sanctuary of which the Mosaic was a type by saying that “the apostle John was granted a view of the temple of God in heaven.” Ibid., 414.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 415.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

of a real heavenly Messianic sanctuary belonging to the order of the new covenant, caused a transition in post-1844 Adventist thinking concerning the location and meaning of the terminal eschatological event portrayed in Dan 8:14. Ellen White described this change of understanding as follows:

At the death of Christ the typical service ended. The 'true tabernacle' in heaven is the sanctuary of the new covenant. And as the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 is fulfilled in this dispensation, the sanctuary to which it refers must be the sanctuary of the new covenant. At the termination of the 2300 days, in 1844, there had been no sanctuary on earth for many centuries. Thus the prophecy, 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed,' unquestionably points to the sanctuary in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

This group of Millerite Adventists thus recognized that the legitimate role of the earthly Mosaic sanctuary was terminated with the inauguration of the new covenant at the death of Christ, a covenant that has a transcendent heavenly Messianic sanctuary of which the earthly was but a copy. Since the prophetic and apocalyptic visions in Dan 8:14 were seen as truly eschatological and Messianic, the sanctuary mentioned in this text was accordingly identified as the sanctuary of the new covenant in which Christ serves as mediator. Given these theological premises, this group of Millerite Adventists concluded that the terminal event predicted in Dan 8:14 with regard to the sanctuary must refer to the heavenly and not the earthly sphere. Their perception of an analogical-typological relationship between the earthly old-covenant and the heavenly new-covenant sanctuaries constitutes the theological perspective in which they reached their new convictions regarding the eschatological event portrayed in Dan 8:14.

#### The Analogical-Typological Principle

Ellen White provides a clear presentation of the Adventist understanding of the prophetic and typological principle of analogy between the earthly old-covenant and the heavenly new-covenant sanctuaries; a principle that governs the Adventist

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 417.

thinking regarding a realistic conception of a heavenly sanctuary and its christological function and meaning. The earthly type was perceived as an interpretative key to the structure, content, function, and meaning of the heavenly reality. Arguments were drawn from the Epistle to the Hebrews as follows:

And Paul says that the first tabernacle ‘was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered gifts and sacrifices;’ that its holy places were patterns of things in heavens;’ that the priests who offered gifts according to the law served ‘unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,’ and that ‘Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.’ Hebrews 9:9, 23; 8,5; 9:24.<sup>1</sup>

Since the term sanctuary is here used strictly as a reference to the structure represented by the tabernacle and temple proper, with the exclusion of the courtyard, it follows that it is the proper structure of the Mosaic sanctuary and its function, which are seen as prophetic types of the transcendent heavenly sanctuary in which Christ performs His post-ascension priestly and kingly intercessory work.<sup>2</sup> The Adventist pioneers concluded that there is a christological reality in the heavenly sphere which in principle corresponds to the earthly type in terms of form, function, and meaning. Ellen White expressed this conviction by saying that “the holy places made with hand were to be ‘figures of the true,’ ‘patterns of things in the heavens’ (Hebrews 9:24, 23)--a miniature representation of the heavenly temple where Christ, our great High Priest, after offering His life as a sacrifice, was to minister in the sinner’s behalf.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 413.

<sup>2</sup> The courtyard was seen by Ellen White as a type of the earth, and Christ’s death was accordingly seen as the reality of which all the bloody sacrifices were prophetic types. Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Life of Christ (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1898), 652, 757; idem, The Great Controversy, 420.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets As Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1958), 343. The heavenly sanctuary was seen as “the ‘true tabernacle’ . . . to which the earthly sanctuary pointed.” Idem, The Great Controversy, 417.

She added that "not only the sanctuary itself, but the ministration of the priests, was to 'serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.' Hebrews 8:5."<sup>1</sup> The basic exegetical arguments on which this theological reflection was based were summarized by Ellen White as follows:

Moses made the earthly sanctuary, 'according to the fashion that he had seen.' Paul declares that 'the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry,' when completed, were 'the patterns of things in heavens.' Acts 7:44; Hebrews 9:21, 23. And John says that he saw the sanctuary in heaven. That sanctuary, in which Jesus ministers in our behalf, is the great original, of which the sanctuary built by Moses was a copy.<sup>2</sup>

The New Testament christological usage of the Old Testament sanctuary imagery was clearly seen as more than purely metaphorical. The arguments are actually based on the conviction that the earthly Mosaic sanctuary and its ministries were divinely given prophetic types of the heavenly mediatorial role of Christ. It is important to notice that Ellen White maintained that it was the earthly sanctuary with its services that is a copy of the heavenly christological reality and not vice versa; hence it logically follows that the earthly types must be a reflection of the heavenly reality in terms of form, function, and meaning.

While it was maintained that there exists a level of real correspondence between type and reality, it was nevertheless recognized that the substance of the heavenly reality completely transcends the earthly prophetic types. Ellen White stated that the transcendent heavenly sanctuary is "the abiding place of the King of kings, where thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him (Daniel 7:10)."<sup>3</sup> She further described the celestial reality by saying that this "temple filled with the glory of the eternal throne, where seraphim, its shining

<sup>1</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 351-52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 357.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

guardians, veil their faces in adoration, could find, in the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands, but a faint reflection of its vastness and glory.”<sup>1</sup> The earthly sanctuary was further described by her as only a “dim reflection of the glories of the temple of God in heaven, the great center of the work for man’s redemption.”<sup>2</sup> Despite the existence of such an indescribable difference between the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly reality, she nevertheless insisted that “important truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man’s redemption were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.”<sup>3</sup>

The theological implications of this post-1844 Adventist insight into the biblical sanctuary motif are decisive. If the christological dimension is the reality of which the earthly Mosaic sanctuary is a temporal prophetic type, it logically follows that there must be a transcendent christological reality that corresponds in principle to the earthly type in terms of form, function, and meaning. The earthly order thus provides an interpretative key to the form, function, and meaning of Christ’s post-resurrection priestly, kingly, and mediatorial works before God. This principle seems to imply that since the earthly sanctuary was divided into a holy and a most holy place, there must be a reality in the heavenly sphere that in principle corresponds to it, and since the mediatorial work is divided into two successively related phases, namely the daily-continual and the yearly-consummative work, there must be a christological reality that in principle corresponds to it. The implications of this principle with regard to Christ’s celestial mediatorial work are discussed in the following sub-sections.

<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 414.

<sup>2</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 349.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 414.

The Analogy of Structure

The Adventist understanding of the typological principle with regard to the structure of the celestial sanctuary was represented by Ellen White as follows: "The holy places of the sanctuary in heaven are represented by the two apartments in the sanctuary on earth."<sup>1</sup> She thus argued that there was a reality in the heavenly sphere which in principle corresponded to the holy and most holy divisions of the earthly sanctuary. This structural division with regard to the celestial sphere was further supported by a description of the visionary throne and temple scenes in the Book of Revelation as follows:

Here the prophet was permitted to behold the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven; and he saw there the 'seven lamps of fire' and the 'golden altar,' represented by the golden candlestick and the altar of incense in the sanctuary on earth. Again, 'the temple of God was opened' (Revelation 11:19), and he looked within the inner veil, upon the holy of holies. Here he beheld 'the ark of His testament,' represented by the sacred chest constructed by Moses to contain the law of God.<sup>2</sup>

The Adventist understanding of the structural divisions between a holy and most holy sphere in the celestial sanctuary was continually reflected in Ellen White's descriptions of the transcendent mediatorial work of Christ. She declared that "the ministration of the priest throughout the year in the first apartment of the sanctuary . . . represents the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His ascension."<sup>3</sup> She added that "such was the work of ministration in the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven."<sup>4</sup> Christ's transcendent mediatorial work, however, was seen as culminating in the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary. The consummation of Christ's

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 414.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 414-15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 420.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 421.

mediatorial work was seen by post-1844 Adventists, including Ellen White, as the salvation historical fulfillment of the prophecy in Dan 8:14 as she further stated: "At that time, as foretold by Daniel the prophet, our High Priest entered the most holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work."<sup>1</sup> She further elucidated this insight by saying: "Instead of coming to the earth at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844, Christ then entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to perform the closing work of atonement preparatory to His coming."<sup>2</sup> The scriptural arguments in favor of such a realistic conception of a most holy sphere in the heavenly sanctuary were summed up by Ellen White as follows:

‘The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament.’ Revelation 11:19. The ark of God’s testament is in the holy of holies, the second apartment of the sanctuary. In the ministration of the earthly tabernacle, which served ‘unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,’ this apartment was opened only upon the great Day of Atonement for the cleansing of the sanctuary. Therefore the announcement that the temple of God was opened in heaven and the ark of His testament was seen points to the opening of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 as Christ entered there to perform the closing work of the atonement.<sup>3</sup>

According to their perception of the typological principle, the Adventists, including Ellen White, thus argued that since the earthly sanctuary has a spatial division between the holy and most holy spheres, there must be a heavenly reality that in principle corresponds to it. The Adventist support for this interpretation was based partly on the Epistle to the Hebrews and partly on the visionary throne and temple scenes in the Book of Revelation.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 421. Ellen White reaffirmed this insight by saying that “Christ had come, not to the earth, as they expected, but as foreshadowed in the type, to the most holy place of the temple of God in heaven.” Ibid., 424.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 422.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 433.

### The Analogy of Function

The Adventist understanding of the typological principle with regard to the function of the celestial sanctuary was represented by Ellen White as follows: "Not only the sanctuary itself, but the ministration of the priests, was to 'serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.' Hebrew 8:5."<sup>1</sup> She thus argued that there is a christological reality in the heavenly sphere that in principle corresponds to the ministration performed by the priests in the earthly sanctuary. Ellen White observed that "the ministrations of the earthly sanctuary consisted of two divisions, a daily and a yearly service. The daily service was performed at the altar of burnt offering in the court of the tabernacle and in the holy place; while the yearly service was in the most holy."<sup>2</sup> She furthermore described the interrelationship between the two phases in the mediatorial work as follows: "The priests ministered daily in the holy place, while once a year the high priest performed a special work of atonement in the most holy, for the cleansing of the sanctuary."<sup>3</sup> She also focused on the crucial significance of the Day of Atonement by saying that "once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, the priest entered the most holy place for the cleansing of the sanctuary. The work there performed completed the yearly round of ministration."<sup>4</sup> The daily-continual ministry in the earthly sanctuary was thus seen as being incomplete by itself, while the yearly-consummative ministry was seen as providing the necessary completion of the daily-continual ministry.

<sup>1</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 351-52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 352.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 418.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 419.

A consistent application of the typological principle would seem to imply that as the mediatorial work in the earthly type was divided into two successively related phases, there must be a christological reality which in principle corresponds to it. The following reference affirms that this was indeed the Adventist reasoning. It was stated that "such was the service performed 'unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.' And what was done in type in the ministration of the earthly sanctuary is done in reality in the ministration of the heavenly sanctuary."<sup>1</sup> The two-phased mediatorial work in the earthly sanctuary, which involved a two-phased soteriological application of the atoning blood, was thus conceived by post-1844 Adventists, including Ellen White, as a prophetic type and shadow of the heavenly mediatorial work of Christ.

She described the mediatorial work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary as a ministry that would be performed in two successive historical stages, and in which there would be a corresponding two-phased application of His atonement in behalf of the worshipper. Regarding the christological application of the mediatorial motif she stated that "the ministration of the priest throughout the year in the first apartment of the sanctuary . . . represents the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His ascension."<sup>2</sup> This first phase in Christ's post-ascension mediatorial ministry, corresponding to the daily ministration in the Mosaic type, was furthermore seen by

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 420. She elucidated this insight by saying that "as Christ's ministration was to consist of two great divisions, each occupying a period of time and having a distinctive place in the heavenly sanctuary, so the typical ministration consisted of two divisions, the daily and the yearly service, and to each a department of the tabernacle was devoted." White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 357.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 420. She further explained this assertion, saying: "It was the work of the priest in the daily ministration to present before God the blood of the sin offering, also the incense which ascended with the prayers of Israel. So did Christ plead His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners, and present before Him also, with the precious fragrance of His own righteousness, the prayers of penitent believers. Such was the work of ministration in the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven. Ibid., 420-21.

Ellen White as culminating in a distinct eschatological consummative phase, which in principle would correspond to the yearly ministration on the Day of Atonement. She declared that "as in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of men is completed there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary."<sup>1</sup> She further elucidated this idea by saying that "our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man."<sup>2</sup> This consummative soteriological act of Christ in terms of applying Christ's merits and righteousness on behalf of believers was typologically described by Ellen White as follows: "The cleansing, both in the typical and in the real service must be accomplished with blood: in the former, with the blood of animals; in the latter, with the blood of Christ."<sup>3</sup>

According to Ellen White, post-1844 Adventists thus identified a functional division in Christ's post-ascension intercessory ministry, which was synchronously related to the structural divisions of the sanctuary, and in which there would be some correspondence in principle to the daily-continual and the yearly-consummative work that transpired in the holy and most holy divisions of the earthly sanctuary. Thus the functional divisions perceived in Christ's transcendent mediatorial ministry were logically governed by this typological principle. This principle constitutes the biblical hermeneutical key, to the christological interpretation of the interrelationship between the old and new covenant sanctuaries and their respective ministries, which is basic to the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the biblical sanctuary motif.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 421.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 480. Christ was seen as entering "the most holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work--to cleanse the sanctuary." Ibid., 421.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 417-18.

### The Analogy of Time

The entire Mosaic sanctuary service with its festivals proceeded on a yearly repeated cycle in which the services in the holy and most holy places were divided into a daily-continual and a yearly-consummative phase. Thus a temporal dimension was inseparably related to the spatial and functional divisions of the sanctuary. According to the typological principle, adopted by post-1844 Adventists, the temporal cycle with its daily and yearly ministries was seen as a grand salvation-historical parable typifying the successive stages in the earthly-heavenly sacrificial and mediatorial work of Christ.

The death of Christ was identified as the great transition point between the legitimate functions of the old and new covenants and their respective sanctuaries and ministries. Ellen White declared that "Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals." She elucidated this assertion by saying that "He, the spotless lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin offering, that He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death."<sup>1</sup> In harmony with traditional Protestant thought, Ellen White viewed the death of Christ not only as the grand reality of which all the sacrificial types were but acted parables, but also as the great transition point between the earthly and heavenly ministry of Christ. She said that "type has met antitype in the death of God's Son. The great sacrifice has been made. . . . Henceforth the Savior was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 652.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 757. She further affirmed this conviction by saying that "after His ascension, our Saviour was to begin His work as our High Priest. Says Paul, 'Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' Hebrews 9:24." White, The Great Controversy, 420.

Just as the daily-continual sacrifices represented the once-and-for-all atoning sacrifice of Christ, so the daily-continual priestly entrance into the typical sanctuary represented the once-and-for-all entrance of Christ into the heavenly realities. Ellen White's identification of Christ's death and ascension as the decisive transition point in Christ's earthly-heavenly ministry was in principle in harmony with traditional Protestant christology. The uniqueness with respect to the Adventist belief, however, is linked to the spatial, functional, and temporal divisions of Christ's post-ascension mediatorial ministry.

In principle, the Adventist pioneers arrived at the conviction that there were two phases in the post-ascension mediatorial work of Christ based on their perception of sanctuary typology, while their conviction that the year 1844 was the transition point in His heavenly ministry was based on their Messianic interpretation of Dan 8:14. Ellen White, in harmony with the Adventist pioneers, believed that Daniel, chaps. 8-9, with its sanctuary motif has a Messianic prophetic content with regard to the past, present, and future mediatorial role of Christ. The Adventist pioneers thus identified the temporal aspects of Christ's work by means of this prophecy including the year 1844 as the time at which His consummative eschatological work would begin in the heavenly sphere.<sup>1</sup> Ellen White consistently described the perceived two phases in Christ's post-ascension mediatorial ministry in terms of this theological-exegetical perspective. Thus she could say that "for eighteen hundred years this work

<sup>1</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 224-29, 409-32. The identification of the year 1844 as the historical point of transition in terms of the two phases in Christ's post-ascension ministry was thus related to their understanding of the chronological content of Dan 8:14, while the meaning of the event itself was related to the christological understanding of the text, especially the sanctuary motif. The validity of the date of 1844 as the transition point in Christ's heavenly ministry is not the object of this research and will not be discussed here. This study is focussed on the possible soteriological implications of the Adventist perception of a two-phased dimension in Christ's post-ascension mediatorial ministry.

of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary." She added: "When the 2300 days ended . . . , as foretold by Daniel the prophet, our High Priest entered the most holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work--to cleanse the sanctuary."<sup>1</sup> The conviction of the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers was summarized as follows: "Instead of coming to the earth at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844, Christ then entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to perform the closing work of atonement preparatory to His coming."<sup>2</sup> The yearly cycle in the Mosaic sanctuary, with its temporal divisions into a daily and yearly mediatorial ministry, was thus perceived by Ellen White as a prophetic type of two related but distinct phases in Christ's post-ascension celestial ministry, the last and consummative one being identified in terms of time by the means of Messianic eschatological prophecy.

The Sanctuary Doctrine thus provided post-1844 Seventh-day Adventists with a comprehensive salvation-historical perspective in which they understood the past, present, and future soteriological work of Christ as a progressive and indivisible unit, prophetically outlined in the Messianic texts of the Scriptures and prophetically typified in the biblical sanctuary motif. The typological principle furthermore provided a clear distinction between Christ's atoning sacrifice completed at the cross and its subsequent soteriological application through Christ's heavenly mediatorial ministry. Just as the Mosaic sanctuary service had a daily-continual and a yearly-consummative mediatorial application of the atoning blood for the solution of the problem of sin, so the post-ascension intercession of Christ, according to this principle, should have a corresponding present-continual and eschatological-consummative application of His

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 421. Thus she could say that "one part of His ministration had closed, only to give place to another." Ibid., 430. See also ibid., 428-29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 422.

merits and righteousness to the full eradication of the believer's problem of sin. It is the soteriological implications of this doctrinal development seem to compromise the core of Protestant soteriology, according to the critics.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Biblical Dimension of Law and Sin

The biblical teachings regarding law, sin, grace, righteousness, atonement, Christ, faith, regeneration, and the Final Judgment are all integrated in the Sanctuary Doctrine and thus constitute the perspective in which the soteriological implications of Christ's two-phased mediatorial ministry must be assessed. Divine creation and human transgression constituted the basic theological perspectives in which Lutherans understood the rationale and function of the divine law. Their doctrine of salvation furthermore presupposes that God, subsequent to the fall of Man, through the instrument of moral law, simultaneously reveals His eternal will and man's sinful condition and thus his need of divine grace. The Adventist position on these vital doctrinal points needs to be investigated as they have a crucial impact on soteriology.

#### Original Righteousness

Prior to the historic origin of sin, Adam and Eve existed in a primeval state of original righteousness and spiritual relationship with God, possessing a positive spiritual disposition as they reflected the moral image and eternal character of God according to Ellen White. Originally they were "created innocent and holy. . . . God made them free moral agents, capable of appreciating the wisdom and benevolence of His character and the justice of His requirements, and with full liberty to yield or to withhold obedience."<sup>2</sup> She amplified this assertion by saying that "every faculty of

<sup>1</sup>See above pp. 11-16.

<sup>2</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 48.

mind and soul reflected the Creator's glory,"<sup>1</sup> and that "the principles of righteousness were written upon his [Adam's] heart."<sup>2</sup> She elucidated this description further by saying that "God made Adam after His own character, pure and upright. There were no corrupt principles in the first Adam, no corrupt propensities or tendencies to evil. Adam was as faultless as the angels before God's throne."<sup>3</sup> The moral principles present in the heart of Adam prior to the Fall were equated with the moral principles expressed in the divine moral law as follows: "Adam and Eve, at their creation, had a knowledge of the law of God. It was printed on their hearts, and they understood its claims upon them."<sup>4</sup> The original spiritual disposition towards God present in the human heart and mind at the time of creation thus perfectly matched and reflected God's spiritual and moral attributes.

#### Sin as a Corruption of the Original Spiritual Disposition

This insight into the normative function of God's eternal moral character and its original presence in the human heart and mind serves as the theological key to Ellen White's perception of sin and transgression. The nature of the temptation launched by Satan was described as an attempt to destroy the original spiritual disposition of faith

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Education (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1952), 20.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 467.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Letter 191, 1899, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953), 1: 1083.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, "Christ and the Law," RH, 29 Apr. 1875, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 1: 1083. She added: "Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is 'the express image' (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will." Idem, Patriarchs and Prophets, 45.

and love of God. She said that “he [Satan] would change their love to distrust and their songs of praise to reproaches against their Maker.”<sup>1</sup> She qualified this crucial insight by saying that “he [Satan] . . . tempted the woman to distrust God’s love, to doubt His wisdom, and to transgress His law.”<sup>2</sup> The temptation thus aimed at destroying the very essence of Adam and Eve’s spiritual nature. The seriousness of the damage caused by their fall was expressed as follows: “Should they once yield to temptation, their nature would become so depraved that in themselves they would have no power and no disposition to resist Satan.”<sup>3</sup> While the damage of their spiritual nature was thus qualified as permanent it was furthermore depicted as being so radical that it would subsequently be inherited by posterity. Ellen White said: “While Adam was created sinless, in the likeness of God, Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents.”<sup>4</sup>

Fallen nature was described as “inherent propensities of disobedience,”<sup>5</sup> and as a spiritual condition in which “his [man’s] powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love.”<sup>6</sup> Thus subsequent to the fall, Adam “no longer reflected the divine image. His heart was at war with the principles of God’s law.”<sup>7</sup> The hostility arising from the selfish disposition in the human heart had the effect that “he [man]

<sup>1</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 53. She said that “his [man’s] nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil.” Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1908), 17.

<sup>4</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 80.

<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, Letter 8, 1895, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1956), 5: 1128.

<sup>6</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 17.

<sup>7</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 467.

could no longer find joy in holiness, and he sought to hide from the presence of God. Such is still the condition of the unrenewed heart. It is not in harmony with God, and finds no joy in communion with Him."<sup>1</sup> Unbelief and enmity now characterize the human disposition according to Ellen White, who further declared that "distrust in God is the natural outgrowth of the unrenewed heart, which is at enmity with Him."<sup>2</sup>

Adam's transgression was thus seen as having caused so radical a change in man's relationship to God that his spiritual disposition is now naturally inclined to evil and negatively disposed towards God. Ellen White, like the Lutherans, thus partly described sinfulness, from the perspective of humanity's original righteousness, as a loss of the original relationship expressed by a spiritual disposition of faith and love, and partly from the perspective of humanity's subsequent spiritual depravity, as the presence of a radically negative disposition of unbelief, disobedience, and selfishness.

#### The Law Reveals Original Righteousness

Divine moral law was seen as a revelation of the spiritual principles that are intrinsic to God's eternal being and which were reflected in the human mind, heart, and soul at the creation, and which were radically damaged through the subsequent fall of humanity. Ellen White taught that "after Adam's sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. The principles of the ten commandments existed before the Fall and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings."<sup>3</sup> Subsequent to

<sup>1</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 17.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 527. She explained more fully the nature of this enmity by saying that "when man transgressed the divine law, his nature became evil, and he was in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan. There exists naturally no enmity between sinful man and the originator of sin. Both became evil through apostasy." Ibid., 505.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3 (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn., 1864), 295.

the Fall, however, the principles of the moral law "were more explicitly stated . . . , and worded to meet the case of fallen intelligences. This was necessary in consequence of the mind of man being blinded by transgression."<sup>1</sup> While the mode of formulation was thus adapted to meet humanity in its fallen condition, the positive principles that it promoted remained unchanged according to the following citation: "After the transgression of Adam, the principles of the law were not changed, but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition."<sup>2</sup> Ellen White accordingly declared that "God's law is not a new thing. It is not holiness created, but holiness made known."<sup>3</sup> The biblical dimension of the moral law was thus seen as a revelation of the spiritual principles intrinsic to God's eternal being and which were originally internalized in humanity's spiritual disposition.

This conviction with regard to the rationale and authority of the Decalogue was fundamental in the thinking of Ellen White. She declared that "righteousness is defined by the standard of God's holy Law, as expressed in the ten precepts given on Sinai."<sup>4</sup> She further stated that "the law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth."<sup>5</sup> The character of Christ was seen as a perfect reflection of the moral principles of the divine law. It was taught that "in the Saviour's life the principles of God's law--love to God and man--were perfectly exemplified.

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, "The Law of God," ST, 15 Apr. 1875, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 1: 1104.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "The Law and the Gospel," ST, 14 Mar. 1878, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 1: 1104.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Manuscript 88, 1897, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 1: 1104.

<sup>4</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 61.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 60.

Benevolence, unselfish love, was the life of His soul."<sup>1</sup> In addition the moral law was actually seen as sharing some of God's attributes. It was declared that "the moral law was never a type or a shadow. It existed before man's creation, and will endure as long as God's throne remains. . . . It is unchangeable, unalterable, infinite, and eternal."<sup>2</sup> As a revelation and reflection of the eternal moral character of God, the Decalogue will in principle be as unchangeable, enduring, and eternal as God Himself.

Like the Lutheran tradition, Adventism thus saw the Decalogue as a divine revelation of the eternal, unchangeable positive moral and relational principles that were intrinsic to God's being, and which were exemplified in the life of Christ, and which were originally internalized in the human mind, heart, and soul at the creation. Like the Lutheran tradition, Ellen White recognized that the spiritual rationale of the external moral law was thus independent of and prior to the problems of sin and salvation.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "The Righteousness of Christ in the Law," RH, 22 Apr. 1902, 9. Ellen White's understanding of the authority, continuity, and immutability of the moral law was supported by the logic of the Sanctuary Doctrine. Based on the premises that the heavenly sanctuary constituted the reality of which the earthly Mosaic sanctuary was a type and reflection, she thus maintained that "the law of God in the sanctuary in heaven is the great original, of which the precepts inscribed upon the tables of stone and recorded by Moses in the Pentateuch were an unerring transcript." Idem, The Great Controversy, 434. She affirmed that those Adventists who, subsequent to the disappointment in 1844, followed the typology of the Sanctuary Doctrine "were thus led to see the sacred, unchanging character of the divine law. . . . The law of God, being a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, must forever endure, 'as a faithful witness in heaven'." Ibid. While this insight was in full accord with her conception of the Decalogue as a revelation of the eternal divine moral principles, the sanctuary perspective clearly sharpened this conviction as the following citation indicates: "None could fail to see that if the earthly sanctuary was a figure or pattern of the heavenly, the law deposited in the ark on earth was an exact transcript of the law in the ark in heaven; and that an acceptance of the truth concerning the heavenly sanctuary involved an acknowledgement of the claims of God's law and the obligation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment." Ibid., 435. See also ibid., 434. While her convictions concerning the rationale and authority of the Decalogue were similar to that of the Lutherans' she nevertheless disagreed with them regarding the Sabbath commandment. This disagreement has to do with the content of the moral law and not with its rationale or function.

### The Law Demands Original Righteousness

Ellen White, like the Lutherans, recognized that the biblical dimension of the moral law communicates that God, despite the Fall, still demands a full compliance with its spiritual-relational imperatives. She stated those radical imperatives as follows: "The divine law requires us to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves."<sup>1</sup> She accordingly stated that those "two great principles embrace the first four commandments, showing the duty of man to God, and the last six, showing the duty of man to his fellowman."<sup>2</sup> Love being a disposition of the mind and heart thus implies that the moral law demands more than outward compliance to the letter of the law. The law actually makes demands on the motives and dispositions behind one's thoughts and acts. Ellen White referred to this dimension of the moral law, saying: "The law . . . reaches to the thoughts and feelings. . . . The law requires that the soul itself be pure and the mind holy, that the thoughts and feelings may be in accordance with the standard of love and righteousness."<sup>3</sup> The law demands "purity in the most secret thoughts, desires, and disposition."<sup>4</sup> Ellen White expanded the idea that the law demands purity in motives and emotions by saying that the law "takes cognizance, not only of the outward actions, but of the thoughts and intents, the desires and emotions, of the heart."<sup>5</sup> The spiritual-relational demands of the law were thus described as being

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Character of the Law of God," ST, 15 Apr. 1886, 225.

<sup>2</sup> White, "The Law of God," 1: 1104.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Perfect Law," RH, 5 Apr. 1898, 213.

<sup>4</sup> White, "The Character of the Law of God," 226.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Ellen White's description of the normative role of the moral law in the Final Judgment further reveals her fundamental conviction that God still requires a

so radical that they require nothing less than perfect conformity with the moral character of God even in terms of emotions and motivation. The biblical dimension of divine law reveals that the Fall of man did not cause any moral-spiritual change in God nor modify or cancel His original moral-relational order. Like the Lutherans, Ellen White thus saw the Decalogue as an instrument through which God continually confronts fallen humanity with the divine imperative that a person's relationships with God and man must still conform with the will of God or be subject to the curse of God.

#### The Law Reveals Human Sinfulness

As the moral law confronts sinners with its positive spiritual and moral imperatives, it forces them to acknowledge the deeply seated corruption of their spiritual nature. Ellen White declared that "the law of God, spoken in awful grandeur from Sinai, is the utterance of condemnation to the sinner. It is the province of the law to condemn."<sup>1</sup> This is precisely the function of the Decalogue in the Mosaic sanctuary and its services, which according to the typological principle illustrates the celestial reality in which Christ is now ministering in behalf of sinners before God. The law

perfect compliance with the original goodness reflected in humanity at the creation and subsequently required by the Decalogue. She claimed that "The law of God, enshrined within the ark, was the great rule of righteousness and judgment." White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 349. That "law will be the standard of character in the judgment." Idem, The Great Controversy, 436. Ellen White expanded this insight by saying that "the law whose principles remain forever the great standard of righteousness--[is] the standard by which all shall be judged in that great day when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened." Idem, "The Perfect Law," 213. This argument regarding the normative role of the moral law in the Last Judgment confirmed her assertion that "the condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been,--just what it was in paradise before the fall of our first parents,--perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness." Idem, Steps to Christ, 62. The fact that on the Day of Judgment God will ultimately deal with the secret motives and visible works of men and women according to the spiritual and moral requirements of the law demonstrates clearly that despite the Fall God has never changed, modified, or cancelled His original intentions or requirements with regard to humanity.

<sup>1</sup>White, "The Righteousness of Christ in the Law," 8.

enshrined within the ark "pronounced death upon the transgressor."<sup>1</sup> Ellen White elucidated this position when she declared that "while it [the law] promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor."<sup>2</sup>

The condemnatory function of the law was more specifically related to the problem of exposing the sinfulness of humanity. It was a fundamental conviction in Ellen White's theology that "the first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin."<sup>3</sup> This conviction was seen as issuing from a confrontation with the law: "In order to see his guilt, the sinner must test his character by God's great standard of righteousness. It is a mirror which shows the perfection of a righteous character and enables him to discern the defects of his own."<sup>4</sup> Ellen White explained this function of the law in more detail by saying that "as the sinner looks into the great moral looking glass, he sees his defects of character. He sees himself just as he is, spotted, defiled, and condemned."<sup>5</sup> The following quotation explains how the law exposes the spiritual depravity of the human mind as it reveals the disposition and motives behind the acts:

Paul says that as 'touching the righteousness which is in the law,'--as far as outward acts were concerned,--he was 'blameless;' but when the spiritual character of the law was discerned, he saw himself a sinner. Judged by the letter of the law as men apply it to the outward life, he had abstained from sin; but when he looked into the depths of its holy precepts, and saw himself as God saw him, he bowed in humiliation, and confessed his guilt. . . . When he saw the spiritual nature of the law, sin appeared in its true hideousness, and his self-esteem was gone.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 349.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 468. Ellen White also declared that "the law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy," *ibid.*, 467.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>White, "The Perfect Law," 213.

<sup>6</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 29-30.

Through its positive demands, the moral law, in its confrontation with human sinfulness, thus simultaneously reveals and condemns the evil disposition and motives that naturally rule the heart of fallen humanity. The law, however, does not achieve this effect by itself. It is the Holy Spirit who makes the moral law effective in terms of exposing the spiritual corruption in the human soul, according to Ellen White. She expressed this conviction by saying that "when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law."<sup>1</sup> Ellen White thus emphasized the condemnatory function of the law because, like the Lutherans, she recognized that sinners do not know that there is something intrinsically wrong with them and that accordingly they are subject to God's wrath and judgment.

#### The Spiritual Helplessness of the Sinner

Ellen White further argued that the damage and corruption of humanity's original spiritual disposition in heart and mind were not partial but total. Consequently, sinners in their present natural state are completely powerless in terms of fulfilling

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 24. The power of the law to expose the character of the motives and emotions behind men and women's actual life was repeatedly emphasized and explained by Ellen White. She considered the moral law of God to be "so far-reaching as to express the whole will of God, and to take cognizance, not only of the outward actions, but of the thoughts and intents, the desires and emotions, of the heart." White, "The Character of the Law of God," 225. She added that "the law of God reaches to those secret purposes, which though they may be sinful, are often passed over lightly, but which are in reality the basis and the test of character." Ibid. She listed some of the motives that the law exposes as evil and which makes humanity subject to divine condemnation as follows: "The law of God takes note of the jealousy, envy, hatred, malignity, revenge, lust, and ambition that surge through the soul, but have not found expression in outward action, because the opportunity, not the will, has been wanting. And these sinful emotions will be brought into the account in the day when 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil' (Eccl. 12: 14)." Ibid. Ellen White further stated that "when the light from Christ shines into our souls, we shall see how impure we are: we shall discern the selfishness of motive, the enmity against God, that has filled every act of life." Idem, Steps to Christ, 28-29.

God's moral demands as expressed in the law. Ellen White supported the principle that while the law reveals the nature and depth of humanity's spiritual depravity, it cannot solve the problem of sin. She declared that "the law cannot in any way remove the guilt or pardon the transgressor."<sup>1</sup> She added that the "law cannot remit the penalty, . . . [it] charges the sinner with all his debt," and that the "law . . . cannot pardon the transgressor. It is our schoolmaster, condemning to punishment."<sup>2</sup>

The best and most virtuous human effort remains insufficient as a solution of the problem of sin, according to Ellen White. She maintained that "education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life."<sup>3</sup> Even the knowledge of divine moral law was seen as insufficient as a remedy of sin. Ellen White taught that "it is not enough to discern the wisdom and justice of His law, to see that it is founded upon the eternal principle of love."<sup>4</sup> She concluded that "the idea that it is necessary only to develop the good that exists in man by nature, is a fatal deception."<sup>5</sup> The knowledge of law and human effort was thus seen as being insufficient in terms of aiding humankind towards genuine spiritual virtue. The reasons for this impotence of the law in terms of aiding men and women towards genuine virtue were not due to any defects in the law, but due to a radical damage of humanity's spiritual nature, as she further stated, saying:

<sup>1</sup>White, "The Perfect Law," 213.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "Sermon at Otsego," RH, 3 Feb. 1891, 66; Ellen G. White, Manuscript 50, 1900, quoted in idem, Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), 1: 341.

<sup>3</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 18.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 18-19.

By nature we are alienated from God. The Holy Spirit describes our condition in such words as these: 'Dead in trespasses and sins;' 'the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint;' 'no soundness in it.' We are held fast in the snares of Satan; 'taken captive by him at his will.'<sup>1</sup>

Human beings were thus described as being powerless in terms of achieving the spiritual and moral virtues demanded by divine law because they are subject to a deep and radical spiritual bondage and slavery. Ellen White actually defined the essence of the hostile spiritual disposition that now dominates and rules the natural heart of humankind as selfishness, saying: "Selfishness is the essence of depravity, and because human beings have yielded to its power, the opposite of allegiance to God is seen in the world today."<sup>2</sup> The moral depravity and spiritual bondage of fallen human beings were clearly seen by Ellen White as being so radical that they cannot liberate themselves. Like the Lutherans, she accordingly affirmed that "it is impossible, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them."<sup>3</sup> Even the most strenuous efforts or desperate spiritual exercises in an attempt to fulfill the spiritual obligations of the moral law are hopeless: "The more you struggle to escape, the more you realize your helplessness. Your motives are impure; your heart is unclean. You see that your life has been filled with selfishness and sin."<sup>4</sup> The impotence of the moral law in aiding fallen human beings

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 43. She elucidated this total spiritual depravity as follows: "The human family have all transgressed the law of God, and as transgressors of the law, man is hopelessly ruined; for he is the enemy of God, without strength to do any good thing. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be' (Rom. 8:7). Ellen G. White, "The Divine Standard," ST, 5 Dec. 1892, quoted in *idem*, Selected Messages, 1: 321. She reaffirmed this assertion by saying that "the natural heart hates the law of God, and wars against its holy claims." *Idem*, "The Character of the Law of God," 217. She also said that "love is of God. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it." White, Steps to Christ, 59.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "Self-Love and Self-Sacrifice," RH, 25 June 1908, 8.

<sup>3</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 18. She added that "we cannot do anything to change our hearts, or to bring ourselves into harmony with God." *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 49.

toward true virtue was thus seen as arising from their spiritual and moral depravity.

Ellen White, like the Lutherans, argued that sinners' encounters with the law, instead of aiding them toward virtue, actually expose their selfishness, hostility, and helplessness and thus lead them to spiritual despair. She declared that, "looking into the moral mirror--God's holy law--man sees himself as sinner, and is convicted of his state of evil, his hopeless doom under the just penalty of the law."<sup>1</sup> She further exposed this problem in the words of the Apostle Paul, saying: "Paul the apostle saw all this when he exclaimed 'I consent unto the law that it is good. . . .' But he added, in the bitterness of his soul-anguish and despair, 'I am carnal, sold under sin.'"<sup>2</sup> While the moral law thus threatens transgressors with death, it simultaneously reveals to them that they are powerless in terms of fulfilling its deepest spiritual requirements.

Ellen White realized that sinners must recognize their spiritual depravity and the gravity of the problem of sin, in terms of its ultimate existential consequences, in order to be able to appreciate God's solution through Christ. This preparatory function of the law in terms of exposing the need for a saviour was stated as follows: "It is through the law that men are convicted of sin; and they must feel themselves sinners, exposed to the wrath of God, before they will realize their need of a Saviour."<sup>3</sup> This insight was further reflected in her reference to the Apostle Paul's encounter with the law, saying: "He longed for the purity, the righteousness, to which in himself he was powerless to attain, and cried out, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?'"<sup>4</sup> Her convictions regarding this unique preparatory function of the moral law in terms of revealing the sinner's need of a saviour were forcefully

<sup>1</sup>White, "The Divine Standard," 1: 321.

<sup>2</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 19.

<sup>3</sup>White, "The Character of the Law of God," 225.

<sup>4</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 19.

expressed as follows: "In all its majesty the law confronts the conscience, causing the sinner to feel his need of Christ as the propitiation for sin. . . . The sense of sin, urged home by the law, drives the sinner to the saviour."<sup>1</sup> Ellen White thus recognized that through the instrument of the moral law the Holy Spirit seeks to prepare the sinner to receive God's grace in Christ.

Ellen White, like the Lutherans, thus recognized that the biblical dimension of the moral law was a revelation of the eternal moral principles that were intrinsic in God's eternal being and which were reflected in humanity's mind, heart, and soul at the creation and which subsequent to the fall of humankind still demands the presence of perfect holiness and righteousness. Ellen White like the Lutherans thus saw the law as a divine instrument by which God seeks to move a sinner from ignorance to consciousness regarding the divine character and regarding the reality, gravity, and totality of man's spiritual corruption before God. Through this process, the law reveals to the sinner that he is so ruled and bound by his evil disposition that he is totally incapable of liberating himself from its legal and existential bondage and thus escape the judgment of God. The soteriological powerlessness of the law was depicted as arising from the fact that the basic preconditions for performing God's will were completely absent in fallen man, as he exists in complete bondage to an evil, selfish disposition. A sinner's encounter with the divine law, instead of resolving the problem of sin, actually reveals the depth of his spiritual depravity, his helplessness in terms of being and doing what God demands, the depth of his spiritual and legal estrangement from God, the radicalness of the divine wrath against sin, and thus his inability to escape the condemnation

<sup>1</sup> White, "The Righteousness of Christ in the Law," 9. Quoting the Apostle Paul, she said that "'the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith' (Gal. 3:24). In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace." Idem, Manuscript 87, 1900, quoted in idem, Selected Messages, 1: 234.

and judgment of God. Like the Lutherans, Ellen White thus recognized that through this unique function of the law the Holy Spirit seeks to lead sinners to spiritual despair and thus prepare them for receiving God's grace in Christ. In these vital aspects of the doctrines of law and sin, she shared the essence of the Lutheran Protestant heritage.

#### Christ's Objective Soteriological Work

This section deals with the Adventist perception of Christ's earthly atoning work in conjunction with His post-ascension mediation. The Adventist ideas regarding a two-phased post-ascension mediatorial ministry of Christ constitute a new development in Post-Reformation Protestant christology, soteriology, and eschatology. It is the perception of a particular eschatological consummative phase in Christ's celestial mediatorial ministry that is unique. The soteriological significance of this idea, however, cannot be fully assessed without a prior clarification of the Adventist understanding of the soteriological significance of Christ's earthly atoning work. This section thus deals specifically with the Adventist perception of Christ's life and death, as a manifestation of divine grace, as a satisfaction of the legal and penal demands of the moral law, and as an act of substitution with regard to sinners. These doctrinal points must be analyzed prior to any attempts to assess Ellen White's teachings regarding the soteriological significance Christ's heavenly priestly mediation before God.

#### Christ's Earthly Work

The historic death of Christ was seen by Ellen White as the great reality of which all the sacrifices offered daily and yearly in the earthly sanctuary were the types. She said that "the sacrifices and offerings pointed forward to the sacrifice He was to make. The slain lamb typified the Lamb that was to take away the sin of the world."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 8.

She further declared that "in every bleeding sacrifice was typified 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'."<sup>1</sup> Speaking about the significance of Christ's suffering and death she stated: "He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin offering, that He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death."<sup>2</sup> The sacrificial types were thus seen as fulfilled in Christ's atoning death.

### Divine Grace and Love

Throughout her writings Ellen White kept emphasizing that divine love, mercy, and compassion are the intrinsic motivations of all God's saving activities by saying that "love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His [Christ's] life; His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men."<sup>3</sup> She identified the love and mercy present in Christ as a manifestation of God's disposition towards men and women by saying that "it is from the Father's heart that the streams of divine compassion, manifest in Christ, flow out to the children of men. Jesus, the tender, pitying Saviour, was God 'manifest in the flesh'.<sup>4</sup>"

Divine love was seen as manifesting itself specifically as grace towards the undeserving and unlovable. Ellen White said that "the Lord saw our fallen condition; He saw our need of grace, and because He loved our souls, He has given us grace and

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, "Chosen in Christ," ST, 2 Jan. 1893, 134.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 652. Ellen White declared that "type has met antitype in the death of God's Son. The great sacrifice has been made." *Ibid.*, 757. See also *idem*, The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1911), 33.

<sup>3</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 11-12.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 12. She said that "the fact that we are sinners, instead of shutting us away from the mercy and love of God, makes the exercise of His love to us a positive necessity in order that we may be saved." Ellen G. White, "Transformation through Faith and Obedience," ST, 5 June 1893, quoted in *idem*, Selected Messages, 1: 347.

peace."<sup>1</sup> Ellen White further stated that "our sinfulness calls for the exercise of grace from a merciful God."<sup>2</sup> While she described grace as an "attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings," she more specifically said that "grace is unmerited favor."<sup>3</sup> Her definitions of divine grace in conjunction with her usage of the terms mercy, love, and grace show that, like the Lutherans, she defined divine grace as unmerited favor and mercy and not as a supernatural quality infused in the human soul.

Divine love, mercy, and grace were moreover seen by Ellen White as the only and exclusive ground of humanity's salvation. She declared that "the grace of God in Christ is the foundation of the Christian hope."<sup>4</sup> She expressed its uniqueness by saying that "the grace of Christ is our only hope of salvation,"<sup>5</sup> and she emphasized its exclusiveness by stating that "grace is unmerited favor, and the believer is justified without any merit of his own."<sup>6</sup> In accordance with her conviction that divine grace constitutes the only and exclusive ground for salvation, she declared that "we can do nothing, absolutely nothing, to commend ourselves to divine favor. We must not trust at all to ourselves nor to our good works."<sup>7</sup> This view fully harmonizes with the

<sup>1</sup>White, "Transformation through Faith and Obedience," 1: 347.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1: 331-2.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1905), 161; idem, "Come and Seek and Find," ST, 19 Dec. 1892, quoted in idem Selected Messages, 1: 331. She further reaffirmed her definition of grace by saying that "grace means favor to one who is undeserving, the one who is lost." Idem, "Transformation through Faith and Obedience," 1: 347.

<sup>4</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 256.

<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, "Morning Talk to the Ministers Assembled at the General Conference," Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 1883, quoted in idem, Selected Messages, 1: 351.

<sup>6</sup>Ellen G. White, "Justified by Faith," The Bible Students' Library, Apr. 1893, quoted in idem, Selected Messages, 1: 398.

<sup>7</sup>White, "Morning Talk," 1: 353-54.

assertion that "the grace of Christ cannot be purchased; it is a free gift."<sup>1</sup> She accordingly admonished: "Let no one take the limited, narrow position that any of the works of man can help in the least possible way to liquidate the debt of his transgression. This is a fatal deception."<sup>2</sup>

Ellen White thus defined grace as a loving, merciful, and favorable divine disposition towards sinners, a disposition that grants salvation as a free gift. She also described grace as a divine attribute and not as a supernatural quality infused into the human soul. She also recognized that divine grace constitutes the only and exclusive ground for a believer's salvation, and that all human endeavors are therefore excluded from the doctrine of divine forgiveness, pardon, and justification. An essential agreement thus exists between Ellen White and the Lutheran tradition in terms of the basic meaning of divine grace.

#### The Soteriological Significance of Christ's Life and Death

God's gracious disposition was seen by Ellen White as reaching its ultimate expression through Christ's atoning work. Christ's life and death were seen by her as the ultimate visible manifestation of divine love, mercy, grace, and compassion towards a fallen humanity. She accordingly declared that "all His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love"<sup>3</sup> and that "nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, The Story of Redemption (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1947), 342. She also declared that "we ourselves owe everything to God's free grace. . . . Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our exaltation to heirship with Christ." Idem, Christ's Object Lessons (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1900), 250.

<sup>2</sup>White, Manuscript 50, 1900, 1: 343.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 753.

could express the Father's love to lost humanity.<sup>1</sup> This belief was stated as follows:

But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! 'God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son.' The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but he provided the propitiation because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which he could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.' God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption.<sup>2</sup>

Christ's life and death were clearly identified by Ellen White as the ultimate expression of God's gracious and merciful disposition. The saving provision through Christ's incarnation, life, passion, and death was perceived as linked directly to His fulfillment of both the moral and penal demands of the law. With regard to Christ's moral fulfillment of the law, she said that "in the Saviour's life the principles of God's law--love to God and man--were perfectly exemplified. Benevolence, unselfish love, was the life of His soul."<sup>3</sup> Thus she could declare that Christ was "obedient, sinless to the last, He died for man, his substitute and surety," that He was the "pure and spotless lamb of God," and that "the provision made for us all through Christ was a full and perfect sacrifice,--a sinless offering."<sup>4</sup> She actually considered Christ's perfect moral fulfillment of the law as an act of legal substitution on behalf of sinners, saying: "By His perfect obedience He satisfied the claims of the law, and my only hope is found in looking to Him as my substitute and surety, who obeyed the law perfectly for me."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 14. See also idem, The Desire of Ages, 660.

<sup>2</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 13. See also ibid., 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>4</sup>White, Manuscript 50, 1900, 1: 342; idem, Testimonies for the Church (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 4: 374; idem, Life Sketches of Ellen G. White: Being a Narrative of Her Experience to 1881 As Written By Herself: with A Sketch of Her Last Sickness Compiled from Original Sources (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1915), 246.

<sup>5</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 396.

While Ellen White thus spoke of Christ's active fulfilment of the positive spiritual demands of the moral law as an act of legal substitution and satisfaction, she nevertheless placed her major emphasis on His passive substitutional satisfaction of its penal demands.

Ellen White linked the soteriological meaning of Christ's death to her understanding of the unchangeable and immutable character of the divine moral law, saying: "Those only who acknowledge the binding claim of the moral law can explain the nature of the atonement."<sup>1</sup> She related Christ's death to the penal demands of the moral law by saying that Christ "accomplished our full salvation in a way satisfactory to the demands of God's justice, and consistent with the exalted holiness of His law."<sup>2</sup>

Christ's death was specifically described as a voluntary act of legal substitution and penal satisfaction, by which He redeemed the penitent sinner from the ultimate existential consequences of sin specified by the law, as follows: "He [Christ] came forth from heaven to earth; and while on earth, he bore the curse of God as surety for the fallen race. . . . He chose to bear the wrath of God, which man had incurred through disobedience to the divine law."<sup>3</sup> Ellen White elucidated this assertion, saying: "Guiltless, He bore the punishment of the guilty. Innocent, yet offering Himself as a substitute for the transgressor."<sup>4</sup> Christ was thus pictured as One who through an act of substitution "made a sacrifice that satisfied the principles of justice by which the kingdom of heaven is governed,"<sup>5</sup> and that "the sacrifice made is equal to the broadest

<sup>1</sup>White, "The Law and the Gospel," 1: 229.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "A Divine Sin Bearer," ST, 30 Sept. 1903, quoted in *idem*, Selected Messages, 1: 309.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, "The Work of the Minister," RH, 11 Sept. 1888, 578.

<sup>4</sup>White, "The Divine Standard," 1: 322.

<sup>5</sup>White, "A Divine Sin Bearer," 1: 309.

demands of the broken law of God.<sup>1</sup> Ellen White, like the Lutherans, thus described Christ's death as an act of substitution that provided a full satisfaction of the broadest penal demands of the moral law. The legal necessity of this act of substitution and satisfaction as a means of saving the transgressor was presented as follows: "Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon."<sup>2</sup> Christ's satisfaction of the ultimate moral and penal demands of the law was thus seen as a legal substitutional act, which legally liberates the believing sinner from the condemnation of the law.

The biblical perspective with regard to the condemnation of the sinner, the legal and penal demands of the moral law, and the sinner's need for a righteousness that can match the ultimate moral and penal requirements of the law thus constituted the basic theological setting in which Ellen White, like the Lutherans, understood the soteriological significance of the life and death of Christ.

#### The Soteriological Exclusiveness of Christ's Life and Death

The existential predicament and spiritual impotence of the sinner in terms of the requirements of the moral law were the theological context in which Ellen White understood the soteriological necessity and exclusiveness of Christ's righteousness. She held that "although as sinners we are under the condemnation of the law, yet Christ

<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 489.

<sup>2</sup>White, Manuscript 50, 1900, 1: 340. Her understanding was reaffirmed as follows: "Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law." Idem, The Desire of Ages, 753. Ellen White emphasized the substitutional and satisfactory character of Christ's life, sufferings, and death. See also the Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White, Prepared Under the Direction of the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1963), 1: 495-96.

by His obedience rendered to the law, claims for the repentant soul the merit of His own righteousness.”<sup>1</sup> She continued this line of thought by saying that “the provision made is complete, and the eternal righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of every believing soul.”<sup>2</sup> The believing sinner was accordingly “accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.”<sup>3</sup> Her convictions regarding the righteousness of Christ as the legal basis for the acceptance and justification were summarized as follows:

By His perfect obedience He has satisfied the claims of the law, and my only hope is found in looking to Him as my substitute and surety, who obeyed the law perfectly for me. By faith in His merits I am free from the condemnation of the law. He clothes me with His righteousness, which answer all the demands of the law. . . . He presents me to God in the spotless garment of which no thread was woven by any human agent.<sup>4</sup>

Christ’s personal righteousness and merits were, furthermore, perceived as the only legally valid basis on which a believing sinner might be pardoned, accepted, and justified before God. Ellen White emphasized the soteriological exclusiveness of Christ’s righteousness by saying that “nothing but His righteousness can entitle us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace,” and that we accordingly “have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.”<sup>5</sup> Since Christ’s merits and righteousness in her thinking constituted the

<sup>1</sup>White, “Justified by Faith,” 1: 393.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 394.

<sup>3</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 62.

<sup>4</sup>White, “Justified by Faith,” 1: 396.

<sup>5</sup>White, “Morning Talk” 1: 351; idem, Steps to Christ, 63. Ellen White also said that “through the blood of Christ alone, is there forgiveness of sins.” Idem, “Christ Our Sacrifice,” RH, 21 Sept. 1886, 593. See also the Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White, Prepared Under the Direction of the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1963), 3: 281-85.

only legally valid basis on which a sinner might be accepted, she accordingly declared that "no one can be justified by any works of his own. He can be delivered from the guilt of sin, from the condemnation of the law, from the penalty of transgression, only by virtue of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ."<sup>1</sup> In accordance with this view of the unique soteriological power of Christ's righteousness, she declared that "he who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility."<sup>2</sup> Ellen White thus defended the soteriological exclusiveness of Christ's merit and righteousness as a basic principle, and accordingly excluded all human merit and achievements from the sphere of man's acceptance, pardon, and justification.

Like the Lutherans, Ellen White interpreted the soteriological significance of Christ's life and death in the perspective of the existential predicament of the sinner before the justice of God. Like the Lutherans she emphasized that Christ perfectly fulfilled both the moral and the penal demands of the law and thus satisfied divine justice as the substitute of humanity. Like the Lutherans she also recognized that through His satisfaction of the moral and penal demands of the law, by virtue of His merits and righteousness, Christ thus provided the only and exclusive ground on which a penitent, believing sinner might be granted forgiveness, pardon, and acceptance before God. While Ellen White maintained that Christ through His earthly life, His passion, and death provided the only legal ground on which the penitent believing sinner might be granted pardon and justification, she simultaneously stated that the actual soteriological application of His righteousness on behalf of the individual sinner in principle happens through Christ's heavenly mediatorial and intercessory work.

<sup>1</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 389.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "Spiritual Weakness Inexcusable," RH, 1 July 1890, 402.

### Christ's Heavenly Intercessory Work

Ellen White distinguished sharply between Christ's objective provision of salvation and its existential application to the individual penitent believer. Christ's heavenly post-ascension ministry was depicted as the means of applying the salvation provided by Christ by His earthly ministry. She emphasized this distinction between the earthly and the heavenly dimensions in Christ's ministry by saying that "after His ascension our Saviour began His work as our high priest."<sup>1</sup> This ministry is located in "the sanctuary in heaven, [which] is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of man."<sup>2</sup> She described this priestly dimension in Christ's work as a continuation and consummation of His earthly ministry by saying that "the intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven."<sup>3</sup> The essence of His ministry was characterized as a continual soteriological application of the atoning blood in behalf of penitent believers as follows: "His intercession is that of a pierced and broken body, of a spotless life. The wounded hands, the pierced side, the marred feet, plead for fallen man, whose redemption was purchased at such infinite cost."<sup>4</sup> The reality and necessity of His post-ascension mediation was thus presented by Ellen White as the means of

<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 420.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 488.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 489. She related Christ's reconciliatory ministry to this celestial sanctuary by saying that "the ark that enshrines the tables of the law is covered with the mercy seat, before which Christ pleads His blood in the sinner's behalf." Ibid., 415.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 416. Speaking of Christ's continual heavenly intercession she declared that it has continual efficacy by saying that "Christ is pleading for the church in the heavenly courts above, pleading for those for whom He paid the redemption price of His own lifeblood. Centuries, ages, can never diminish the efficacy of this atoning sacrifice." Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1923), 92.

personally applying to the believer what He accomplished at the cross.

The heavenly dimension of Christ's mediation was perceived, as we have already seen, by Ellen White as transpiring in two successive and inseparable phases by which the soteriological benefit of Christ's death would be applied to the penitent believer. The first phase was seen as Christ's intercession prior to the Final Judgment of the saints, and the second phase was seen as His intercession during that event. The two phases were furthermore perceived as related in such a way that the first phase was seen as reaching its consummation in the second phase, which might thus logically imply that the initial phase itself would in some respect be incomplete.

#### Christ's Pre-Judgment Intercession

Although the soteriological significance of Christ's intercessory work in behalf of believers prior to the moment of their judgment cannot be fully understood apart from its consummation during that event, it must nevertheless be discussed separately. Ellen White referred to Christ's pre-judgment ministry when she declared that "the ministration of the priest throughout the year in the first apartment of the sanctuary . . . represents the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His ascension."<sup>1</sup> Through this intercession "the blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father."<sup>2</sup> Christ's post-ascension mediatorial ministry was thus specifically seen as having its central soteriological significance with regard to the individual application of the benefits of His atoning sacrifice and its personal appropriation by the believer. This idea was further clarified in the following statement:

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<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 420.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 421. The context of this statement documents that she referred to the first phase in Christ's intercession prior to the time and act of judgment.

It was the work of the priest in the daily ministration to present before God the blood of the sin offering, also the incense which ascended with the prayers of Israel. So did Christ plead His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners, and present before Him also, with the precious fragrance of His own righteousness, the prayers of penitent believers. Such was the work of ministration in the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

The continual priestly ministration of the sacrificial blood and the continual offering of incense in the earthly sanctuary was identified by Ellen White as central types illustrating the soteriological function of the first phase in Christ's heavenly intercession. Christ was depicted as performing a ministry that continually qualified a genuinely penitent believer as righteous before God.

Ellen White furthermore claimed that when Christ would enter upon His consummative role as judge He would nevertheless continue with this intercessory function, saying: "Christ had only completed one part of His work as our intercessor, to enter upon another portion of the work, and He still pleaded His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners."<sup>2</sup> She added that "one part of His ministration had closed,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 420-21. "Before the the veil of the most holy place was an altar of perpetual intercession, before the holy, an altar of continual atonement. By blood and by incense God was to be approached--symbols pointing to the great mediator, through whom sinners may approach Jehovah, and through whom alone mercy and salvation can be granted to the repentant, believing soul." White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 353. Ellen White elucidated this assertion by saying that "as Christ at His ascension appeared in the presence of God to plead His blood in behalf of penitent believers, so the priest in the daily ministration sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice in the holy place in the sinner's behalf." Ibid., 357. She fully recognized that the sacrificial blood was not always taken into the holy place and sprinkled before the alter of incense in the daily ministration with regard to the individual sin-offering; but in that case the meat of the sacrifice had to be eaten by the officiating priest whereby he himself in person represented the atoning sacrifice before God. See ibid., 354-55; idem, The Great Controversy, 418. The cultic manipulations of the sacrificial flesh and blood in the daily ministry thus illustrated the continual soteriological presence of the atoning sacrifice before God.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 429. Ellen White maintained as previously established that a structural, functional, and temporal transition in Christ's heavenly ministry occurred in 1844 according to prophecy, a transition which she perceived as prefigured in the earthly sanctuary by the transition from the daily-continual to the yearly-consummative functions. See above pp. 85-88.

only to give place to another. There was still an 'open door' to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ was ministering in the sinner's behalf," and accordingly "forgiveness of sins was offered to men through the intercession of Christ in the most holy."<sup>1</sup> Thus she declared that "Jesus stands in the holy of holies, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment, complete in Himself."<sup>2</sup> The intercession of Christ in behalf of penitent believers symbolized by the priestly mediation through blood and incense in the daily service in the Mosaic sanctuary was thus visualized as continuing during the consummative phase of Christ's heavenly intercession.<sup>3</sup>

Ellen White considered this phase in Christ's intercession, symbolized by the earthly priestly mediation through the blood and the incense, as absolutely necessary for the believer's continual possession of a complete pardon and acceptance prior to the consummation in the eschatological judgment. She stated that "the atoning sacrifice through a mediator is essential because of the constant commission of sin." This is the context in which she understood the necessity of Christ's continual mediation and accordingly declared that "Jesus is officiating in the presence of God, offering up His shed blood, as it had been a lamb slain. Jesus presents the oblation offered for every

<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 430.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "Accepted in Christ," ST, 4 July 1892, 534. She added that "we are complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved, only as we abide in Him by faith." *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>While Ellen White considered Christ's consummative intercessory function as beginning in 1844 according to her understanding of prophecy, she did not teach that the soteriological function previously performed would cease during the time of judgment, which was depicted as dealing individually, chronologically, and progressively with the saints from all ages, ending with the living saints immediately prior to the parousia. The reference to the intercession of Christ in this study, is therefore reference to His mediatorial work up to the moment that the individual believer has been judged, and not to the historical point in time at which the process of judgment was conceived as beginning. See White, The Great Controversy, 425, 490-91, 613-15.

offence and every shortcoming of the sinner.<sup>1</sup> Ellen White elucidated this idea by saying that "the incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God."<sup>2</sup> She further presented her ideas regarding the continual efficacy of Christ's mediation by means of sanctuary imagery as follows:

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable.<sup>3</sup>

The personal intercessory function of Christ was thus visualized by Ellen White as necessary for the continual imputation of His righteousness to the believer, as Christ through this function, by virtue of His merits and righteousness, was depicted as qualifying the believer moment by moment as righteous before God. This insight was further reflected in her general references to the mediatorial function of Christ. She said that "the case is brought before the only true Mediator, our great High Priest," and that "those who acknowledge their guilt will be justified; for Jesus will plead His blood

<sup>1</sup>White, Manuscript 50, 1900, 1: 344. She affirmed this view by saying that "Christ Jesus is represented as continually standing at the altar, momentarily offering up the sacrifice for the sins of the world." Ibid., 1: 343.

<sup>2</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 353.

<sup>3</sup>White, Manuscript 50, 1900, 1: 344. Ellen White elaborated this viewpoint, saying: "It is by virtue of the blood of Christ that the sin-stricken soul can be restored to soundness. Christ is the fragrance, the holy incense which makes your petition acceptable to the Father." White, "Come and Seek and Find," 1: 333.

in behalf of the repentant soul.<sup>1</sup> She added: "Look up, you that are doubting and trembling; for Jesus lives to make intercession for us."<sup>2</sup> The present reception and possession of salvation was thus conceptualized as being dependent on the personal and continual celestial intercession of Christ before God.

The theological implications of Ellen White's views regarding the believer's continual dependence upon the personal intercession of Christ prior to its consummation in the judgment, however, cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of her views concerning the role of Christ during that event. Although the first phase in Christ's post-ascension ministry, as the sinner's representative, substitute, and surety in the presence of God, was thus perceived as being incomplete by itself, it was nevertheless perceived as continually providing a full and complete salvation for the penitent believer as long as true faith endures. Her views regarding the present reception and possession of salvation must be further analyzed prior to a study of the soteriological importance of Christ's consummative intercession during the judgment.

#### **Present reception and possession of salvation**

Ellen White's beliefs regarding the imputation of Christ's merits through His continual mediation and thus the continual possession of salvation by the believer were strongly supported by her general usage of the terms pardon and justification. The question of salvation may always be viewed from either an objective perspective, that is, from the perspective of how, when, and where the problem of sin will be resolved, or from a subjective perspective, that is, from the perspective of how, when, and where a penitent believer receives and possesses a full salvation. While she continued to maintain the objective christological perspective in her soteriology, her emphasis

<sup>1</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 37, 41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 54.

subsequent to 1888 was placed on the spiritual needs of people, and accordingly she approached the issue of salvation from the perspective of the sinner's present needs, present reception, and present experiential possession of salvation. The spiritual state of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at that time called for such an emphasis.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White's articles and publications subsequent to 1888 emphasized the major themes regarding Christ's imputed righteousness, justification, and pardon in the perspective of the penitent believing sinner's present needs, present reception, and present experiential possession of salvation.<sup>2</sup> Her continual emphasis upon a believer's

<sup>1</sup>The soteriological themes of law, sin, faith, penitence, grace, pardon, and justification by virtue of Christ's merits, in contrast to human achievement, became the prominent topics at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists held at Minneapolis in 1888 and in the following decade. These topics generated heated controversy and debate. For a historical account of the Minneapolis conference, its aftermath and theological-religious implications including the role of Ellen White, consult the following sources: Olson, Thirteen Crisis Years, 187-326; George R. Knight, Angry Saints: The Frightening Possibility of Being Adventist Without Being a Christian! (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1989), 11-115; idem, From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1987), 23-88. Prior to this time she had lamented the spiritual state of the Adventist Church. She declared in 1887 that "there is too much formality in the church. Souls are perishing for light and knowledge." Ellen White, "Praise Glorifies God," RH, 15 Feb. 1887, 97. She added that "a revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs." Idem, "The Church's Great Need," RH, 22 Mar. 1887, 177. In 1889 she said that "the churches are lukewarm. They have listened to doctrinal discourses, but they have not been instructed concerning the simple art of believing." Idem, "Camp-Meeting at Williamsport, Pa.," RH, 13 Aug. 1889, 513. Looking back in 1890 at the spiritual-doctrinal condition that had developed in the Adventist Church by 1888 she said: "As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain." Idem, "Christ Prayed for Unity among His Disciples," RH, 11 Mar. 1890, 196. From this period in time Ellen White increasingly approached the issue of salvation from the perspective of the sinner's present needs, present reception, and present possession of salvation.

<sup>2</sup>She presented the central themes of salvation in the following books published in 1892, 1896, 1898, and 1900. White, Steps to Christ; idem, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1896); idem, The Desire of Ages; idem, Christ's Object Lessons. Her most significant articles on soteriology from the same period are published in the following compilation: idem, Selected Messages, 1: 201-416. In the book Steps to Christ, more than in any other of her books, she presents the great issue of salvation from the practical perspective of the sinner's present need, present reception, and present possession of salvation through a living, personal, and sanctifying faith in Christ. The table of contents directly shows

present reception of salvation was done in the context of her perception of Christ's work as the dying substitute and living heavenly intercessor expressed in the Sanctuary Doctrine. In an article entitled "Christ the Way of Life," published in 1890, Ellen White stated that "when the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then according to his unfailing promises, God pardons his sin, and justifies him freely."<sup>1</sup> She elucidated this assertion by saying that "by faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His son to the sinner's account."<sup>2</sup> She thus placed the emphasis on the salvation that the sinner would receive and possess when he turned to God in penitence and faith.

In another article published in 1893 entitled "Justified by Faith," Ellen White presented her understanding of present acceptance and justification in a similar perspective, saying: "I am a sinner, and He died upon Calvary's cross to save me. I need not remain a moment longer unsaved. He died and rose again for my justification, and He will save me now. I accept the forgiveness he has promised."<sup>3</sup> She further assured the penitent believer of the present provision of salvation, saying: "You must believe

this emphasis and approach to the issue of salvation. She first presented the theme of God's love for man, then she turned to a discussion of the sinner's need for Christ, and then she continued discussing the themes of repentance, confession, faith, and acceptance. Having thus presented these basics themes of salvation, she then turned to a discussion concerning the sanctifying effect of receiving and possessing a full and complete salvation through a living faith in Christ. *Idem, Steps to Christ*, 7.

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, "Christ the Way of Life," *RH*, 4 Nov. 1890, 673.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Ellen White further declared that acceptance would be granted by virtue of the soteriological provision made by Christ, saying: "Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son." Ibid. She also said that "He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourselves to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned." White, *Steps to Christ*, 62.

<sup>3</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 392.

that He is your Saviour now and that He imputes to you His righteousness."<sup>1</sup> Ellen White explained what this imputation of Christ's righteousness effects in terms of acceptance and justification by saying that "in ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just and treats us as just."<sup>2</sup> She summarized her views on imputation, acceptance, and justification as follows:

The great work that is wrought for the sinner who is spotted and stained by evil is the work of justification. By Him who speaketh truth he is declared righteous. The Lord imputes unto the believer the righteousness of Christ and pronounces him righteous before the universe. He transfers his sins to Jesus, the sinner's representative, substitute and surety. . . .

Although as sinners we are under the condemnation of the law, yet Christ by His obedience rendered to the law, claims for the repentant soul the merit of His own righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

Justification was thus understood as a forensic declarative act by God in contrast to condemnation where God legally pronounces a penitent believer just before the universe on the exclusive basis of Christ's merits and righteousness made available through His function as a dying substitute and living intercessor. The present

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, Manuscript 8, 1888, quoted in Olson, Thirteen Crisis Years, 277. See also *ibid.*, 274-76.

<sup>2</sup> White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 394. She further stated that "the provision made is complete, and the eternal righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of every believing soul." *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 392-93. The term imputation was also a key concept in the soteriology of Ellen White. By this legal concept she described the substance of the salvation which Christ continually mediates to the penitent believer through His heavenly intercession. She stated that "God's dear Son died that He might impute unto man His own righteousness." Ellen G. White, "The Truth as It Is in Jesus," RH, 17 June 1890, 370. She also said that the imputation of Christ's righteousness implied that the believer was fully accepted by God: "Because of the imputed righteousness of Christ they are accounted precious. For Christ's sake the Lord pardons those that fear Him." *Idem*, The Desire of Ages, 667. She accordingly stated that "our only hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us." *Idem*, Steps to Christ, 63. Ellen White repeatedly defined the soteriological benefit received by a believer through Christ's personal mediation as an imputation of His merits and righteousness. See *idem*, Selected Messages, 1: 360, 363, 392-97. See also Comprehensive Index, 3: 282-83.

dimension in terms of receiving and possessing divine imputation, acceptance, and justification and peace of conscience by the believer contemporaneously with the response of faith was strongly expressed by Ellen White in these statements.

In an article published in 1898, Ellen White again approached the issue of man's pardon and justification from the perspective of her concern for the sinner's present needs, present reception, and present possession of salvation as follows: "Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin. The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God's forgiving grace."<sup>1</sup> In a previous article published in 1891, she had said that "as the penitent sinner, contrite before God, discerns Christ's atonement in his behalf, and accepts this atonement as his only hope in this life and the future life, his sins are pardoned. This is justification by faith."<sup>2</sup> This statement not only reflects her angle of approach and the time of a sinner's acceptance, but it also contains a significant definition of the term justification as pardon. In the later article she added that "pardon and justification are one and the same thing," and that "justification is the opposite of condemnation."<sup>3</sup> The terms pardon and justification were thus

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, "Faith and Good Works," ST, 19 May 1898, 307.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Manuscript 21, 1891, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1957), 6: 1070. Ellen White further elucidated the meaning and rationale of justification as follows: "When God pardons the sinner, remits the punishment he deserves, and treats him as though he had not sinned, He receives him into divine favor, and justifies him through the merits of Christ's righteousness. The sinner can be justified only through faith in the atonement made through God's dear Son, who became a sacrifice for the sins of the guilty world. No one can be justified by any works of his own. He can be delivered from the guilt of sin, from the condemnation of the law, from the penalty of transgression, only by virtue of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Faith is the only condition upon which justification can be obtained, and faith includes not only belief but trust. Idem, "Justified by Faith," 1: 389.

<sup>3</sup>White, Manuscript 21, 1891, 6: 1070.

apparently used in a legal and judicial sense--an observation that seems confirmed by the fact that she identified justification as the antithesis to condemnation. In the same article she forcefully stated the rationale for the sinner's reception and possession of pardon and justification by a reference to Christ's role as the dying substitute and living mediator as follows:

The sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins, because these sins are borne by his Substitute and Surety. The Lord speaks to His heavenly Father, saying: 'This is My child, I reprove him from the condemnation of death, giving him my life insurance policy--eternal life--because I have taken his place and have suffered for his sins, He is even My beloved son.' Thus man, pardoned, and clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ's righteousness, stands faultless before God.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White's description of justification as a declarative act of God, in contrast to condemnation whereby God pronounces a penitent believer just before the entire universe on the exclusive basis of Christ's righteousness made available through His function as a dying substitute and living intercessor, logically implies that she understood divine imputation and justification as an objective legal change of a sinner's status before God and not as a subjective character change. The terms pardon and justification were thus apparently seen by Ellen White as a forensic declaration made by the highest legal and judicial authority in the universe. The present temporal dimension in terms of receiving and possessing divine imputation, acceptance, and justification, as man by faith embraces Christ and His righteousness, was strongly expressed by Ellen White. Salvation full and complete was perceived by her as being a present existential reality. Her focus upon the present reception and possession of salvation through faith fully corresponds with the main perspective from which she generally approached the issue of salvation, that is, her concern for the sinner's present needs, present reception, and present possession of salvation. Her continual emphasis upon Christ's objective work as the dying substitute and the living intercessor as the foundation for the present

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

reception and possession of salvation demonstrates that her doctrine of salvation cannot be divorced from her sanctuary christology which remained the context within which the various parts of her soteriology were formulated and understood.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White's definition of the biblical terms justification and pardon as a forensic declaration, pronounced by the highest legal and judicial authority in the universe based exclusively on the merits of Christ, corresponds in principle to the Protestant tradition. Her unique understanding of the continuous necessity of Christ's personal soteriological intercession before God has to do with the manner in which the divine provision is presently applied to the believer and not with the soteriological

<sup>1</sup> Ellen White's first major exposition of the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine was published in 1884 and republished in 1888 in her book The Great Controversy. While this publication underwent several revisions in 1907 and 1911 in matters of historical documentation and details, no doctrinal changes occurred in these later editions. See above p. 7. While her presentation of the Sanctuary Doctrine in this book remained her most explicit one, again in 1890 she promoted this doctrine in her book Patriarchs and Prophets. In the following years she often referred to this doctrinal idea directly and indirectly. In the year 1892 Ellen White wrote that "Jesus stands in the holy of holies, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment, complete in Himself." White, "Accepted in Christ," 534. In 1898 she said that "this is the great day of Atonement, and our Advocate is standing before the Father, pleading as our intercessor. . . . Unless we enter the sanctuary above, and in uniting with Christ in working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, we shall be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and shall be pronounced wanting." Idem, Manuscript 168, 1898, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1957), 7: 933-34. In the year 1899 she stated that "Christ's priestly intercession is now going on in the sanctuary above in our behalf. But how few have a real understanding that our great High Priest presents before the Father His own blood, claiming for the sinner who receives Him as his personal saviour all the graces which His covenant embraces as the reward of His sacrifice." Idem, Manuscript 92, 1899, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 7: 932. In the year 1900 she published an article entitled "Christ Our High Priest" which still reflected the essence of her sanctuary teachings. Idem, Manuscript 50, 1900, 1: 340-44. In 1906 she specifically stated that "the correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith." Idem, Letter 208, 1906, 221. Thus it is clear that Ellen White subsequent to 1884 clearly continued to maintain the christological and salvation-historical perspective expressed in the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine as the theological context in which she formulated and understood the various parts of her soteriology.

meaning, effect, or rationale of the provision itself.<sup>1</sup> Ellen White's general usage of the forensic terms justification and pardon in relationship to a genuine believer's present reception and possession of salvation is noteworthy in that she applies the same terms eschatologically with regard to the consummative divine verdict pronounced in the Final Judgment of the saints. The double usage of these terms seems to create a tension in her soteriology that may appear difficult to resolve. This tension, however, does not arise purely from her eschatological usage of these terms but from the theological context in which they are applied. Her unique understanding regarding the necessary continuous soteriological intercession of Christ presently and eschatologically may, in fact, constitute the theological key that unlocks the mystery on how she, in the context of the sanctuary perspective, could speak of a presently complete existential reception and possession of salvation and simultaneously speak about its present legal incompleteness. The sanctuary perspective must accordingly be further analyzed with regard to the following concepts: the idea that presently there is a legal transfer of sin from the penitent believer to Christ, that confessed sin is not fully dealt with legally until Christ's intercession in the judgment, and that He then performs a necessary and consummative mediatorial act that forensically confirms a believer's salvation.

#### The legal transfer of sin

Ellen White's view with regard to the legal imputation of Christ's righteousness and merits through His personal mediation in the presence of God was closely associated with the assertion that guilt was legally transferred to Christ in His

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<sup>1</sup>For a review of the Lutheran-Protestant position, see above pp. 32-34. For a detailed analysis of the meaning of the terms righteousness and justification see also the following works of biblical scholarship: Colin Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 3: 370-73; Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 2: 211-18.

capacity as our heavenly representative and substitute. The legal participation, the legal transfer, and the legal exchange between Christ and the penitent sinner with respect to merits and demerits were expressed by Ellen White as follows: "He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness."<sup>1</sup> She expanded this view by saying that "the Lord imputes unto the believer the righteousness of Christ. . . . He transfers his sins to Jesus, the sinner's representative, substitute, and surety. Upon Christ he lays the iniquity of every soul that believeth."<sup>2</sup> The legal transfer or legal exchange of demerits and merits between the penitent believer and Christ, respectively, was not new to Protestant thinking. The new element was the manner in which it was being illustrated by some of the key rituals of the earthly Mosaic sanctuary service. The legal transfer of sin to Christ was, by means of the typological figurative language of the ancient Mosaic sanctuary cult, seen as implying that sin was somehow legally transferred to the heavenly sanctuary. Ellen White presented the doctrinal consensus of the pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism when she said that "as anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 62.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 392. This idea with regard to the legal exchange of merits and demerits between Christ and the believer was also expressed as follows: "He proffered His perfection of character in the place of man's sinfulness." Idem, "The Righteousness of Christ in the Law," 8.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 421. The Adventist insight regarding the continual legal transfer of sin to Christ as mediator was by means of the ancient Mosaic sanctuary cult further illustrated by Ellen White as follows: "The sins of the people were transferred in figure to the officiating priest, who was a mediator for the people." Idem, "The Law and the Gospel," 1: 1111. She provided a detailed description of this doctrinal idea by saying that "day by day the repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle and, placing his hand upon the victim's head, confessed his sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice. The animal was then slain. 'Without shedding of blood,' says the apostle, there is no remission of

The soteriological importance of the heavenly mediation of Christ was thus seen by Ellen White as involving not only a legal transfer of merits from Christ to the guilty but also a legal transfer of guilt from the penitent to Christ. While she maintained that the intercession of Christ prior to its consummation thus provides a legal removal of guilt from the penitent believer, she nevertheless maintained that this transaction does not legally eradicate the sins confessed. She expressed this idea by saying that "the blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record."<sup>1</sup> She further elaborated the implications of this doctrinal idea by saying that "the blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement."<sup>2</sup> While the condemnatory power of repented, confessed, and forsaken

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sin. . . . The blood, representing the forfeited life of the sinner, whose guilt the victim bore, was carried by the priest into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, behind which was the ark containing the law that the sinner had transgressed. By this ceremony the sin was, through the blood, transferred in figure to the sanctuary. In some cases the blood was not taken into the holy place; but the flesh was then to be eaten by the priest, as Moses directed the sons of Aaron, saying: 'God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation.' Leviticus 10:17. Both ceremonies alike symbolized the transfer of the sin from the penitent to the sanctuary." Idem, The Great Controversy, 418. See also idem, Patriarchs and Prophets, 354-55.

<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 421. The pre-judgmental protective function of Christ's intercession was related to the biblical idea that there is a celestial register, figuratively described as books, in which the actual lives of all men, be they good or evil, are recorded with photographic exactness. The meaning and significance of this aspect of Adventist theology are discussed later.

<sup>2</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 357. The term final atonement was used as a reference to the second and consummative phase of Christ's heavenly intercession during the act of judgment according to the context. It is important to notice that Ellen White, in her discussion of the legal transfer of sin, explicitly indicates that she saw Christ's pre-judgmental intercession as being incomplete in itself in terms of ultimately resolving the legal problem of sin. She declared that "important truths concerning the atonement are taught by the typical service. A substitute was accepted in the sinner's stead; but the sin was not cancelled by the blood of the victim. A means was thus provided by which it was transferred to the sanctuary. By the offering of blood the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed his guilt in transgression, and

sins was seen by Ellen White as neutralized through the personal intercession of Christ, its legal cancellation was depicted as postponed until the intercession of Christ during the act of judgment itself. While the personal intercessory role of Christ thus provides a full and complete protection against the condemnatory power of repented, confessed, and forsaken sins, it does not legally cancel these sins.

Evidently Adventist theology as reflected by Ellen White assigned both a level of completeness and incompleteness to the soteriological meaning and effect of the intercession of Christ prior to the eschatological consummation in the judgment. While the character of this completeness and incompleteness cannot be fully assessed without a study of the consummative intercessory role of Christ during the act of judgment, it is nevertheless clear that the dimension of completeness was located in the sphere of the believer's personal, experiential possession of salvation, while the dimension of incompleteness was seemingly located in the sphere of the legal forensic ratification of a believer's salvation. Confessed, repented, and forsaken sin was seen as retaining its condemnatory power, which implies that it has not yet been fully dealt with forensically, as she clearly indicates, or else it should have lost its condemnatory power, which apparently does not happen until the act of judgment. The presence of such a forensic incompleteness fully correlates with her emphasis upon the pre-judgment necessity of Christ's personal intercession in behalf of the believer as a means of a

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expressed his desire for pardon through faith in a Redeemer to come; but he was not yet entirely released from the condemnation of the law. On the Day of Atonement the high priest, having taken an offering from the congregation, went into the most holy place with the blood of this offering, and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, directly over the law, to make satisfaction for its claims. . . . Such was the service performed 'unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.' And what was done in type in the ministration of the earthly sanctuary is done in reality in the ministration of the heavenly sanctuary." Idem, The Great Controversy, 420. Adventists as reflected by Ellen White thus arrived at their conviction regarding the soteriological meaning of Christ's pre-judgmental intercession on the basis of the typological principles governing their understanding of the relationship between the heavenly Messianic sanctuary and the earthly parabolic type.

continual protection against the condemnatory power of sin confessed. She referred to the mediation of Christ's merits as the basis for a believer's perpetual possession of salvation, and thus his full and complete protection against the condemnatory power of the transgressed law, as Christ through His personal mediation perpetually imputes His personal righteousness to the believer whose guilt is perpetually imputed to Christ.

#### The Role of Christ during the Judgment

In accord with other Seventh-day Adventists, Ellen White was convinced that Christ's judicial intercessory work commenced in 1844 according to Messianic prophecy and that this work would climax in His second advent and the establishment of His kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Ellen White perceived that it was the commencement of this event "that was foretold in prophecy to take place at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844."<sup>2</sup> The soteriological work of Christ, that was typified by the yearly intercession in the Mosaic sanctuary, was seen by Ellen White as reaching its consummation in the eschatological judgment of the saints. Furthermore, this intercession was seen as being both priestly and judicial as Christ was not only depicted as soteriologically applying

<sup>1</sup> The Final Judgment was understood in terms of biblical prophecy such as the scene of judgment in Dan 7:9. Ellen White stated that "thus was presented to the prophet's vision the great and solemn day when the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the Judge of all the earth, and to every man should be rendered 'according to his works. The Ancient of Days is God the Father. . . . It is He, the source of all being, and the fountain of all law, that presides in the judgment. And holy angels as ministers and witnesses, in number 'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,' attend this great tribunal.'

'And, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.' Daniel 7:13, 14. The coming of Christ here described is not His second coming to the earth. He comes to the Ancient of Days in heaven to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom, which will be given Him at the close of His work as a mediator.' White, The Great Controversy, 479-80. Ellen White believed that the eternal kingdom of God would be established through the proceedings of this eschatological tribunal.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 480.

His blood in behalf of the saints but also performing an investigative judgment. Ellen White referred to this role of Christ as follows:

Attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last act of His ministration in behalf of man--to perform the work of investigative judgment and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White thus recognized that Christ during this event would exercise His judicial and mediatorial authority in favor of the saints.

#### **Judgment according to law and works**

Ellen White defined sin in terms of the divine moral law, which she conceptualized as located in the divine center of the heavenly sanctuary, where she depicted Christ as defending the penitent sinner by His blood both prior to and during the act of judgment. She declared that "that law will be the standard of character in the judgment. The apostle Paul declares: 'As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, . . . in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ'.<sup>2</sup> This conviction with regard to the ultimate moral and relational criteria according to which

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Statements such as "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ," and that "Jesus will appear as their advocate, to plead in their behalf before God" and that He as "our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation," clearly depict Christ's role in the judgment as being not only priestly but also judicial as He presents and defends the saints--an action that reflects the biblical role of a Hebrew judge. Ibid., 436; ibid., 482; ibid., 483.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 436. Ellen White elaborated this assertion, saying: "The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment. Says the wise man: 'Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment.' Ecclesiastes 12: 13-14. The apostle James admonishes his brethren: 'So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' James 2:12." Ibid., 482. With regard to the authority of divine law she further declared that "within the holy of holies, in the sanctuary in heaven, the divine law is sacredly enshrined. . . . The law of God in the sanctuary in heaven is the great original, of which the precepts inscribed upon the tables of stone and recorded by Moses in the Pentateuch were an unerring transcript." Ibid., 434. The Adventists thus maintained that humankind would ultimately be judged according to God's eternal moral standard.

God would finally judge every man, including the saints, was inseparably related to the biblical idea that all men will be judged according to their actual lives. Ellen White expressed this view as she commented on the judgment scene in Dan 7: 9 by saying that "thus was presented to the prophet's vision the great and solemn day when the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the Judge of all the earth, and to every man should be rendered 'according to his works'.<sup>1</sup> The idea that all men would be judged according to their actual lives was further correlated to the biblical idea of the existence of a heavenly register, figuratively described as books, in which the actual lives of all men, be they good or evil, would be recorded with photographic exactness. These celestial records would serve as a legal indictment in the judgment, according to Ellen White. She characterized the content of such heavenly records as follows: "As the features of the countenance are reproduced with unerring accuracy on the polished plate of the artist, so the character is faithfully delineated in the books above. Yet how little solicitude is felt concerning that record which is to meet the gaze of heavenly beings."<sup>2</sup> She elucidated this description as follows:

Every man's work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel.<sup>3</sup>

Both negative and positive dispositions and actions would be recorded in the heavenly register. Ellen White referred to the positive record by saying that in the "book of remembrance . . . are recorded the good deeds of 'them that feared the Lord,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 479.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 487.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 482. Ellen White declared that "the hidden selfishness of men stands revealed in the books of heaven . . . [including] the record of unfulfilled duties to their fellow men, of forgetfulness of the Saviour's claims." Ibid., 487.

and that thought upon His name.' Malachi 3:16. Their words of faith, their acts of love, are registered in heaven." She added that in the "book of God's remembrance every deed of righteousness is immortalized. There every temptation resisted, every evil overcome, every word of tender pity expressed, is faithfully chronicled."<sup>1</sup> She further stated that not only their good deeds but also their faith and reliance on Christ's atonement were recorded in the heavenly register, saying: "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."<sup>2</sup> The heavenly register was thus seen as providing a full description of the lives, thoughts, and motives of all men.

These records thus constitute the legal testimony by which even the saints will be judged as Ellen White further declared, saying: "All who have ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ must pass its searching scrutiny. Both the living and the dead are to be judged 'out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works'."<sup>3</sup> The idea that there exists a heavenly record of the spiritual and moral character of each person is thus central in the Adventist theology of judgment.

#### The function of the heavenly records in the judgment

The idea that the heavenly tribunal would conduct a specific examination of each person in the eschatological judgment was expressed by Ellen White as follows: "Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 481. Ellen White also referred to a special divine record of those who serve God, saying: "The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God." Ibid., 480.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 483.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 486. Ellen White further affirmed this insight by saying that the "books of record in heaven, in which the names and the deeds of men are registered, are to determine the decisions of the judgment." Ibid., 480.

being upon the earth."<sup>1</sup> This idea was forcefully stated as follows:

As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names are rejected.<sup>2</sup>

The divine tribunal was thus seen dealing individually, chronologically, and progressively with the saints from all ages according to the testimony of the heavenly records. The character, motives, and disposition of each person will be fully exposed and revealed through the proceedings at the divine tribunal. Although men may think that they can hide their actions or motives from others, they will not be able to hide them from God. Ellen White further declared:

He may have committed his evil deeds in the light of day or in the darkness of night; but they were open and manifest before Him with whom we have to do. Angels of God witnessed each sin and registered it in the unerring records. Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates; no one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong; but it is laid bare before the intelligences of heaven. The darkness of the darkest night, the secrecy of all deceptive arts, is not sufficient to veil one thought from the knowledge of the Eternal. God has an exact record of every unjust account and every unfair dealing. He is not deceived by appearances of piety. He makes no mistakes in His estimation of character. Men may be deceived by those who are corrupt in heart, but God pierces all disguises and reads the inner life.<sup>3</sup>

The proceedings in the judgment would not have the purpose of revealing to

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 490.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 483. Ellen White further described the usage of these records by the tribunal, saying: "In the judgment the use made of every talent will be scrutinized. . . . What have we done for Christ, in the person of the poor, the afflicted, the orphan, or the widow? God has made us depositaries of His holy word; what have we done with the light and truth given us to make men wise unto salvation? No value is attached to a mere profession of faith in Christ; only the love which is shown by works is counted genuine." Ibid., 487. These records are thus also revelatory of the presence or absence of genuine faith.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 486. Ellen White repeated this concept with regard to the function of the heavenly records in the judgment by saying that "our acts, our words, even our most secret motives, all have their weight in deciding our destiny for weal or woe. Though they may be forgotten by us, they will bear their testimony to justify or condemn." Ibid., 486-87.

God who are the real saints and who are not. On the contrary, God was depicted as the One who made the unerring records and as the One who would at the heavenly tribunal reveal and expose the full truth about every person, including those who had professed allegiance to Christ. Everything was thus, according to Adventist thought, presented as being recorded by the divine register, and subsequently exposed at the celestial tribunal not only the evil inclinations and sins committed by each individual, but also the penitence and faith of true believers, including their reliance upon Christ's atoning intercession as their protection against the condemnatory power of the sins recorded.

Ellen White specifically emphasized that a person's present relationship with the mediating Christ would be recorded in the heavenly register, and that this would be part of the records that would vindicate him and thus be determinative for the verdict passed at the heavenly tribunal. She argued that if the heavenly records at the time of judgment would reveal that professing believers "have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, [then] their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, she said if the heavenly records revealed that professing believers "have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, [then they] have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven . . . , [and] their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life."<sup>2</sup> Thus the divine records will reveal who are worthy and who are unworthy of eternal life. She further illustrated this function of the celestial records during the judgment by her usage of Christ's parable concerning the wedding

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 483. Ellen White added that the "sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God." Ibid., 486.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

feast in Matt 22:1-13:

Previous to the wedding the king comes in to see the guests, to see if all are attired in the wedding garment, the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the lamb. Matthew 22:11; Revelation 7:14. He who is found wanting is cast out, but all who upon examination are seen to have the wedding garment on are accepted of God and accounted worthy of a share in His kingdom and a seat upon His throne.<sup>1</sup>

Only those persons who prior to the moment of their judgment have relied on Christ's righteousness and merits in penitence and faith are thus found worthy and acceptable during this event, according to Adventist thought. This thematic context reveals what she meant by saying that "everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."<sup>2</sup> The wrinkles and the spots are seemingly the unconfessed, unrepented, and unsorsaken sins for which the blood of Christ provides no protection. The role and function of the divine records during the act of judgment thus reveal that it will be man's relationship with Christ in faith and penitence prior to this event that will determine his fate when the sentence will be passed. The heavenly records will thus reveal and vindicate a true believer at the eschatological tribunal. The crucial question regarding the destiny of all men during the divine judgment thus seems to turn on whether or not a sinner has availed himself of the salvation provided by Christ's intercession prior to this consummative act of God. The sentence pronounced in the judgment thus appears as an act of forensic ratification of what a genuine believer has previously obtained and possessed through faith in Christ.

#### Christ's intercession

The assertion that the Final Judgment apparently provides an eschatological forensic ratification of a believer's status before God seems further supported by Ellen White's description of Christ's intercessory role in the judgment. She presented Christ

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 428.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 490.

as the representative and defender of all those who had ever professed allegiance to Him by saying that "Jesus will appear as their advocate, to plead in their behalf before God"<sup>1</sup> and that He as "our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation."<sup>2</sup> Not only did she describe Christ as the One who would present the cases of all the saints at the heavenly eschatological tribunal, but she also more specifically stated that Christ's righteousness and merits during this consummative event would have its ultimate soteriological effect for genuine believers. She said that Christ "appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man--to perform the work of investigative judgment and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits."<sup>3</sup> This act was also characterized as "the closing work of atonement."<sup>4</sup> Whatever was meant by this expression, it seems clear that Ellen White visualized Christ as performing a consummative soteriological act in behalf of the true believers, illustrated by the High Priestly intercession on the ancient Day of Atonement. This act would be performed for those only who according to the testimony of the heavenly records are entitled to its benefit by virtue of their prior reliance upon the provisions of the gospel. The work of Christ in the Final Judgment was thus assigned the same conclusive and determinative meaning that was anciently assigned to the proceedings on the typological Day of Atonement.

The Adventist understanding of Christ's intercession in the judgment was more fully explained by Ellen White. While Jesus was presented as "pleading for the subjects of His grace" at the heavenly tribunal in the judgment, Satan was depicted as

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 482.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 483. In addition to the priestly role Christ was thus depicted as One who defends the accused saints--an action that reflects the role of a Hebrew judge.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 480.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 422.

accusing them before God as transgressors as follows: "Now he [Satan] points to the record of their lives, to the defects of character, the unlikeness to Christ, which has dishonored their redeemer, to all their sins that he has tempted them to commit, and because of these he claims them as his subjects."<sup>1</sup> The accusations presented by Satan apparently correspond to the negative records in the heavenly register, which carries its legal testimony against the saints at the heavenly tribunal. As the representative of the accused saints in the court of divine justice, Christ was depicted by Ellen White as defending the saints as follows:

Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying: I know them by name. I have graven them on the palms of My hands. 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.' Psalm 51:17. And to the accuser of His people He declares: 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' Zechariah 3:2. Christ will clothe His faithful ones with His own righteousness, that He may present them to His Father 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' Ephesians 5: 27. Their names stand enrolled in the book of life, and concerning them it is written: 'They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.' Revelation 3:4.<sup>2</sup>

Christ was thus depicted as representing His people before the heavenly tribunal as a mediator with the full authority to defend and vindicate them before the universe by demonstrating their worthiness by means of the records of their prior repentance, faith, and reliance upon His soteriological provisions. Christ was furthermore seen as One who has the authority to request the heavenly tribunal to pronounce a positive verdict. Ellen White described Christ's intercessory act as follows:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 484. Satan was described not only as the accuser of the saints but also as the One who had tempted them to commit the sin of which he subsequently accused them. Ellen White stated that "the great deceiver has sought to lead them into skepticism, to cause them to lose confidence in God, to separate themselves from His love, and to break His law." Ibid. This depiction of Satan as the accuser of the saints was based on the vision in Zech 3:1-6. For similar christological and eschatological applications of this visionary presentation in Zech 3:1-6, see also White, Testimonies to Ministers, 37-39.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 484.

The deepest interest manifested among men in the decisions of earthly tribunals but faintly represents the interest evinced in the heavenly courts when the names entered in the book of life come up in review before the Judge of all the earth. The divine Intercessor presents the plea that all who have overcome through faith in His blood be forgiven their transgressions, that they be restored to their Eden home, and crowned as joint heir with Himself to 'the first dominion.' Micah 4:8. Satan in his effort to deceive and tempt our race had thought to frustrate the divine plan in man's creation; but Christ now asks that this plan be carried into effect as if man had never fallen. He asks for His people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White concluded this description of the proceedings at the Final Judgment, including her description of Christ's consummative intercession, by saying that "thus will be realized the complete fulfilment of the new-covenant promise: 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more'."<sup>2</sup> The genuineness of a believer's faith will thus be vindicated by Christ at the eschatological tribunal on the testimony of the divine records. On the basis of this vindication, the divine sentence characterized as pardon and justification full and complete will be pronounced.

Ellen White's usage of the term justification as a characterization of the verdict of ratification for which Christ will make a request in the judgment does not appear to be incidental. This usage reappears in her description of the approving and disapproving verdicts pronounced by the eschatological tribunal as follows: "Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives . . . will all bear their testimony to justify or condemn."<sup>3</sup> Her eschatological usage of the forensic term to justify in contrast to the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 483-84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 485.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 486-87. Ellen White supported her assertion with Matt 12: 36-37. "Says the Saviour: 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned'." Ibid., 481. As late as in 1904, she made a practical application of the words of Jesus, saying: "By our words we are to be justified or condemned. When in the Final Judgment we stand before the tribunal of God, it is our words that will justify or condemn us. Much more than we realize is involved in the matter of speech. . . . Let your lips be touched with a live coal from the divine altar." Ellen G. White, Letter 283, 1904, Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington, D.C.

forensic term to condemn further indicates that the sentence pronounced at the celestial tribunal must be understood as an act of judicial ratification. Ellen White quoted Rom 2:12-16 in support of her understanding of the significance of the sentence pronounced on the saints in the Final Judgment, saying: "The apostle Paul declares: 'As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, . . . in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.' And he says that 'the doers of the law shall be justified.' Romans 2:12-16."<sup>1</sup> The theological context in which she applies this text reveals that she used it eschatologically as a reference to the forensic verdict that will be pronounced at the Final Judgment on all those who have relied prior to this event on the provisions of the gospel.

Christ was conceptualized by Ellen White as performing a final determinative mediatorial intercession in favor of the saints at the eschatological tribunal. The divine sentence that would legally confirm the eternal destiny of true believers at the judgment was characterized as pardon and justification full and complete and was furthermore described as the soteriological consummation the New Covenant promises. During this event, the salvation previously received and possessed through Christ's personal intercession was thus seen as legally approved and judicially confirmed. The legal and judicial context of the usage of the terms justification and pardon further supports the forensic confirmatory meaning of the divine sentence pronounced eschatologically on true believers. Her unique perception of the continuous soteriological intercession of Christ according to the salvation-historical structure of the Sanctuary Doctrine thus makes it possible to look at salvation from the perspective of its present existential possession and its eschatological judicial ratification without contradiction, as the latter

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<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 436. The doer of the law was characterized by her as a true believer as follows: "Faith is essential in order to the keeping of the law of God; for 'without faith it is impossible to please Him.' And 'whatever is not of faith is sin.' Hebrews 11: 6; Romans 14:23." Ibid.

is seen as confirming the former. While the present possession of salvation was thus seen as being complete through Christ's personal mediation, it was nevertheless being perceived as forensically incomplete until His ultimate mediatorial intercession at the judgment. The location of the forensic confirmatory aspect of salvation as an eschatological reality is further supported by the assertion that the divine record of confessed sin, including its condemnatory power, will not be legally cancelled until the judgment.

#### The legal cancellation of sin

While the intercession of Christ prior to its consummation in the judgment would legally protect the sinner against the condemnatory power of sin, it would not legally cancel its condemnatory power according to Adventist thought. If confessed sin had been definitively dealt with forensically through the pre-judgmental intercession of Christ, it would have lost its condemnatory power, which apparently does not happen prior to the judgment. Ellen White expressed this conviction as follows: "The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement."<sup>1</sup> She elucidated this idea by means of the Mosaic sanctuary type, saying:

Important truths concerning the atonement are taught by the typical service. A substitute was accepted in the sinner's stead; but the sin was not cancelled by the blood of the victim. A means was thus provided by which it was transferred to the sanctuary. By the offering of blood the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed his guilt in transgression, and expressed his desire for pardon through faith in a Redeemer to come; but he was not yet entirely released from the condemnation of the law. On the Day of Atonement the high priest, having taken an offering from the congregation, went into the most holy place with the blood of this offering, and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, directly over the law, to make satisfaction for its claims. . . . Such was the service performed 'unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.' And what was done in type in the ministration of the earthly sanctuary is done in reality in the ministration of the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 357.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 420.

These statements indicate that the full forensic and legal cancellation of sin will not take place until the consummative act of Christ in the judgment as illustrated by the day of atonement typology. This act was furthermore described as an act that legally fulfilled and satisfied the claims of the moral law. The atoning blood of Christ was visualized by Ellen White as having its ultimate forensic effect in the judgment. She declared: "Then by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be blotted from the books of heaven."<sup>1</sup> She added that "their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life."<sup>2</sup> Not only the legal satisfaction of the moral law but also the legal cancellation of sin was viewed as the ultimate soteriological effect of Christ's mediation in the Final Judgment. While the pre-judgmental intercession of Christ was thus seen as being legally protective of the condemnatory power of sin, it was nevertheless seen as being forensically incomplete in terms of cancelling its condemnatory power, a completion that was linked to His intercessory work in the judgment. This insight further supports the thesis that while the pre-judgmental mediation of Christ provides a complete present existential and legally valid possession of salvation, His eschatological mediation provides its forensic ratification according to the Sanctuary Doctrine.

#### The decisiveness of the divine verdict

This act of legal cancellation of sin was synchronized with the eschatological verdict of approval pronounced upon the believer at the heavenly tribunal. Ellen White indicates that the sentences pronounced at the Final Judgment would be determinative by saying that "when the cases of those who in all ages have professed to be followers of Christ have been examined and decided, then, and not til then, probation will close,

<sup>1</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 357.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 483.

and the door of mercy will be shut."<sup>1</sup> She accordingly said that "when the work of the investigative judgment closes the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death."<sup>2</sup> Such statements indicate that the action taken at the eschatological judgment thus has a formal, legal determinative nature. She further elucidated the character of this divine action by saying that "the righteous dead will not be raised until after the judgment at which they are accounted worthy of 'the resurrection of life.' Hence they will not be present in person at the tribunal when their records are examined and their cases decided."<sup>3</sup> The judicial action taken by the heavenly tribunal was apparently seen by Ellen White as being so determinative and decisive that it must precede the resurrection to eternal life. The judicial ratification apparently will not take place until the heavenly tribunal convenes and reviews the evidences of each individual person and accordingly pronounces its verdict. Ellen White's views regarding the judicial formality, the judicial decisiveness, and the soteriological necessity of the action taken by the eschatological tribunal with regard to the eternal destiny of the saints strongly support the preceding observation that the forensic confirmatory aspect of salvation seems located as a real eschatological reality, according to the Adventist doctrine of judgment.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 428.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 490.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 482. The determinative nature of the action taken by the heavenly tribunal was further described as follows: "Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, 'It is done'; and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as He makes the solemn announcement: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still'. Revelation 22:11. Every case has been decided for life or death. Christ has made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The number of His subjects is made up; 'the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven,' is about to be given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus is to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords." Ibid., 613-14. Ellen White furthermore characterized the declaration made by Christ as "the final, irrevocable decision . . . pronounced in the sanctuary above." Ibid., 491. She affirmed this view by saying that "the irrevocable decision of the sanctuary has been pronounced and the destiny of the world has been forever fixed." Ibid., 615.

### Summary

Ellen White consistently argued that through His pre-judgmental intercession, Christ would continually provide a full and complete legal protection against the condemnatory power of repented, confessed, and forsaken sin, because He would legally impute His righteousness and merits to a true believer. This basic conviction with regard to the present reception of salvation through Christ's continual mediation was confirmed by her present and timeless usage of the terms justification and pardon as expressive of a genuine believer's present possession of salvation full and complete.

Although Ellen White thus confirmed that Christ through His mediation instantly provides a full and complete existential possession of salvation for believers, she nevertheless presented it as being forensically incomplete awaiting its formal judicial ratification in the judgment. Regarding the judgment, she maintained that the testimony of the divine records will vindicate a genuine believer at the divine tribunal. Such an eschatological vindication was presented as the basis on which Christ performs His last act of intercession and as the basis on which the tribunal will pronounce the judicial sentence of approval, which will then forensically nullify the legally condemnatory power of sin. The purpose of the Final Judgment of the saints, in the structure of Adventist sanctuary theology, thus seems to transcend the dimension of vindication since it has as its primary objective the divine forensic ratification of the saints. The assertion that the forensic and confirmatory aspect of salvation was located as a real eschatological reality according to the Sanctuary Doctrine was based on the following observations: (1) the stated need for an eschatological intercession of Christ in behalf of the saints during the act of judgment, (2) the stated need for an eschatological judicial cancellation of sin, and (3) the identification of a forensic determinative character of the divine sentence pronounced in the judgment. The actual usage in this eschatological

context of the classical biblical soteriological terms pardon and justification, as a characterization of the divine legal sentence, further supports this observation.

The terms pardon and justification were used to describe both the present existential possession as well as the eschatological judicial ratification of salvation according to Ellen White's presentation of Adventist soteriology. While these terms are used in two different temporal contexts, they still carry the same soteriological meaning. The conceptual similarities in the judicial meaning assigned to these terms both in her present and eschatological usages, including their soteriological rationale, are so striking that they cannot be ignored. In both temporal dimensions pardon and justification carry a forensic meaning expressive of the divine forgiveness and acceptance granted by the highest legal and judicial authority in the universe based exclusively on the provisions of Christ. The conceptual similarities thus seem to create a real tension between the present existential and eschatological judicial dimensions in Adventist soteriology, but the problem, however, seems to be dissolved in the context of her unique understanding of the mediatorial role of Christ. Ellen White's emphasis upon Christ's objective work, as dying substitute and living intercessor, as the foundation for a present reception and possession of salvation, including its eschatological judicial ratification, demonstrates that her soteriology cannot be divorced from her sanctuary christology. The decisive sentence of approval in the judgment was seen as being based exclusively in the saving provisions of Christ previously received and previously possessed by virtue of His continual intercession, which means that at the very moment a believer is related to Christ he possesses the soteriological substance that determines his eternal destiny. To possess the substance of salvation logically implies that you simultaneously possess all that it will ever effect regardless of the time of its realization. The christological doctrine with its unique assertions regarding the continuous meritorious intercession of Christ provides a soteriological principle by which an eschatological

reality may actually be fully receivable and possessable as a present reality.

This christological principle, furthermore, makes it possible to distinguish more sharply between the objective and the subjective sides of salvation. Viewed from an objective perspective, the eschatological judgment may be identified as the crucial moment that forensically determines the eternal destiny of the individual believer. However, viewed from a subjective perspective, the presence of faith may be identified as the decisive moment that existentially determines the eternal destiny of the individual believer. It is, however, possible but not likely that Ellen White should be inconsistent and self-contradictory in her usage of the terms pardon and justification, especially in view of her christology as it is expressed in the salvation-historical framework of the Sanctuary Doctrine. The continuous presence of the central christological elements from the Sanctuary Doctrine in her soteriology requires, methodologically speaking, that her usage of these terms must be assessed in the context of this larger theological perspective, a perspective that makes it possible to look at man's salvation from either a present existential or an eschatological forensic perspective. Ellen White's general usage of the soteriological terms pardon and justification in a present sense seems perfectly consistent when man's salvation is viewed from the subjective perspective of how, when, and where a penitent believer existentially receives and possesses a full salvation. Likewise, her usage of the terms in an eschatological sense seems perfectly consistent when salvation is viewed from the objective perspective of how, when, and where the legal problem of sin will be resolved forensically. Thus, in the context of this larger salvation-historical perspective, her present and eschatological usages of these terms may appear perfectly consistent. The christological dimension in the Sanctuary Doctrine apparently provides the central key of interpretation, not only with regard to the interrelationships of the various parts of the Sanctuary Doctrine itself, but also to the present and eschatological usage of the terms pardon and justification.

Pardon and justification understood as a decisive forensic verdict of approval by God apparently belong in the thematic context of the divine judgment. The temporal location of the great event, where the heavenly tribunal would convene to perform such an action, to make such a decision, and to pronounce such a sentence, was identified as the eschatological judgment of the saints according to the Sanctuary Doctrine. The judicially decisive sentence of approval in the judgment was, however, depicted as being based exclusively in the saving provisions of Christ previously received and previously possessed by the believers by virtue of His preceding intercession. While the forensic aspect of salvation, thematically speaking, belongs to the eschatological judgment, it was nevertheless presented as being received and possessed as a present reality by the believer by virtue of Christ's mediation. The Sanctuary Doctrine thus provides a theological rationale by which the present existential reception and possession of pardon and justification could consistently be interpreted as mediated eschatology.

#### A Comparison Between the Two Soteriologies

Ellen White and the Lutherans shared the basic themes regarding law and sin. They held an essentially similar view on divine grace and its singular expression in the life and death of Christ. They agreed on the characterization of Christ's life and passion as an act of substitution and satisfaction with regard to the moral and penal demands of God expressed in the Decalogue. They agreed that the terms pardon and justification<sup>1</sup> essentially refer to a forensic verdict of approval pronounced by God at the

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen White's description of the biblical term justification as a forensic declaration pronounced by the highest legal and judicial authority in the universe based on Christ's merits and righteousness imputed to the believer fully corresponds to the Protestant tradition. See above pp. 32-34. For a detailed analysis of the meaning of the terms righteousness and justification see also the following works of biblical scholarship: Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3: 352-77; Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 2: 211-18.

divine tribunal. They agreed that pardon and justification are based exclusively on the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which was seen as providing a complete satisfaction of the ultimate demands of the divine moral law. They also agreed that a penitent believer would receive and possess a full and complete salvation as a present reality at the very moment that true faith is born. It is important to notice this agreement with regard to the time of reception and possession of a full and complete salvation. A variance on any of these levels will create an irreconcilable conflict between the two soteriologies. The two traditions thus appear to be in essential accord with respect to this fundamental Protestant principles of salvation. The dual temporal perspective in Adventist soteriology, with its distinction between the present existential reception and the eschatological forensic ratification of salvation, is absent in Lutheran soteriology. The unique Adventist emphasis on Christ's mediatorial role and its connective function with regard to the present and eschatological dimensions in her soteriology is likewise absent in Lutheran thought. The Lutherans did not maintain a real temporal distinction between the existential reception and the forensic ratification of salvation--both aspects were seen basically as a present reality. The true believer was seen as fully justified in a forensic sense as long as genuine faith endures, even through the moment of death; thus no further forensic action was seen as being necessary or possible. Ellen White's apparent location of the forensic confirmatory dimension of salvation as an eschatological reality, although it is presently receivable and possessable by virtue of Christ's continuous and meritorious intercession, collides directly with the Lutheran article on justification with respect to the time aspect. Without a perception of the dual temporal perspective in Adventist soteriology including its christological rationale, the Adventist doctrine of the judgment will appear disturbing, controversial, and even incompatible with the Lutheran doctrine of forensic justification and all that it signifies as a presently complete reality. Despite the apparent structural and temporal differences of the

salvation-historical perspectives in the two traditions, they nevertheless share the same essential soteriological principles with regard to the time and rationale of a believer's present existential reception and possession of salvation.

While this difference thus does not seem compromise the fundamental Protestant principles of soteriology, the issue still needs to be investigated in terms of Ellen White's view of sanctification. The precise place and meaning of the sanctifying effect of faith in Christ must be carefully assessed, as the actual life of the believer was seen as playing a significant role during the judgment. The crucial issue concerns whether or not a believer's sanctification has any contributory role in terms of the forensic verdict pronounced at that event. The relationship of sanctification to the dual temporal perspectives with regard to the present existential reception and the eschatological judicial ratification of salvation must be further investigated. Thus the next chapter focuses on the role of faith in terms of man's acceptance, justification, and sanctification.

## CHAPTER III

### FAITH AND ACCEPTANCE, SANCTIFICATION, AND JUDGMENT

While the actual forensic ratification of man's salvation was seen as being eschatological in character, the actual reception and possession of salvation were nevertheless seen as a present reality instantly received by faith in Christ the mediator. The meaning and function of faith in relationship to Christ as personal mediator and its implications for present reception of salvation as well as its implications for the actual life of the believer need careful investigation. The place and meaning of sanctification in Adventist theology must be carefully assessed, as the actual life of the believers was seen as playing a crucial role with regard to their vindication before the divine tribunal and thus the judicial ratification of their salvation. The key question turns on whether or not the believers' sanctification has any meritorious and thus a contributory role in terms of their present as well as their ultimate acceptance in the judgment.

#### The Meaning and Function of Faith

The fact that Christ was perceived by Ellen White as a contemporary living intercessor, having in His person the righteousness by which a believing sinner might continually be constituted as righteous before God, provides the theological perspective in which to understand her emphasis upon faith as the sole medium by which the sinner is contemporaneously united with Christ spiritually and thus legally made a participant in His privileges. The dimension of faith holds a central position in her soteriology.

in principle belong to the objective sphere of God's work for man, the dimension of faith in principle belongs to the subjective sphere of God's work in the heart of man. In Ellen White's thinking faith holds a central position not only with regard to justification as a present and experiential reality but also to Christian sanctification as a present and progressive spiritual and behavioral renewal in the actual life of the true believer. This apparent double function of faith in terms of her soteriology necessitates a separate analysis of the following affirmations: that faith is a gift of grace; that faith alone spiritually unites with Christ and thus alone justifies; and that justifying faith in Christ and His righteousness is the core of a new spiritual relationship with God and thus has a sanctifying effect.

#### Faith as a Gift of Grace

Like the Lutherans, Ellen White held that the damage of original sin is so severe that fallen man in his present natural state is neither capable of restoring his lost spiritual relationship of faith nor is he able to liberate himself from his negative evil disposition of disbelief. She accordingly declared that "it is necessary for the sinner to know what that repentance is which works a radical change of mind and spirit and action."<sup>1</sup> She believed that such a radical change of disposition towards God could be restored only by the regenerative power of God, saying: "Distrust of God is the natural outgrowth of the unrenewed heart, which is at enmity with Him. But faith is inspired by the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup> She declared that the radical change in one's spiritual disposition will manifest itself in faith, penitence, and love, saying: "In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God. . . . The old life of alienation from God has ended;

<sup>1</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 393.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 527.

the new life of reconciliation, of faith, and love has begun."<sup>1</sup> A new relationship with God characterized by faith, penitence, and love thus constitutes the core of a new positive spiritual disposition in the regenerate person.

### The Instrumental Cause of Faith

While Ellen White recognized that the Holy Spirit is a powerful agent in the spiritual regeneration of fallen man, she often linked this function of the Spirit with the function of the divine Word. The Word concerning God's love and grace was seen as a vital instrument in the restoration of the new spiritual relationship with God characterized by penitence and faith. She declared that "genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures."<sup>2</sup> This assertion was elaborated as follows: "Coming to God inspires confidence, and stimulates the soul to action. In order to have spiritual strength, or even life, it must be nourished by the Word, which is spirit and life. It must be constantly fed by the truth."<sup>3</sup> She underlined this function of the Word of grace by saying that "without the grace of Christ it is impossible to take one step in obedience to the law of God. Then how necessary that the sinner hear of the love and power of his Redeemer and Friend."<sup>4</sup> The causal relationship between spiritual renewal and the revelation of divine love and mercy was also expressed as follows: She stated that "we do not repent in order that God may love us, but He reveals to us His love in

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 468. Ellen White maintained that "faith is inseparable from repentance and transformation of character." White, Christ's Object Lessons, 112. She reaffirmed this conviction by saying that "repentance is associated with faith, and is urged in the gospel as essential to salvation." Idem, "Christ the Way of Life," 673.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 126.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Manuscript 16, 1890, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 7: 941.

<sup>4</sup>White, "Sermon at Otsego," 65.

order that we may repent."<sup>1</sup>

While the divine Word functions as a vital agent in the spiritual regeneration of fallen man, this power was never attributed to the divine Word independent of the operation of the Holy Spirit. Ellen White stated this conviction by declaring that "the very first step to Christ is taken through the drawing of the Spirit of God, as man responds to this drawing, he advances towards Christ in order that he may repent."<sup>2</sup> As the Spirit draws men to Christ and generates penitence and faith, it thus creates a new spiritual life in the soul, as she further stated: "Through the simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God."<sup>3</sup> She furthermore emphasized the continual necessity of this divine

<sup>1</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 189. She elucidated this view by saying that "when the sinner beholds Jesus lifted up upon the cross, suffering the guilt of the transgressor, bearing the penalty of sin; when he beholds God's abhorrence of evil in the fearful manifestation of the death of the cross, and His love for fallen man, he is led to repentance toward God. . . . He exercises faith in Christ, because the divine Saviour has become his substitute, his surety, and advocate, the one in whom his very life is centered." Idem, "The Divine Standard," 1: 324. She also said that "the light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour." Idem, The Desire of Ages, 176.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 390. She revealed a similar view in the following statements: "It is by faith that the soul beholds the glory of Jesus. This glory is hidden, until, through the Holy Spirit, faith is kindled in the soul." Idem, The Desire of Ages, 392; "Faith is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it will flourish only as it is cherished." Idem, The Great Controversy, 527.

<sup>3</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 52. The power of creating faith was thus attributed to both the divine Word and the Spirit, an insight that was summarized as follows: "No man can create faith. The Spirit operating upon and enlightening the human mind, creates faith in God. . . . The Spirit of God impresses the truth on the heart." Idem, Manuscript 56, 1899, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 7: 940. Ellen White elaborated this conviction, saying: "It is the Holy Spirit that reveals to men the preciousness of the goodly pearl [Christ]. The time of the Holy Spirit's power is the time when in a special sense the heavenly gift is sought and found." Idem, Christ's Object Lesson, 118-19. She also said that "By the manifestation of His love, by the entreating of His Spirit, He woos men to repentance; for repentance is the gift of God, and whom He pardons He first makes penitent." Idem, "The Divine Standard," 1: 324.

enlightenment for the maintenance and growth of penitence and faith in the sinner, saying: "It [faith] grows as exercised in appropriating the word of God. In order to strengthen faith, we must often bring it in contact with the word."<sup>1</sup>

While the divine Word of grace is the tangible visible agent in the creation of penitence and faith, the Holy Spirit is the invisible agent making the Word effective in the transformation of man's disposition towards God. Thus the Holy Spirit was seen as the divine agent that continually, through the divine Word, initiates, maintains, and increases penitence and faith and thus liberates man from his spiritual bondage.

#### The Ultimate Cause of Faith

The new spiritual disposition of faith and penitence, generated by the divine Word and Spirit, was furthermore seen by Ellen White as a gift of grace. Speaking about the disposition of faith, she said that "faith earns nothing for us; it is the gift of God,"<sup>2</sup> and that "the faith that enables us to receive God's gifts is itself a gift."<sup>3</sup> She specifically identified regeneration as a gift provided by Christ, saying: "But man is not capable of originating such a repentance as this, and can experience it alone through

<sup>1</sup>White, Education, 253-54. Ellen White elucidated this view by saying that "the infinite mercy and love of Jesus, the sacrifice made in our behalf, call for the most serious and solemn reflection. We should dwell upon the character of our dear Redeemer and Intercessor. We should meditate upon the mission of Him who came to save His people from their sins. As we thus contemplate heavenly themes, our faith and love will grow stronger, and our prayers will be more and more acceptable to God, because they will be more and more mixed with faith and love. They will be intelligent and fervent. There will be more confidence in Jesus, and a daily, living experience in His power to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." Idem, Steps to Christ, 89. See also idem, Testimonies for the Church, 5: 199-200.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Faith and Good Works," 307.

<sup>3</sup>White, Education, 253-54. She also stated that "repentance is the gift of God. . . . We can no more repent of sin without Christ, than we can be pardoned without Christ." Idem, "Relation of Faith and Works," Notebook Leaflets, 9 Apr. 1893, quoted in idem, Selected Messages, 1: 381.

Christ, who ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."<sup>1</sup>

This assertion was further elucidated as follows: "We ourselves owe everything to God's free grace. . . . Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our exaltation to heirship with Christ."<sup>2</sup> The granting of the gifts of faith, repentance, and regeneration thus depends upon the prior objective existence of the divine grace in Christ apart from which the presence and work of the Word of grace and the Spirit in a world of sin would have been nonexistent.

The Word of grace in Christ, made effective through the Spirit, thus serves as the instrumental cause of repentance and faith, while the grace of God, manifested in the atoning death of Christ, is itself the ultimate cause of repentance and faith. The birth of faith in the sinner was thus seen by Ellen White as a unique and dynamic work of God, as faith was depicted as dependent on, determined by, and thus existing solely by virtue of its object. It is a unique work because it implies that the divine grace in Christ, through the instrumentality of the Word and the Spirit, initiates, increases, and sustains the response of faith, which God has designed as the sole instrument through which His grace and gifts are to be received and possessed. Thus the divine grace in Christ not only awaits its reception by the sinner, but actually creates in the sinner the very disposition by which it is received. The theological implications of this position are highly significant, since it implies that whatever spiritual value may be attributed to faith, it cannot possibly contribute to man's justification, since faith itself is constituted by its object, which alone justifies--namely God's mercy in Christ.

<sup>1</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 393. Ellen White also stated that "repentance comes from Christ as truly as does pardon." Idem, The Desire of Ages, 175.

<sup>2</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 250. Ellen White added that "he who would become a child of God must receive the truth that repentance and forgiveness are to be obtained through nothing less than the atonement of Christ." Idem, "Justified by Faith," 1: 393. See also Idem, Christ's Object Lessons, 314.

### The Justifying Effect of Faith

Ellen White recognized that while justification was based exclusively on divine grace manifested in the merits and righteousness of Christ, no man would ever be justified apart from a genuine response of faith. The exclusiveness of faith was expressed in the following statements. Ellen White said that “it is only through faith in His blood that Jesus can justify the believer”<sup>1</sup> and that “genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> The exclusiveness of faith as the only means of receiving and possessing divine grace was more specifically stated by her as follows: “The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner’s account.”<sup>3</sup> It is a central theme in Ellen White’s teachings that faith is the only and exclusive means by which the righteousness of Christ may become legally effective in terms of a sinner’s acquittal, acceptance, and justification before God. This unique spiritual, relational, and legal function of faith is, however, inseparably related to her perception of faith as a personal response of trust in a personal God and His promises.

### Faith as a Personal Response of Trust

Faith was continually defined as a personal response of trust, confidence, and reliance on a personal God and His promises. Referring to the example of Christ, she stated that “our redeemer . . . has left man a perfect pattern, showing him that his only safety is in firm trust and unwavering confidence in God. . . . A perfect example

<sup>1</sup>White, “Faith and Good Works,” 307. She specifically declared that “the sinner can be justified only through faith in the atonement. . . . Faith is the only condition upon which justification can be obtained.” Idem, “Justified by Faith,” 1: 389.

<sup>2</sup>White, “Spiritual Weakness Inexcusable,” 402.

<sup>3</sup>White, “Christ the Way of Life,” 673.

of faith and firm trust in God.”<sup>1</sup> She applied this insight to the sinner’s needs by saying that “we should have confidence in Him as a tender father, who will not forsake those who put their trust in Him.”<sup>2</sup> The definition of faith as a personal trust, reliance, and confidence in the person of Christ and the promises and mercy of God thus completely pervades the teaching of Ellen White.

Ellen White’s understanding of faith as essentially trust in a person and his promises was sharpened by her description of true faith in contrast to mere intellectual and doctrinal assent. She stated that “the faith that is unto salvation is not casual faith, it is not the mere consent of the intellect, it is belief rooted in the heart, that embraces Christ as a personal Saviour.”<sup>3</sup> Thus she concluded that “the faith that is required is not a mere assent to doctrines.”<sup>4</sup> This meaning of faith was so central in Ellen White’s

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, “The Temptation of Christ,” RH, 18 Aug. 1874, quoted in idem, Selected Messages, 1: 283.

<sup>2</sup>White, “Morning Talk,” 1: 350. Ellen White further defined faith as trust by saying that “faith is trusting God--believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good.” Idem, Education, 253. She also said that “faith includes not only belief but trust.” Idem, Justified by Faith, 1: 389. Ellen White further illustrated her understanding by the example of Elisha, saying: “Throughout his life he had exercised strong faith, and as he had advanced in a knowledge of God’s providence and of His merciful kindness, faith had ripened into an abiding trust in his God.” Idem, Prophets and Kings as Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1917), 264.

<sup>3</sup>White, “Justified by Faith,” 1: 391.

<sup>4</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 5: 437-38. She described genuine faith as abiding trust in a person and his promises in contrast to intellectual and doctrinal assent, saying: “To talk of religion in a casual way, to pray without soul hunger and living faith, avails nothing. A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith cannot receive blessing from God. It is not enough to believe *about* Christ; we must believe in Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power.” Idem, Desire of Ages, 347.

theology that she repeatedly expressed that true faith is a complete personal trust and confidence in God's mercy in Christ by saying that "the Christian life must be a life of constant, living faith [and] an unyielding trust, a firm reliance upon Christ."<sup>1</sup> She also declared that "a life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ."<sup>2</sup> Since the benefits of the gospel, such as pardon and justification, are essentially an objective gift of God in Christ offered exclusively through the divine word of promises, it logically follows that the manner of reception is through a response of faith in the sense of personal trust in the giver. This insight provides a vital key to her belief that faith is the sole relational bond that presently unites the believer with Christ and His righteousness, while mere mental assent to doctrinal and historical truth or ecstasy of feeling has no justifying power.

#### The Spiritual-Relational Function of Faith

Previously it has been affirmed<sup>3</sup> that the righteousness that alone justifies is outside the believer and located exclusively in the person of Christ, who is presently serving as mediator before God. This assertion logically implies that there can be no salvation apart from a spiritual connection with the living, ascended, and mediating Christ. Ellen White accordingly identified faith as the spiritual bond that links the believer to the living Christ, saying: "When you respond to the drawing of Christ, and join yourself to Him, you manifest saving faith. . . . The faith which avails to bring us to vital contact with Christ expresses on our part supreme preference, perfect reliance,

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, "Sanctification: The Christian's Privilege," RH, 3 May 1881, 273. See also *idem*, "Justified by Faith," 1: 389.

<sup>2</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 70.

<sup>3</sup>See above, pp. 109-113.

entire consecration.”<sup>1</sup> She further declared that it is “faith which unites us to Christ.”<sup>2</sup> The relationship between the believer and Christ was furthermore described in terms of a marriage covenant as follows: “In both the Old and the New Testament, the marriage relation is employed to represent the tender and sacred union that exists between Christ and His people.”<sup>3</sup> Ellen White elucidated this view further, saying:

In the Bible the sacred and enduring character of the relation that exists between Christ and His church is represented by the union of marriage. The Lord has joined His people to Himself by a solemn covenant, He promising to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be His and His alone.<sup>4</sup>

A marriage covenant constitutes a judicially binding arrangement based on the divine law, which spiritually, personally, and legally unites the bride and the bridegroom as one person before God. The institution of the biblical marriage with all its legal and personal implications was thus used by Ellen White as an analogy by which she described the nature and implications of the union established between Christ and the sinner through the spiritual bond of faith. Christ and the believer were thus seen as united in a covenant that legally constitutes the two as one person before God.

The analogy of the vine and its branches was one of Ellen White’s favorite illustrations of the union and covenant that faith establishes between the believer and Christ. She said that “He [Christ] had been presenting before them the close union with

<sup>1</sup>White, “Come and Seek and Find,” 1: 334. Ellen White declared that “the spiritual relation [with Christ] can be established only by the exercise of personal faith.” Idem, Testimonies for the Church, 5: 229.

<sup>2</sup>White, Manuscript 16, 1890, 6: 1111; Ellen White further declared that “simple faith, with the love of Christ in the soul, unites the believer to God.” Idem, Testimonies to Ministers, 147.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 151. Ellen White added that “saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God.” Ibid., 347.

<sup>4</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 381. “The unfaithfulness of the church to Christ in permitting her confidence and affection to be turned from Him, and allowing love of worldly things to occupy the soul, is likened to the violation of the marriage vow.” Ibid. See also idem, The Ministry of Healing, 356; idem, Education, 268.

Himself by which they could maintain spiritual life when His visible presence was withdrawn. To impress it upon their minds He gave them the vine as its most striking and appropriate symbol.<sup>1</sup> She applied this symbol as follows:

Can we conceive of a closer, more intimate relation to Christ than is set forth in the words: 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches'? The fibers of the branch are almost identical with those of the vine. The communication of life, strength, and fruitfulness from the trunk to the branches is unobstructed and constant. The root sends its nourishment through the branch. Such is the true believer's relationship to Christ. He abides in Christ and draws his nourishment from Him.<sup>2</sup>

By this analogy Ellen White emphasized the centrality of faith as the spiritual bond that relates the believer to Christ as intimately as the branch is related to the trunk. By this symbol she focussed specifically on the justifying role of faith as the means by which the believer share the life, the rights, and privileges of Christ. Ellen White stated this conviction explicitly by saying that "when this intimacy of connection and communion is formed, our sins are laid upon Christ; His righteousness is imputed to us."<sup>3</sup> She stressed this point by saying that "our precious Saviour invites us to join ourselves to Him, to unite . . . our unworthiness to His merits."<sup>4</sup> This description demonstrates the centrality of faith in Ellen White's perception of justification. A real relationship and union are established between the believer and Christ, who is perceived as being not only the transcendent mediator but also as the One who is immanently present through the Spirit. Through this union a legal exchange of merits and demerits was perceived,

<sup>1</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 5: 230.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5: 229. She elucidated this assertion by saying that "we must feel our utter dependence on Christ. We must live by faith on the Son of God. That is the meaning of the injunction: 'Abide in Me.'" Ibid., 5: 231-32. She also illustrated this union with Christ by the analogy of a plant sending its roots into the soil by saying that "the roots of the plant strike down into the soil, and hidden from sight nourish the life of the plant. So with the Christian; it is by the invisible union of the soul with Christ, through faith, that the spiritual life is nourished." Idem, Christ's Object Lessons, 47.

<sup>3</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 5: 229.

<sup>4</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 623.

as instantly taking place between Christ and the sinner. Faith thus constitutes the spiritual means by which a believer is presently related to Christ and thus presently made a participant in His personal righteousness, which alone justifies before God.

While faith was thus seen by Ellen White as having a powerful relational and spiritual function with regard to man's salvation, she simultaneously emphasized that faith only has a spiritual and relational role and never a contributory and meritorious function with regard to man's justification. She stated that "there is nothing in faith that makes it our Saviour," and that "faith earns nothing for us."<sup>1</sup> She explained this view by saying that "faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin."<sup>2</sup> Faith is thus identified as justifying, not by virtue of its intrinsically spiritual quality, but by virtue of what it embraces, namely Christ. She formulated this conception of faith even more sharply by saying that "faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy of sin."<sup>3</sup> She further affirmed this instrumental and non-meritorious role of faith by saying that "faith is not the ground of our salvation, but it is the great blessing--the eye that sees, the ear that hears, the feet that run, the hand that grasps. It is the means, not the end."<sup>4</sup> Ellen White thus stressed the idea that justifying faith is determined by its object and thus justifies by virtue of its relational function in terms of Christ and not by virtue of any intrinsic quality or substance. The function of faith with regard to man's acceptance and

<sup>1</sup>White, "Faith and Good Works," 307.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Christ the Way of Life," 673.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 176.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, Letter 329a, 1905, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 6: 1073.

justification was thus seen as being relational and instrumental.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White in her description of the nature and role of faith emphasized the real presence of Christ in faith, the real personal union with Christ, the legal oneness with Christ, and the legal interchange of merits and demerits between Christ and the believer. This emphasis reveals how central the role of faith is in Ellen White's doctrine of justification. Ellen White's perception of faith as a reality that instantly relates the believer with Christ through a real personal union thus fully correlates with her perception of Christ's continuous, meritorious, and intercessory role before God. Christ was seen as being not only present continuously before God but also as being present continuously with the believer, as a real union with the interceding Christ is established through faith.<sup>2</sup> God's mercy in Christ embraced by faith was seen by Ellen White as the believer's essential and foundational righteousness before God by which the curse and condemnation of the law are legally overcome and by which the believer is received into pardon and divine favor. Where faith-righteousness abides, sin loses its power to accuse and coerce the conscience. The very instant that faith relates a penitent sinner to Christ thus constitutes the existential moment when the ultimate saving effects of His merits are received and possessed, a possession that will continue as long as genuine faith in Christ endures. Ellen White's doctrine regarding the establishment of a

<sup>1</sup>This limitation of faith to a purely relational and instrumental role with regard to man's acceptance, pardon, and justification perfectly correlates with Ellen White's understanding of the grace principle and the Christ principle. Since faith is itself a gift of the grace in Christ that alone justifies, it logically follows that whatever spiritual substance may be attributed to faith, it cannot possibly contribute to man's justification. Since the righteousness which alone justifies thus resides exclusively in the person of Christ and not in the believer, it follows that the role of faith is determined as purely relational and instrumental with regard to man's acceptance, pardon, and justification.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen White maintained that the continuous mediation of Christ both prior to and during the judgment secured for the penitent believer a presently complete reception and possession of salvation through His meritorious sacrifice and righteousness. This view thus perfectly correlates with her relational understanding of faith, which instantly links the believer to Christ the moment that he believes.

spiritual relationship with Christ through faith as the existentially determinative moment of salvation thus perfectly harmonizes with the soteriological principles of the classical Lutheran tradition. There seems to be no principal difference with regard to the time and manner by which a genuinely penitent believer receives and possesses a full and complete salvation within the theology of the two traditions.

#### The Sanctifying Effect of Faith

Faith, however, was recognized by Ellen White as having not only a justifying but also a sanctifying function. The dual temporal dimension in the Sanctuary Doctrine with regard to the present existential reception of salvation and its eschatological, judicial ratification provides a perspective in which the sanctifying role of faith must be carefully assessed. This assessment is crucial, as sanctification in her theology is connected not only to the present existential reception and possession of salvation but also to its eschatological, judicial ratification, as the presence or absence of genuine sanctification apparently plays a role in terms of the divine verdict pronounced in the Final Judgment. This crucial issue pertains to whether or not sanctification has any contributory role in terms of a believer's present and eschatological acceptance before God. Ellen White described the sanctifying role of faith as follows: "The soul is to be sanctified through the truth. And this also is accomplished through faith."<sup>1</sup> She added that "genuine faith always works by love . . . faith that will work, purifying the soul from the slime of selfishness."<sup>2</sup> Not only does true faith thus constitute a radical

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, "Justification by Faith," ST, 3 Nov. 1890, 540. Ellen White declared that "it is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character . . . ; he [the believer] becomes spiritual and discerns spiritual things." Idem, "United with the Living Vine," ST, 26 Dec. 1892, quoted in *idem*, Selected Messages, 1: 338.

<sup>2</sup> White, Manuscript 16, 1890, 6: 1111. She expanded this description by saying that "as we repent of our sins against God and seek pardon through the merits of Christ, He will impart that faith which works by love and purifies the heart." Idem, "Sanctification: Christian Character," RH, 26 Apr. 1881, 257.

change of spiritual orientation, attitude, and disposition, it also manifests itself in true obedience to God. She stated that "it [faith] works in the life of the followers of Christ true obedience to God's commandments; for love to God and love to man will be the result of a vital connection with Christ. 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his' (Rom. 8:9)."<sup>1</sup> Ellen White accordingly maintained that sanctification was not to be seen as an optional addition to faith, saying: "Genuine faith will be manifested in good works; for good works are the fruits of faith. As God works in the heart, and man surrenders his will to God, and co-operates with God, he works out in the life what God works in by the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup> These statements not only demonstrate that sanctification is effected by faith and not by works, they also indicate that the new spiritual disposition, of which faith in Christ is the core, seems to receive its attributes and power from its divine cause and object.

#### The Sanctifying Substance of Faith

The sanctifying function of faith was seen as arising out of its justifying function, as faith does not exist apart from its constituent cause, namely the divine Word of grace in Christ received, believed, and possessed as man's primary and saving righteousness before God. Ellen White recognized that, as faith depends on the saving grace in Christ for its existence, faith accordingly constitutes the presence of a new attitude, disposition, and orientation towards God--a new spiritual reality in the soul that was seen as being unable to coexist peacefully with sin and thus accordingly would have a sanctifying effect. Ellen White's understanding of the sanctifying role

<sup>1</sup>White, "Come and Seek and Find," 1: 334.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 397. Ellen White maintained that "with faith there will be corresponding obedience, a faithful doing of the words of Christ." Idem, "Witnessing for Christ," The Youth Instructor, 9 Mar. 1883, quoted in idem, Messages to Young People (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1930), 200.

of faith seems directly related to her understanding of its substance and cause. It has already been demonstrated in this study that Ellen White maintained that the reality of faith is continuously generated and maintained by the presence and power of the divine Spirit in conjunction with the divine Word of mercy in Christ. As the disposition of faith was thus seen as constituted by these agencies, it should be expected that she would attribute the sanctifying effect of faith to those very same sources. She said:

‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.’ Rom. 10:17. The Scriptures are the great agency in the transformation of character. Christ prayed, ‘Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.’ John 17:17. If studied and obeyed, the word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. The Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin, and the faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us in body, soul, and spirit to His own image.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White apparently attributes sanctification to the sources that create faith in the human heart, namely the divine Word of grace and the Spirit. In the following statement she focused on the sanctifying role of the divine Spirit by saying “that [the] regenerative power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest.”<sup>2</sup> She maintained that “in all who will submit themselves to the Holy Spirit a new principle of life is to be implanted.”<sup>3</sup> Ellen White, likewise, attributed a similar sanctifying function to the divine Word in the following statements: “Received into the heart, the leaven of truth will regulate the desire, purify the thoughts, and sweeten the disposition. . . . It enlarges the capacity for feeling, for

<sup>1</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 100.

<sup>2</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 57. She reaffirmed this view by stating that “to believe . . . will change the heart, and reproduce in man the image of God.” Idem, “Transformation Through Faith and Obedience,” 1: 346.

<sup>3</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 96. She also declared: “The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent.” Idem, The Desire of Ages, 671. She further stated: “When man is converted to God, a new moral taste is supplied, a new motive is given, and he loves the things that God loves.” Idem, “United with the Living Vine,” 1: 336.

loving."<sup>1</sup> Ellen White summarized her beliefs by saying that "by beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart."<sup>2</sup> A principle that was seen as being so powerful that "where the heart is yielded to Him, there is faith,--faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God."<sup>3</sup> Faith was thus seen by Ellen White as a powerful spiritual response towards Christ that exists by virtue of the conjoined agency of the divine Word and Spirit. Faith in Christ thus serves as the core of a new spiritual relationship to God, which manifests

<sup>1</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 101. Ellen White added that "The truths of the word of God meet man's great practical necessity--the conversion of the soul through faith." Ibid., 100.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 395. Ellen White elucidated her understanding of how the knowledge of Christ plays a central role in the restoration and presence of sanctifying faith as follows: "Wherever we go, there is the recollection of One dear to us. We are abiding in Christ by a living faith. He is abiding in our hearts by our individual appropriating of faith. We have the companionship of the divine presence, and as we realize this presence, our thoughts are brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. . . . As the mind dwells upon Christ, the character is molded after the divine similitude. The thoughts are pervaded with a sense of His goodness, His love. We contemplate His character, and thus He is in all our thoughts. His love encloses us. If we gaze even a moment upon the sun in its meridian glory, when we turn away our eyes, the image of the sun will appear in everything upon which we look. Thus it is when we behold Jesus; everything we look upon reflects His image, the Sun of Righteousness. We cannot see anything else, or talk of anything else. His image is imprinted upon the eye of the soul and affects every portion of our daily life, softening and subduing our whole nature. By beholding, we are conformed to the divine similitude, even the likeness of Christ. . . . Here again there is the realization of a personal, living influence dwelling in our heart by faith." Idem, Testimonies to Ministers, 388. She further declared that "the spell of a stronger, a perfect mind will be over us; for we have a living connection with the source of all-enduring strength." Idem, Christ's Object Lessons, 61.

<sup>3</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 63. This change of attitude, however, is so radical that she could declare that "the heart that in its unrenewed state is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, now delights in its holy precepts, exclaiming with the psalmist, 'O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the days'." Ibid., 63. She added that this change of attitude makes "every burden . . . light . . . , duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure." Ibid., 59. She further described the agency of the Spirit as the source of a new life in the soul, saying: "The Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all this to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.' Ps. 40:8." Idem, The Desire of Ages, 176.

itself in a loving, willing, and obedient spirit. This disposition in mind, heart, and soul will, by intrinsic spiritual necessity, sanctify the thoughts, the desires, the attitudes, and the ambitions of the believer. She forcefully expressed this understanding, saying: "The faith which avails to bring us in vital contact with Christ expresses on our part supreme preference, perfect reliance, entire consecration."<sup>1</sup> Ellen White elucidated the characteristics of true faith by prescribing a test by which confessing Christians may know whether or not they are genuine believers, saying:

Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.<sup>2</sup>

Genuine faith thus constitutes the presence of a new spiritual principle, a new real righteousness in the heart, a new positive disposition in the mind, and a new attitude of trust, which will manifest itself in a response of devotion, commitment, consecration to Christ. The divine Word of grace and the Spirit were identified as the powers that give substance to the new disposition of the mind. Like the Lutherans, Ellen White thus apparently assigned a real spiritual substance to faith, of which the

<sup>1</sup>White, "Come and Seek and Find," 1: 334. The idea that faith constitutes the psychological core of a new spiritual disposition which moves and motivates a genuine believer was forcefully stated by Ellen White as follows: "Faith in Christ will be the means whereby the right spirit and motive will actuate the believer, and all goodness and heavenly-mindedness will proceed from him who looks unto Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith." Idem, "Christ the Center of the Message," RH, 20 Mar. 1894, 178. Ellen White described this radical change of disposition as a new birth, saying: "In the new birth the heart is brought in harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty." Idem, The Great Controversy, 468. She added: "The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies." Idem, "Sanctification through the Truth," RH, 12 Apr. 1892, 225.

<sup>2</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 58. See also idem, Testimonies for the Church, 6: 472.

constituent core would be trust in the person, purposes, and the mercy of Christ. Thus the constituent cause of faith appears as the core substance of its spiritual power and radically sanctifying effect.

#### Obedience as a Response of Faith

Ellen White's conception of the spiritual disposition of faith as a positive response of trust in the person, purposes, and mercy of Christ manifesting itself in a new devotion, commitment, and consecration to Christ logically implies that this disposition will strive to bring the entire person into perfect conformity to Christ and His will. She expressed this implication by saying that "faith claims God's promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience,"<sup>1</sup> that "genuine faith will be manifest in obedience,"<sup>2</sup> and that "obedience is the fruit of faith."<sup>3</sup> Thus she could say that "faith works by love and purifies the soul. It works in the life of the follower of Christ in true obedience to God's commandments; for love to God and love to man will be the result of vital connection with Christ."<sup>4</sup> That Ellen White saw obedience as an intrinsic response issuing from the disposition of faith was more explicitly stated as follows:

<sup>1</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 126.

<sup>2</sup>White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 154. She elucidated this conviction by saying that "power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised." Idem, The Desire of Ages, 668. She declared that "true obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer." Idem, Christ's Object Lessons, 97-98.

<sup>3</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 61. She declared that "there is no genuine sanctification except through obedience to the truth," an assertion she explained by saying that "those who love God with all the heart will love all His commandments also. The sanctified heart is in harmony with the precepts of God's law, for they are holy, just, and good." Idem, "Sanctification: The Life of John an Illustration of True Sanctification," RH, 22 Feb. 1881, 113.

<sup>4</sup>White, "Come and Seek and Find," 1:334.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience.<sup>1</sup>

Obedience was accordingly seen by Ellen White not only as imperative and possible due to the provisions of the gospel but as a fundamental attitude and spiritual response that issues from the characteristics of faith itself. Since the disposition of faith constitutes a fundamental disposition of mind and thus cannot be partial, it logically follows that the spiritual attributes of faith cannot be partial either, which implies that the response of obedience must be whole and never partial. Ellen White apparently viewed genuine sanctification not only as man's best efforts and works in co-operation with divine power, but as an attribute of genuine faith in Christ.

While faith constitutes the core of a new obedient disposition, it is God's moral law exemplified by Christ that constitutes the standard and norm of true sanctification according to Ellen White. This standard of holiness, however, is essentially a part of the divine revelation that is instrumental in creating the very response of faith that will manifest itself in trust, consecration, and obedience to God. Ellen White stated that through "the leaven of truth . . . a new standard of character is set up--the life of Christ."<sup>2</sup> To this insight she added that "the ideal of Christian Character is Christ-likeness."<sup>3</sup> Thus since "the life of Christ on earth was a perfect expression of God's

<sup>1</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 668. Ellen White never entertained the idea that the spiritual response of obedience could be partial, saying: "He [God] cannot accept partial obedience." Idem, Patriarchs and Prophets, 360. She also said that "God will not accept a willful, imperfect obedience." Idem, Manuscript 40, 1894, quoted in idem, Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1980), 3: 199.

<sup>2</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 98-99.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 311.

law,"<sup>1</sup> it followed that Christ was a personified expression of the norm of sanctification. Ellen White accordingly counselled believers to contemplate the life and person of Christ, saying: "By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity."<sup>2</sup> The idea that faith by intrinsic spiritual necessity would urge the believer to conform to divine law was more comprehensively stated as follows:

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the principle of love. . . . If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life; when the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the covenant promise is fulfilled, 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them'. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience--the service and allegiance of love--is the true sign of discipleship. . . . Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.<sup>3</sup>

The divine revelation in Christ constitutes the means by which the response of faith is restored as well as the norm according to which the obedient disposition will

<sup>1</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 315. She continually argued that true sanctification always takes place according to the moral norm of God revealed in the biblical dimension of law and exemplified in the person and work of Christ. See idem, The Great Controversy, 461-78.

<sup>2</sup>White, "United with the Living Vine," 1: 338. Following this logic, Ellen White accordingly declared that the "faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us in body, soul, and spirit to his own image." Idem, Christ's Object Lessons, 100. She further stated that "those who feel the constraining love of God, do not ask how little may be given to meet the requirements of God; they do not ask for the lowest standard but aim at perfect conformity to the will of their Redeemer." Idem, Steps to Christ, 45. She affirmed this conviction, saying: "Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love,--this is the subject for the soul's contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness." Ibid., 70-71.

<sup>3</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 60-61.

strive to conform. While faith will thus manifest itself in a response of obedience, this obedience will nevertheless transpire in a fierce battle with evil inclinations, which will continually attempt to hinder, paralyze, and eliminate its presence and power.

#### The Opposing Power of Sinful Inclinations

While the Holy Spirit will restore, maintain, and increase the new positive spiritual disposition, it will not eradicate the old sinful, carnal inclinations in the regenerate. Ellen White maintained that a "Christian will feel the promptings of sin, but he will maintain a constant warfare against it,"<sup>1</sup> and that "we may constantly fear lest our old nature will again obtain the supremacy."<sup>2</sup> Referring to Paul's confession, subsequent to his spiritual regeneration, she declared: "We shall make the apostle's confession our own. 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.' Rom. 7:18."<sup>3</sup> The origin, character, power, and continued presence of the evil, carnal inclinations were described as follows:

Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart. But against these principles there is struggling an antagonistic power. The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Co-operation with that power is man's greatest need.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the inherited and cultivated sinful, carnal inclinations are not eradicated but will remain in man subsequent to his spiritual regeneration. Ellen White identified this evil tendency as man's sinful self, which continually strives for supremacy by

<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 469-70.

<sup>2</sup>White, "United with the Living Vine," 1: 336-37.

<sup>3</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 161.

<sup>4</sup>White, Education, 29.

saying that "the warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness."<sup>1</sup> This struggle against the self is not a once-for-all event but a continual warfare that will go on all through life. Ellen White said that "as long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place. There is no point where we can say we have fully attained."<sup>2</sup> She thus affirmed that evil in its most radical sense is still present in the regenerate person and constitutes a powerful force, which is hostile to God and thus opposed to the new spiritual disposition of mind and heart.

Since a genuine Christian who spiritually delights in the will of God still possesses the old sinful inclinations that continually oppose the promptings of the Spirit, he must necessarily experience a deep and ceaseless tension and struggle within his being. She described the presence and continuity of this struggle, saying: "The life of the Christian is not all smooth. He has stern conflicts to meet. Severe temptations assail him. 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh'."<sup>3</sup> She thus described the old sinful inclinations as an evil force that continually attempts to fight, hamper, and restrain the new spiritual life in the heart.

The continual presence and power of the evil inclinations in the flesh thus

<sup>1</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 43.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "The Cause in Northern Wisconsin," RH, 6 May 1862, 179.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Manuscript 33, '911, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 6: 1111. Ellen White elucidated her view by saying that "the Christian will feel the promptings of sin, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; but the Spirit striveth against the flesh, keeping up a constant warfare." Idem, "Sanctification: The Christian's Privilege," 273. The Christian is thus described as a person who will experience the presence of two conflicting forces which attempt to suppress each other, as she further said: "If they [the Christians] do not gain the victory over sin, then sin is gaining victory over them." Idem, Christ's Object Lessons, 50-51.

represent a real, lasting counterforce in the regenerate. While Ellen White believes that faith in Christ as the core of a new spiritual disposition will continually urge a genuine believer to conform to the will of God, as it is expressed in the biblical dimension of the law and exemplified in the person of Christ, she does not consider this obedience to take place without a fierce struggle with an opposing evil force still present in man, which will continually attempt to hinder, paralyze, and even eliminate the new spiritual disposition, including its sanctifying effect. Despite the opposing power of the inherited and cultivated evil inclinations, she nevertheless maintains that a believing, regenerate person will continually manifest a true obedience to God's will as it is exemplified by Christ. She furthermore argues that the new obedient disposition present through faith in Christ will be the superior of the two contending forces in the regenerate person.

#### The Superiority of the New Disposition

Faith, including its spiritual attributes, constitutes the core of a new spiritual principle present in the regenerate person, a new spiritual disposition of the mind, and a new attitude of trust that will manifest itself in a response of devotion, consecration, and obedience to Christ. While Ellen White identified the spiritual substance of faith as the immediate cause of sanctification, she never saw this function as being independent of the ultimate constituent causes behind the origin, existence, and substance of faith, namely the continual operation of the divine Word and Spirit. The fact that she did not consider faith as having any existence or power independent of its constituent causes seems to be a major key to her perception of its superior sanctifying power.

Ellen White maintained that faith with all its attributes will fight and subdue the sinful inclinations so that they will no longer rule and dominate the actual life of a believer, although they will continually attempt to do so. Actually, the sinful inclinations will instead be subdued and governed by the disposition present through faith.

The power and dominion of the new spiritual disposition present through faith were described by Ellen White as follows: "Faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart."<sup>1</sup> She further declared that "in the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and enables the affections."<sup>2</sup> She summarized the experience of genuine believers as follows:

Relying upon the merits of Christ, exercising true faith in Him, they receive pardon for sin. As they cease to do evil and learn to do well, they grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. . . . The warfare is before them, and they enter it bravely and cheerfully, fighting against their natural inclinations and selfish desire, bringing the will into subjection to the will of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The spiritual power and motivation present in the regenerate through faith were explicitly seen by Ellen White as a superior, conquering power which would, by intrinsic necessity, fight the evil inclination as it would seek to bring the actual life into conformity with God's will. The fact that true faith will by intrinsic necessity urge a believer to subdue his evil inclinations in conformity to God's moral law exemplified by Christ fully confirms the preceding findings that true faith is a spiritual response of

<sup>1</sup>White, "Christ the Way of Life," 673. Ellen White emphasized the continual need for this kind of faith, saying: "Oh that I could impress upon all the importance of exercising faith moment by moment, and hour by hour! We are to live the life of faith; for 'without faith it is impossible to please God.' Our spiritual strength depends upon our faith." Idem, My Life Today (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1952), 8. She focused on this spiritual principle in the soul when she said that "true faith which unites us to Christ will stir the soul to activity." Idem, Manuscript 16, 1890, 6: 1111. She also expressed this idea by saying that "the voice of Jesus awakens a new life, which pervades the entire being." Idem, "Sanctification," RH, 18 Jan. 1881, 33.

<sup>2</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 59.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, "True Conversion," The Youth Instructor, 26 Sept. 1901, quoted in idem, Messages to Young People, 74. She declared that "every man has corrupt and sinful habits that must be overcome by vigorous warfare. Every soul is required to fight the fight of faith." Idem, Manuscript 16, 6: 1111. See also idem, Testimonies for the Church, 5: 47.

trust, commitment, consecration, and obedience to Christ. Ellen White consistently maintained that genuine faith in Christ by virtue of its cause and attributes will be the superior of the two contending forces so that the regenerate person will strive to perform the known will of God contrary to the opposition of evil inclinations.

This radical dominion of faith in the actual life of a genuine Christian was characterized by Ellen White as overcoming. She said that "when the children of God are struggling with temptation, battling against the passions of the natural heart, faith connects the soul with the only One who gives help, and they are overcomers."<sup>1</sup> She also described it as conquest and victory by saying that "he [the believer] must pray for divine help and at the same time resolutely resist every inclination to sin. By courage, by faith, by persevering toil he can conquer. But let him remember that to gain the victory Christ must abide in him and he in Christ."<sup>2</sup> Ellen White thus once more stated that while faith sanctifies according to its spiritual attributes, it does not sanctify independent of its relational function, which unites the believer with Christ, the constituent and operative power behind true faith. The radical character of the sanctifying power of the new spiritual disposition was more forcefully stated by Ellen White as follows:

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>White, Testimonies to Ministers, 161.

<sup>2</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 5: 47. Ellen White also said that "Christ has given his Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress his own character on his church." Idem, "Christ's Most Essential Gift to His Church," RH, 19 Nov. 1908, 16. She further declared that "it is God who gives us power to overcome." Idem, Letter 44, 1903, quoted in the SDA Bible Commentary, 7: 943.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, 311.

The radical conception of sanctification described in this statement perfectly harmonizes with Ellen White's conviction that the disposition of faith will continually urge the true believer to conform to God's will, as it is expressed in the moral law and exemplified by Christ. It furthermore confirms her conviction that faith in Christ will, by virtue of the Spirit, be so dominating a force in the believer that it will continually subdue and overcome the evil forces still active in the regenerate. This was the theological perspective in which she stated that there was no excuse for sinning:

The tempter's agency is not to be accounted an excuse for one wrong act. Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of Christ making excuses for their deformity of character. It is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God.<sup>1</sup>

The conceptual framework for her statement that "there is no excuse for sinning" is clearly a person's perception of good and evil. She was directly referring to a conscious submission to evil and thus conscious transgression of God's will. The logic of her statement clearly indicates that as the spiritual force present by faith constitutes a superior and dominating power, thus there will be no excuse for ignoring God's will or yielding to recognized evil inclinations. She illustrated this radical view with regard to true sanctification by referring to the experience of the Apostle Paul, saying: "Paul's sanctification was a constant conflict with self--Said he: 'I die daily.' His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God--Instead of following inclinations, he did the will of God, however unpleasant and crucifying to his nature."<sup>2</sup> While the evil inclinations are not eradicated or paralyzed, they are subdued and resisted to such a degree that they are no longer willfully and consciously permitted to rule and dominate the regenerate person's life. Like the Lutherans, Ellen White thus

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 4: 299.

teaches that every true believer will experience the presence of an opposing evil carnal tendency, which will continually attempt to hinder, paralyze, and even nullify the new disposition of trust, consecration, commitment, and obedience present in the regenerate ones. Just as it is the nature of the sinful, carnal inclinations to strive for supremacy and dominion over the whole person, so it is the nature of the new spiritual disposition to strive for supremacy over the entire person; hence a spiritual struggle will inevitably be experienced by a truly regenerate person. Ellen White clearly views sanctification not as man's best efforts and works, but as a reality which will by intrinsic necessity arise from the new obedient disposition governing a truly believing person.

#### The Progressive Characteristics of Sanctification

As the spiritual disposition governing the consciousness of the regenerate person was seen as the superior of the two contending forces, constantly by intrinsic necessity urging the believer to obey God's will, its sanctifying effects were nevertheless seen as being partial and progressive and never instantly complete. Ellen White declared that "Scripture plainly shows that the work of sanctification is progressive"<sup>1</sup> and not "the work of a moment, an hour, or a day."<sup>2</sup> She accordingly declared that "there is no such thing as instantaneous sanctification. Genuine sanctification is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last."<sup>3</sup> She summarized her views regarding the progressive nature of sanctification, saying:

<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 470.

<sup>2</sup>White, "The Cause in Northern Wisconsin," 179.

<sup>3</sup>White, "Sanctification," 33. Ellen White stated: "You do not at one bound reach perfection; sanctification is the work of a lifetime." Idem, Manuscript 9, 1891, quoted in idem, Selected Messages, 3: 193. She further affirmed the progressive character of sanctification by saying that "when in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun. Now he is to 'go on unto perfection'; to grow up 'unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'" Idem, The Great Controversy, 470.

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.<sup>1</sup>

This spiritual battle, which is part of the normal Christian experience, was thus seen by Ellen White as a manifestation of an obedient mind that continually desires to be in harmony with God contrary to the ever present evil inclinations.<sup>2</sup> Such an attitude of mind constitutes the essence of real obedience.

The progressive character of sanctification, implying that a believer would

<sup>1</sup>White, The Acts of the Apostles, 560-61. She elucidated this insight by saying that "it is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is made. At every advanced step heavenward it is to be renewed." Idem, Christ's Object Lesson, 159-60. She could say that "every day they will gain self-control, until that which is unlovely and unlike Jesus is conquered." Idem, "Sanctification," 34. "The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness of heaven, is a lifelong struggle." Idem, Testimonies for the Church, 8: 313. "His [Christ's] children . . . must maintain a constant battle with self." Idem, The Acts of the Apostles, 565.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen White believed that evil inclinations would remain in the regenerate throughout this life, a view that was confirmed by her opposition to the idea that we might obtain holy flesh through spiritual regeneration. She declared that "the teaching given in regard to what is termed 'holy flesh' is an error." Ellen G. White, Letter 132, 1900, quoted in idem, Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), 2: 32. She added that "all may now obtain holy hearts, but it is not correct to claim in this life to have holy flesh. The Apostle Paul declares, 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing' (Rom. 7:18)." Ibid. She accordingly concluded that "you cannot obtain it. Not a soul of you has holy flesh now. No human being on earth has holy flesh. It is an impossibility." Ibid. The substance of evil in our nature will not be removed until our glorification, according to Ellen White. She said: "When human beings receive holy flesh, they will not remain on the earth, but will be taken to heaven. While sin is forgiven in this life, its results are not now wholly removed. It is at His coming that Christ is to 'change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body' (Phil. 3:21)." Ibid., 33. Ellen White thus teaches that God does not eradicate man's evil inclinations through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. The continuity of the believer's spiritual struggle was thus seen as prompted by the continual presence of evil inclinations.

experience an increasing ability to subdue the evil carnal desires, was closely correlated with Ellen White's conviction that the disposition of trust, commitment, consecration, and obedience in the regenerate would increasingly grow stronger. She declared that "by beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character."<sup>1</sup> She reaffirmed this insight, saying:

As you receive the Spirit of Christ--the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others--you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely.<sup>2</sup>

While the progressive character of sanctification thus implies that the new spiritual disposition in the regenerate will increase in strength, it does not imply that this disposition is partial. Ellen White actually saw sanctification as issuing from an obedient disposition and not as a gradual change of this disposition. She said that "[sanctification] is received through obedience" and that "he [the believer] is sanctified through obedience."<sup>3</sup> She stressed this distinction between the end and the means in sanctification by a reference to the experience of the Apostle Paul, saying: "Ever he [Paul] kept before him the ideal to be attained, and this ideal he strove to reach by willing obedience to the law of God."<sup>4</sup> Ellen White accordingly declared that "sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience."<sup>5</sup> While the disposition of obedience was thus seen as the fundamental spiritual reality from which sanctification will arise, the

<sup>1</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 395.

<sup>2</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 68. See also *ibid.*, 65-66.

<sup>3</sup>White, Testimony for the Church, 6: 350.

<sup>4</sup>White, The Acts of the Apostles, 314.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 561.

progressiveness in sanctification seems to be related to the increasing spiritual knowledge and the actual conformity to the divine ideal.

The progressive character of sanctification was, in the thinking of Ellen White, thus primarily linked to the regenerate person's increasing illumination by the Holy Spirit. She expressed this insight as follows: "The apostle presents before the believers the ladder of Christian progress, every step of which represents advancement in the knowledge of God, and in the climbing of which there is to be no standstill."<sup>1</sup> This idea was elucidated as follows: "Continual progress in knowledge and virtue is God's purpose for us. His law is the echo of His own voice, giving to all the invitation, 'Come up hither. Be holy, holier still.' Every day we may advance in perfection of Christian character."<sup>2</sup> The progress in Christian sanctification thus depends on the obedient disposition in conjunction with the increasing illumination by the divine Word and Spirit, which progressively brings the actual life of the believer into an increasing conformity with the divine ideal. Ellen White affirmed this conviction as follows:

At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. As our opportunities multiply, our experience will enlarge, and our knowledge increase.<sup>3</sup>

The terms perfect and perfection are apparently used as relative and dynamic

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 530. She reaffirmed this conviction, saying: "In the lives of those who are true to right principles, there will be a continual growth in knowledge." Ellen G. White, "Unity and Devotion," Notebook Leaflets, Christian Experience, No. 7, quoted in idem, Selected Messages, 2: 161.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Ministry of Healing, 503. She elucidated this idea, saying: "If the eyes are kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of fullness." Idem, The Desire of Ages, 302.

<sup>3</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 65-66. She described this continual response of obedience as follows: "Sanctification . . . is nothing less than a daily dying to self and daily conformity to the will of God." Idem, Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 237.

concepts describing the continual response of obedience to the increasing knowledge of God's will. Ellen White's descriptions of sanctification thus imply that while true conformity to the divine ideal will progressively increase, true sanctification will nevertheless be relative in terms of this ideal. She stated this insight, saying: "He humbled Himself and took our nature that we might be able to learn of Him and, imitating His life of benevolence and self-denial, follow Him step by step to heaven. You cannot equal the copy; but you can resemble it and, according to your ability, do likewise."<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White's description of the consciousness of those who experience true sanctification further supports this view of sanctification. She said that "he who is truly seeking for holiness of heart and life delights in the law of God and mourns only that he falls so far short of meeting its requirements."<sup>2</sup> She saw this experience illustrated in the life of Daniel who felt unworthy in the presence of the Lord, saying: "Such will be the experience of everyone who is truly sanctified. The clearer their views of the greatness, glory, and perfection of Christ, the more vividly will they see their own weakness and imperfection."<sup>3</sup> Seeing their imperfection in the light of the perfection of Christ "they [believers] will have no disposition to claim a sinless character; that which has appeared right and comely in themselves will, in contrast with Christ's purity and glory, appear only unworthy and corruptible."<sup>4</sup> Ellen White summarized her insight

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 2: 170.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Sanctification: Christian Character," 257.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, "Sanctification: The Life of Daniel An Illustration of True Sanctification," RH, 8 Feb. 1881, 82.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Ellen White elucidated this conviction, saying: "There can be no self-exaltation, no boastful claim to freedom from sin, on the part of those who walk in the shadow of Calvary's cross. They felt that it was their sin which caused the agony that broke the heart of the Son of God, and this thought will lead them to self-abasement. Those who live nearest to Jesus discern most clearly the frailty and sinfulness of

regarding the consciousness of those who experience true sanctification as follows:

Those who are really seeking to perfect Christian character will never indulge the thought that they are sinless. Their lives may be irreproachable, they may be living representatives of the truth which they have accepted; but the more they approach to His divine image, the more clearly they discern its spotless perfection, and the more deeply will they feel their own defects.<sup>1</sup>

This increasing consciousness regarding the partiality of actual sanctification fully corresponds with Ellen White's emphasis upon the necessity of a present continuous imputation of the righteousness of Christ in order to qualify the believer as fully acceptable before God. She declared that "man's obedience can be made perfect only by the incense of Christ's righteousness, which fills with divine fragrance every act of obedience."<sup>2</sup> She elucidated this insight, saying:

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confessions of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. . . .

Oh, that all may see that everything in obedience, in penitence, in praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

humanity, and their only hope is in the merit of a crucified and risen Saviour." Idem, The Great Controversy, 471.

<sup>1</sup>White, "Sanctification," 33. Ellen White further rejects the idea that a true believer may ever claim absolute sinlessness by a reference to the experiences of the apostles and prophets, saying: "None of the apostles or prophets ever claimed to be without sin. Men who have lived nearest to God, men who would sacrifice life itself rather than knowingly commit a wrong act, men whom God had honored with divine light and power, have confessed the sinfulness of their own nature. They have put no confidence in the flesh, have claimed no righteousness of their own, but have trusted wholly in the righteousness of Christ. So will it be with all who behold Christ." Idem, Christ's Object Lessons, 160.

<sup>2</sup>White, The Acts of the Apostles, 532.

<sup>3</sup>White, Manuscript 50, 1900, 1: 344. Ellen White elucidated this view when she discussed the erroneous idea that a sinner through the process of sanctification might obtain absolute sinlessness, saying: "And while we cannot claim perfection of

Ellen White thus stated explicitly that all believers experiencing genuine sanctification will continually need the imputed righteousness of Christ as a permanent protective shield against the condemnatory power of their remaining sinful inclinations and imperfections. Sanctification neither eradicates the evil carnal inclinations nor creates instant conformity to the divine ideal, thus all genuine believers will need the continual imputation of Christ's righteousness as their surety before God.

#### Sanctification as Evidence of Faith

Ellen White saw faith as the constituent core of the superior obedient disposition governing the life of the regenerate ones, and accordingly she emphasized that the presence of genuine faith would progressively be revealed through their actual lives, saying: "The faith of the genuine believer will be made manifest in purity and holiness of character."<sup>1</sup> The term character was elucidated by her general exposition of Christ's parable concerning the wedding garment. She declared that "by the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess."<sup>2</sup> The essence of the Christian character was accordingly described as "the righteousness of Christ that may be wrought into the character. Purity of heart, purity

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the flesh, we may have Christian perfection of the soul. Through the sacrifice made in our behalf, sins may be perfectly forgiven. Our dependence is not in what man can do; it is in what God can do for man through Christ. When we surrender ourselves wholly to God, and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our substitute. Ye are accepted in the Beloved." Idem, Letter 132, 1900, 2: 32-33.

<sup>1</sup>White, "Witnessing for Christ," 200.

<sup>2</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 310. She also defined the term character as "the white robe of innocence . . . worn by our first parents when they were placed by God in holy Eden. They lived in perfect conformity to the will of God. All the strength of their affections was given to their heavenly father." Ibid.

of motive, will characterize everyone who is washing his robe, and making it white in the blood of the lamb.”<sup>1</sup> Expressions such as “purity of heart” and “purity of motive” as a designation of the Christian character refer to some of the attributes of true faith in Christ that will characterize the believing mind.

Ellen White recognized the existence of a fundamental causal relationship between faith in Christ, as the inner core of the obedient disposition ruling the regenerate, and its outward visible sanctifying effect. The good works of sanctification were consistently seen as the necessary fruit and visible manifestation of an inward spiritual disposition and never as an addition to it. She said that “genuine faith cannot exist without corresponding works,”<sup>2</sup> which implies that “men and women will act out all the

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, “How Do We Stand?” RH, 24 July 1888, 465. While Ellen White saw the renewed disposition of the mind as a real imparted righteousness, she did not see it as perfect in itself independently of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. She declared that “when it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and efforts as man’s best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit.” Idem, “Faith and Works,” ST, 16 June 1890, 354. This statement also clarifies her usage of the metaphorical language, such as, “the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the lamb.” Idem, The Great Controversy, 428. While the imputed righteousness of Christ thus covers the deficiencies in genuine believers it does not protect against cherished sin. She said that “all these expect to be saved by Christ’s death, while they refuse to live His self-sacrificing life. They extol the riches of free grace, and attempt to cover themselves with an appearance of righteousness, hoping to screen their defect of character; but their efforts will be of no avail in the day of God. The righteousness of Christ will cover no cherished sin.” Idem, Christ’s Object Lessons, 316. The spots of character are consciously cherished sin which are a characteristic of the disobedient mind.

<sup>2</sup> White, “Faith and Good Works,” 306. Ellen White said that “obedience is the fruit of faith.” Idem, Steps to Christ, 61. She added that “good works do not purchase the love of God, but they reveal that we possess that love.” Idem, Christ’s Object Lessons, 283. Ellen White further elucidated this theme by saying that “thus genuine faith does a genuine work in the believer.” Ibid. She described the truly righteous man as follows: “He is unconscious of his goodness and piety. Religious principle has become the spring of his life and conduct, and it is just as natural for him to bear the fruits of the Spirit as for the fig tree to bear figs or a rosebush to yield roses. His nature is so thoroughly imbued with love to God and his fellow men that he works the works of Christ with a willing heart.” Idem, “Sanctification,” 34.

faith which they in reality possess. By their fruits ye shall know them. Not their profession, but the fruit they bear, shows the character of the tree."<sup>1</sup> True faith will thus be manifested in Christlike qualities. Ellen White declared that "genuine faith will be manifested in good works; for good works are the fruits of faith."<sup>2</sup> This description of the causal relationship between the inward spiritual disposition, of which faith is the core, and its visible, tangible sanctifying effects, logically implies that such effects must by intrinsic necessity demonstrate the presence of true faith. Ellen White saw this reality illustrated by the example of Abraham, saying: "Abraham believed God. How do we know that he believed? His works testified to the character of his faith."<sup>3</sup> Thus she could say that "obedience is the test of discipleship. . . . When benevolence, kindness, tender heartedness, sympathy, are manifest in our lives; when the joy of right doing is in our hearts; when we exalt Christ, and not self, we may know that our faith is of the right order."<sup>4</sup> While the works of true sanctification have no justifying power,

<sup>1</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 2: 442. Ellen White further described this relationship between faith and works as follows: "The good tree will produce good fruit. If the fruit is unpalatable and worthless, the tree is evil. So the fruit borne in the life testifies as to the condition of the heart and the excellence of the character. Good works can never purchase salvation, but they are an evidence of the faith that acts by love and purifies the soul." Idem, The Desire of Ages, 314.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 397. Ellen White described the visibility of true sanctification by saying that "a change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are." Idem, Steps to Christ, 57. She added that "the character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts." Ibid., 57-58. She also said that "self-denial, self-sacrifice, benevolence, kindness, love, patience, fortitude, and Christian trust are the daily fruits borne by those who are truly connected with God." Idem, "Sanctification," 33.

<sup>3</sup>White, "Faith and Good Works," 306.

<sup>4</sup>White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 147. Ellen White reaffirmed her conviction by saying that "although the good works of man are of no more value without faith in Jesus than was the offering of Cain, yet covered with the merits of Christ, they testify to the worthiness of the doer to inherit eternal life." Idem, Manuscript 26a, 1892, quoted in idem, Selected Messages, 1: 382.

they nevertheless testify to the presence of true faith. If the good works of sanctification demonstrate the presence of genuine faith, it logically follows that the absence of true sanctification must signify that true faith is also absent. Ellen White accordingly stated that "there is a belief that is not saving faith. . . . The so-called faith that does not work by love and purify the soul will not justify man."<sup>1</sup> Thus she could say that "it is evident that a man is not justified by faith when his works do not correspond to his profession. . . . The faith that does not produce good works does not justify the soul."<sup>2</sup> Like the Lutherans, Ellen White thus recognized as genuine only the faith that would continually express itself in a genuine devotion, consecration, commitment, and obedience to Christ and His moral will, and which therefore would by intrinsic necessity progressively sanctify true believers.

#### The Place and Meaning of Sanctification

Ellen White not only declared that the good works of sanctification constitute the visible evidence of genuine faith, she also stated that while sanctification was expressive of a real imparted righteousness, it had no meritorious value with regard to man's salvation. She stated that "we do not earn our salvation by obedience; for

<sup>1</sup>White, "Faith and Good Works," 306.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Justified by Faith," 1: 397. Positively Ellen White declared that "the faith that justifies always produces first true repentance, and then good works, which are the fruit of that faith. There is no saving faith that does not produce good fruit." Idem, Manuscript 83, 1891, quoted in idem Selected Messages 3: 195. She continually declared that there could be no true faith where obedience to God was absent. She accordingly said that the "so-called faith in Christ which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God, is not faith, but presumption." Idem, Steps to Christ, 61. She expressed this assertion with even greater sharpness, saying: "But while God can be just, and justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul." Idem, "Christ the Way of Life," 673.

salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith,"<sup>1</sup> and that "good works will not save even one soul."<sup>2</sup> That sanctification has no meritorious power seems closely related to the fact that the spiritual attributes of faith from which sanctification arises have no meritorious value either, as Ellen White explicitly stated, saying: "There is nothing in faith that makes it our Saviour,"<sup>3</sup> and that "faith earns nothing for us."<sup>4</sup> While she emphasized that faith and its sanctifying effects were devoid of any meritorious value whatsoever, she carefully explained the reason by saying that "faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin."<sup>5</sup> Faith was thus seen as justifying, not by virtue of its intrinsic spiritual attributes, but by virtue of what it embraced. Ellen White rejected the idea that a true believer experiencing true sanctification would ever, or even partly, rely on his sanctification for acceptance, pardon, and justification, saying: "By beholding Him we become changed into His divine likeness. And when this work is wrought in you, we shall claim no righteousness of our own, but we shall exalt Jesus Christ, while we hang our helpless souls upon His merits."<sup>6</sup> While sanctification was thus perceived as being non-contributory to man's justification, it was nevertheless seen as linked to justification through the indivisible function of faith in such a way that a believer could not possess the one blessing without simultaneously

<sup>1</sup>White, Steps to Christ, 61.

<sup>2</sup>White, "Relation of Faith and Works," 1: 377.

<sup>3</sup>White, "Faith and Good Works," 307.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>White, "Christ the Way of Life," 673.

<sup>6</sup>White, "Sanctification," 33.

possessing the other one. This is the soteriological rationale on which she declared that "while good works will not save even one soul, yet it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works."<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis upon the non-meritorious value of the real imparted righteousness of sanctification was thus perfectly consistent with Ellen White's understanding of the basic principles governing her soteriology. The sanctifying role of faith was seen as arising out of its justifying function, as faith does not exist apart from its constituent cause, namely the divine Word of grace in Christ received, believed, and possessed as man's primary saving righteousness before God. The righteousness that alone justifies was thus seen as residing exclusively in the person of Christ and never in the believer--an insight that logically implies that the justifying power of true faith must be limited to a purely relational function. As the spiritual disposition of faith, including its spiritual attributes, cannot contribute to man's justification, it logically follows that its sanctifying effects cannot contribute either. Even the presence of the divine agencies that cause, increase, and maintain faith cannot, logically speaking, contribute to man's justification, because their presence and operation remain a gift of Christ's grace, which alone justifies. Although faith according to its spiritual substance thus constitutes a new righteousness in the heart, a new positive disposition, and a new attitude of trust, manifesting itself in a radical process of sanctification, it cannot contribute to man's justification, according to the basic principles governing Ellen White's soteriology.

While the progressive character of sanctification implies that the believer's disposition of consecration and obedience will gradually grow stronger, and his ability to subdue his evil, carnal inclinations will increase, and that genuine conformity to the divine ideal will grow progressively according to the illumination of the divine Word and Spirit, yet the spiritual disposition of faith moving the regenerate person is never

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<sup>1</sup>White, "Relation of Faith and Works," 1: 377.

seen by Ellen White as being partial. The response of obedience was seen as issuing from the spiritual disposition of faith, urging the believer towards continuous victory over recognized sin and conformity to recognized duty. True sanctification was thus seen as proving, vindicating, and demonstrating the presence of true faith, and that a believer rightfully possesses all the saving benefits and provisions offered in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White, like the Lutherans, recognized that, as faith ultimately depends on its object, Christ, for its existence, faith accordingly constitutes the presence of a new attitude, disposition, and orientation towards Christ, manifesting itself in a mental response of devotion, commitment, consecration, and obedience, as the dominating and ruling principle in the saints. Like the Lutherans, she saw the good works of sanctification as visible signs revealing and vindicating the presence of true faith. Like the Lutherans, she maintained that there can be no justification without an inner spiritual renewal and no spiritual renewal without justification due to the indivisible nature of the functions and reality of faith. While the sanctifying effect of faith cannot contribute to man's justification, since faith itself is a gift of the grace in Christ which alone justifies, its presence will nevertheless testify to the believer, to the world, and to the universe that a professed Christian is truly related to Christ and thus worthy of eternal life.

#### Sanctification and the Final Judgment of the Saints

The conviction that sanctification, as the visible manifestation of faith, thus vindicates, proves, and demonstrates that a believer is truly in Christ, and thus worthy of eternal life, fully correlates with the place and meaning that Ellen White has assigned

<sup>1</sup>While Ellen White's conception of the sanctifying role of faith thus in principle harmonizes with the Lutheran Protestant position, she nevertheless developed this doctrine in a manner that transcends that of the Lutherans in terms of depth, detail, and emphasis. See above, pp. 58-66. Her use of terminology and concern for true sanctification and Christian living thus clearly reflect the predominantly Wesleyan context in which Adventism emerged.

to sanctification in terms of the Final Judgment of the saints. She believed that the Final Judgment will be conducted according to the divine records which contain a comprehensive testimony that will reveal the moral and spiritual realities of each individual believer with photographic exactness. Thus everything that is recorded in the heavenly register will subsequently be exposed at the tribunal as the evidence on which the decisive judicial sentence will be passed. The content of this record was described by Ellen White in a variety of ways. She said that "their works of faith, their acts of love, are registered in heaven. . . . There every temptation resisted, every evil overcome, every word of tender pity expressed, is faithfully chronicled."<sup>1</sup> She elucidated this description further, saying:

In the judgment the use made of every talent will be scrutinized. . . . What have we done for Christ, in the person of the poor, the afflicted, the orphan, or the widow? God has made us the depositaries of His holy word; what have we done with the light and truth given us to make men wise unto salvation? No value is attached to a mere profession of faith in Christ; only the love which is shown by works is counted genuine. Yet it is love alone which in the sight of Heaven makes any act of value. Whatever is done from love, however small it may appear in the estimation of men, is accepted and rewarded of God.<sup>2</sup>

The heavenly records will thus reveal the actual moral and spiritual life of a professed believer and thereby the presence and absence of genuine sanctifying faith. The words and deeds thus provide important evidence that demonstrates whether the individual in question is a true Christian or not. The divine record also exposes the presence or absence of true penitence and faith as follows: "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."<sup>3</sup> Ellen White's description of Christ's intercessory role in the eschatological judgment further illuminates how this

<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 481.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 487.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 422.

comprehensive divine record will vindicate the saints in the judgment. She said that "Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith . . . claiming for them forgiveness."<sup>1</sup> This exposition during the judgment of the actual lives of all professed believers was thus seen by Ellen White as a revelation of not only of the evil inclinations and sins committed, but also the penitence, faith, and the good works of sanctification including their reliance upon Christ as dying substitute and living intercessor and as their protection against the condemnatory power of the sins recorded in the heavenly register. None of her references to the function of the divine records in the judgment seems to indicate that sanctification has any meritorious function. The theological content and context of these statements reflect the idea that the celestial records basically serve as evidence with respect to the presence or absence of true justifying and sanctifying faith. The eschatological vindication of the saints through the exposition of their faith, including all its benefits and characteristics, was forcefully illustrated by her application of Christ's parable regarding the marriage feast in Matt 22:1-13.

Previous to the wedding the king comes in to see the guests, to see if all are attired in the wedding garment, the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the lamb. Matthew 22:11; Revelation 7:14. He who is found

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 484. She further affirmed this insight by saying that "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." Ibid., 483. Thus it was explicitly stated that the heavenly record in the judgment reveals the presence of a faith that both justifies and sanctifies. This view fully correlates with her description of Christ's righteousness imputed as our title to heaven while Christ's righteousness imparted constitutes our fitness for heaven. She stated: "The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven." Idem, "Qualifications for the Worker," RH, 4 June 1895, 353. See also idem, The Desire of Ages, 300.

wanting is cast out, but all who upon examination are seen to have the wedding garment on are accepted of God and accounted worthy of a share in His kingdom and a seat upon His throne.<sup>1</sup>

By this parabolic language Ellen White described a genuine Christian who possesses both the imputed and imparted righteousness by virtue of faith in Christ. This parabolic description thus comprehensively summarizes what the heavenly records will reveal in the eschatological judgment, including the presence of true sanctification. In another eschatological interpretation of this parable, she made another reference to the revealing and vindicating role of sanctification in the judgment of the saints, saying: "It is by their deeds that all will be judged. Our characters are revealed by what we do. The works show whether the faith is genuine."<sup>2</sup> She added that "every act is judged by

<sup>1</sup>White, The Great Controversy, 428. Ellen White used the figurative language, being "spotless" and "washed in the blood of the lamb," as references to the qualifying function of Christ's righteousness, imputed to the believer, with regard to his legal standing before God as perfect. This insight correlates with her description of the actual life of believers and its continuous need for the imputation of Christ's righteousness. She said that "although the good works of man are of no more value without faith in Jesus than was the offering of Cain, yet covered with the merits of Christ, they testify to the worthiness of the doer to inherit eternal life." White, Manuscript 26a, 1892, 1: 382. She added that "Christ will clothe His faithful ones with His own righteousness, that he may present them to His Father 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' Ephesians 5:27." Idem, The Great Controversy, 484. In this context the following references to the saints with regard to the judgment appear understandable. Referring to those who pass the test of judgment she said that "their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil." Ibid., 425. She also declared that "everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Ibid., 490. These strong expressions appear perfectly consistent in the context of her doctrine of justification and sanctification, in general, and in connection with her doctrine of judgment, in particular, as a reference to those who through faith hold Christ as their primary righteousness before God and thus experience genuine sanctification--as faith in Christ will continually urge them to fight against recognized sin and to strive towards fulfilment of recognized duty. These statements thus appear as descriptions of those who through faith in Christ share both His imputed and imparted righteousness.

<sup>2</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 312. According to Adventist eschatology, Christ's role as mediator will terminate in the consummative act of judgment at which the saints are judicially approved before God. Since this event is seen as terminating shortly before the parousia it follows that there will be a short interim period in which Christ will no longer mediate between the consummation of the judgment of the saints and the visible advent, which means that the eternal destiny is definitively settled for

the motives that prompt it.<sup>1</sup> Thus Christian character is not the sum of the deeds done, but rather a designation of the spiritual disposition that prompts the deeds; a disposition

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the inhabitants of this world. See White, The Great Controversy, 425, 618-623. The argument has often been presented that this feature in Adventist eschatology necessarily implies that the living saints will then have to live before God without the support of the divine grace and mercy in Christ. While Christ's mediation was seen as ceasing also for the saints, subsequent to their approval in the judgment, the implications seem to be the exact opposite, namely that their status in Christ's grace has been confirmed as their legal right before God. Her description of the reaction of the living saints, as they, with the rest of the world, experience the second advent of Christ in His glorious majesty, clearly confirms this observation. She said: "The righteous cry with trembling: 'Who shall be able to stand?' . . . The voice of Jesus is heard, saying: 'My grace is sufficient for you.'" Ibid., 641. She perceived that even the saints will be filled with awe and trembling at the approach of the majesty of heaven, and her description of the reassuring words of Christ in this moment confirms that she believed that the living saints will continue to enjoy the grace of God subsequent to their approval in the judgment. God's grace in Christ was thus presented by Ellen White as the only basis on which the saints can prevail in the judgment, at which they are judicially approved, and also as the only basis on which they can prevail at the glorious appearance of the Lord. The argument has also been presented that this feature in Adventist eschatology, regarding the termination of Christ's mediation, necessarily implies that the living saints must reach a degree of absolute perfection prior to this event. Ellen White's description of the experience of the saints in this short interim period, however, yields a different picture. In this period the saints not only enjoy the continuous standing in divine grace, but they are also described as going through a sanctifying experience as God allows them to be subject to a short but severe spiritual crisis and anguish caused by the persecution of a hostile world. Ellen White described this sanctifying experience as follows: "God's love for His children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected." Ibid., 621. The fact that the sanctification of the saints continues after their approval in the judgment is thus in harmony with her general teaching that it is not the degree of sanctification but the reality of true sanctification, as evidence of genuine faith in Christ, that is the primary issue with regard to their approval in the judgment. This quotation, furthermore, illuminates another controversial eschatological statement by Ellen White regarding the experience of the living saints at the second advent. She declared that "when the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." White, Christ's Object Lessons, 69. In the salvation-historical structure of her eschatology she explicitly declared that this reflection of the mercy, compassion, and love of Christ will be perfected in the living saints through a short trial subsequent to their approval in the judgment and not as a condition for their approval. In the context of her theology in general and her Sanctuary theology in particular these statements may thus consistently be understood and interpreted in harmony with the fundamental principles governing her soteriology. Further discussion of her eschatological rationale for this unique experience of the living saints at the second advent is outside the scope of this study.

<sup>1</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, 316.

that has true faith in Christ, as man's primary and saving righteousness before God as its constituent spiritual core. There seem to be no elements in her theology of judgment which indicate that sanctification has any meritorious and contributory role in the Final Judgment. Her strong appeals to professed Christians to make sure that they possess the white robes of character in view of the coming judgment appear as a strong plea for the possession of true faith in Christ, because only the presence of true sanctifying faith will make Christ's atoning intercession soteriologically protective for the penitent believer and secure his continuous possession of salvation. This observation with regard to the non-meritorious role of sanctification in the judgment thus harmonizes fully with Ellen White's general description of sanctification, including its theological rationale. This insight also correlates with her understanding of the double and indivisible role of faith that was seen as (1) saving instantly by virtue of its relational function and (2) subsequently sanctifying progressively by virtue of its spiritual cause, substance, and attributes. The theological principles governing her Sanctuary Doctrine, which imply that salvation is instantly receivable and possessable through a faith relationship with the mediating Christ, and which imply that the eschatological, judicial ratification of man's salvation is based on his prior reception and possession of salvation, further exclude sanctification from any contributory role with regard to man's salvation.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section the central features of Ellen White's soteriology are summarized, systematized, and assessed in comparison with the basic elements of Lutheran soteriology, including a final comparative assessment of the major differences. Since the major themes and principles undergirding the two soteriologies are the primary concern of this study, a discussion of the issues, details, and differences that divide the two traditions, and which have no determinative significance for the primary soteriological principles, are omitted.

#### A Comparative Summary

The investigation of the basic principles governing the soteriology of Ellen White and the Lutheran-Protestant tradition reveals that they in essence agreed that man was originally created in the moral image of God and was thus originally endowed with the moral and spiritual qualities characterizing his creator. Like the Lutherans, Ellen White in principle held that Adam's transgression caused so radical a change in man's relationship with God that man's spiritual disposition was subsequently inclined to evil and negatively disposed towards God. Like the Lutherans, she identified the biblical dimension of the moral law as a revelation of the eternal, unchangeable moral principles that are intrinsic to God's being and which are exemplified by Christ's life and were originally imprinted in man's mind, heart, and soul at creation. Like the Lutherans, she saw the biblical dimension of the moral law as a spiritual instrument by which God continually confronts the sinner with the divine imperative that man's relationship with God must still conform to the will of God; otherwise he would ultimately be subject to

the curse of God. Like the Lutherans, she recognized that the soteriological impotence of the law arises from the fact that the basic preconditions for performing God's will were completely absent in fallen man as he exists in complete bondage to an evil, selfish disposition. The two traditions furthermore shared the conviction that a sinner's encounter with the moral law, instead of resolving the problem of sin, actually reveals the depth of his spiritual depravity, his helplessness in terms of being and doing what God demands, the depth of his spiritual and legal estrangement from God, the radical implications of the divine wrath against sin, and thus man's inability to escape the judgment of God. The two traditions accordingly maintained that through the unique function of the law the Holy Spirit seeks to lead sinners towards spiritual despair and thus prepare them for receiving God's grace. In these doctrinal aspects regarding law and sin the two traditions apparently shared the same fundamental principles.

#### **The Principle of Grace**

Grace was in both traditions identified as essentially a relational concept expressive of a loving, merciful, and favorable divine disposition towards sinners, manifesting itself in saving actions. The two traditions furthermore shared the conviction that divine grace is the exclusive meritorious ground for a believer's salvation, and that all human endeavors accordingly have no contributory role with regard to man's acceptance, pardon, and justification before God.

#### **The Principle of Christ**

The gracious disposition of God was in both traditions seen as reaching its ultimate expression through Christ's soteriological work, as God provided the necessary and only solution to the problem of sin through Christ's incarnation, life, passion, and death. The life and death of Christ were described as substitutional in both traditions, as the merits of Christ were seen as providing a full and complete satisfaction

of the broadest legal and penal demands of the moral law. They accordingly recognized that by virtue of His personal righteousness and merits Christ thus provided the only and exclusive meritorious basis on which a penitent sinner would be granted acceptance, pardon, and justification before God.

### The Principle of Faith

The following assertions with regard to the principle of faith were basic to both Ellen White and the Lutherans. First of all, spiritual restoration was seen as a gift of divine grace as the spiritual damage, in the context of divine condemnation, was identified as being so radical that fallen man was neither capable of restoring his lost spiritual disposition of faith nor was capable of liberating himself from the negative disposition of unbelief. Second, true justifying faith does not exist apart from its constituent cause, namely the divine Word of grace in Christ received, believed, and possessed as man's proper and foundational righteousness before God. True faith was, therefore, seen as God's unique and dynamic work by means of the Holy Spirit, which would initiate, restore, increase, and maintain faith through the divine Word of love, mercy, and grace in Christ. Thus God through the divine Word and Spirit liberates man from his spiritual bondage as He restores man's lost spiritual disposition of which faith is the core. Third, that since the benefits of the gospel, such as pardon and justification, are essentially objective gifts of God in Christ offered exclusively through the divine Word of promises, it follows that the manner and reception happens through a personal response of trust in the giver. Faith was thus understood as personal trust in Christ and His promises and accordingly seen as the sole spiritual-relational bond that presently unites the believer with the mediating Christ and His righteousness. Fourth, that the first and primary function of faith is the justifying one, as faith embraces God's mercy in Christ as the believer's essential and foundational righteousness before God through which the curse and condemnation of the law are legally overcome and by which the

believer is received into divine pardon and favor. Where faith-righteousness thus abides, sin loses its power to accuse and coerce the conscience. Fifth, that since faith is determined by its object, the divine grace in Christ, for its existence, it accordingly constitutes the presence of a new attitude and disposition towards God, which by intrinsic necessity will manifest itself in a response of love and obedience to the One trusted. Sixth, that by virtue of its spiritual cause and attributes, faith will have a sanctifying function, which will progressively transform the actual life of a believer despite the opposing forces of evil still present in him. Finally, the two traditions shared the conviction that true faith, despite its spiritual attributes and sanctifying effect, will never have a contributory role with regard to justification, as faith itself is dependent on our redemption in Christ for its existence--as the God-relationship restored through our redemption in Jesus Christ was seen as the foundation for the presence of the divine Spirit generating the spiritual life of faith.

While the progressive character of sanctification implies that the believer's disposition of consecration and obedience will gradually grow stronger, and his ability to subdue his evil, carnal inclinations will increase, and that his conformity to the divine ideal will increase according to the illumination of the divine Word and Spirit, yet, the spiritual disposition moving the regenerate person was never seen by Ellen White as being partial. The response of obedience was thus perceived as issuing from the spiritual disposition of faith, continually urging the believer towards victory over recognized sin and conformity to recognized duty. Ellen White, like the Lutherans, thus saw the spiritual disposition of faith manifesting itself in a response of consecration, devotion, commitment, and obedience to Christ, as the ruling and dominant principle in the saints. The two traditions furthermore shared the conviction that the good works of sanctification are visible signs revealing and vindicating the presence of true faith in Christ. They accordingly shared the basic conviction that there can be no justification

without inner spiritual renewal and no inner spiritual renewal without justification due to the indivisible nature and function of true faith. While the sanctifying effect of faith cannot contribute to man's justification, as faith itself is a gift of Christ's grace that alone justifies, the presence of genuine sanctification will nevertheless testify to the believer, to the world, and to the universe that a professed Christian is truly in Christ and thus worthy of eternal life. Although Ellen White's perception of the sanctifying role of faith thus in principle harmonizes with the Lutheran-Protestant position, she nevertheless stated this doctrine in a manner that transcends that of the Lutherans in terms of depth, detail, and emphasis.

#### The Meaning of the Term Justification

Ellen White understood the terms justification and pardon essentially as a forensic declaration of acceptance and forgiveness pronounced by the highest legal and judicial authority in the universe, based exclusively on Christ's merits and righteousness imputed to the believer. An essential agreement thus exists between Ellen White and the Lutherans regarding the basic meaning of justification as a forensic-relational reality that refers to a restored relationship with God on the basis of the divine pardon and forgiveness in Christ. She accordingly agreed with the Lutherans that the divine verdict of justification would be based exclusively on divine grace, manifested in the merits and righteousness of Christ, and received by the believer exclusively through a faith relationship with Christ--as the imputation of Christ's righteousness was seen as providing a complete satisfaction of the ultimate demands of the divine moral law. The penitent believer was likewise seen as existentially receiving and possessing a full and complete salvation as a present reality at the very moment that faith in Christ was born. The two traditions thus appear to be in essential accord with regard to the manner and time that a believer existentially receives and possesses a full and complete salvation.

The Sanctuary Doctrine, however, provides a dual, temporal perspective in

which salvation may be viewed from the point of view of either its existential reception or from its eschatological, judicial ratification. In this salvation-historical perspective, she used the terms pardon and justification not only as a designation of the present existential reception and possession of salvation but also as a designation of its eschatological, judicial ratification in the judgment. In both temporal usages these terms carry the same forensic meaning expressive of divine forgiveness granted by the highest legal and judicial authority in the universe based exclusively on the provisions of Christ. The Lutherans, however, did not have a real temporal distinction between the existential reception and the forensic ratification of salvation; both aspects were seen basically as a present timeless reality.

#### The Sanctuary Doctrine

The historical perspective of salvation in which Ellen White applied the threefold principles of grace alone, Christ alone, and faith alone was called the Sanctuary Doctrine. It provides the christological perspective by which she saw the past, the present, and the future soteriological work of Christ as a progressive and indivisible unit prophetically outlined in the Messianic texts of the Scriptures and typified in the biblical New Covenant sanctuary motif. She distinguished between Christ's provision of salvation at the cross and its subsequent application to the individual believer through Christ's celestial mediation. This continuous application of salvation provided by Christ through His earthly ministry was seen as transpiring in a two-phased celestial ministry. The first phase was perceived as Christ's continuous intercession prior to the Final Judgment of the saints, while the last and consummative phase was seen as His intercession during that event.

Ellen White consistently argued that through His pre-judgmental intercession, Christ would continually provide a full and complete legal protection against the condemnatory power of repented, confessed, and forsaken sin, by virtue of the

continual imputation of His merits and righteousness. This conviction with regard to the present reception of salvation through Christ's continual mediation was confirmed by her present and timeless usage of the terms justification and pardon as expressive of a genuine believer's present possession of salvation full and complete. Although she thus confirmed that a true believer receives and possesses a full and complete salvation instantly through his faith relationship with the mediating Christ, she nevertheless presented it as being forensically incomplete, awaiting its formal judicial ratification in the judgment. The assertion that the believer will instantly receive and possess a full and complete salvation as a present reality fully concurs with the Lutheran tradition, while the eschatological dimension, implying that the forensic confirmatory aspect of salvation will be eschatological, constitutes a new feature in Protestant theology.

#### The Forensic Character of the Eschatological Verdict

Ellen White presented the pre-judgment solution to man's problem of sin as being forensically incomplete, which implies that the eternal destiny of a true believer still awaits its formal forensic ratification. The assertion that the forensic and confirmatory aspect of salvation was located as an eschatological reality according to the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine was based on the following observations: (1) the stated need for an eschatological intercession of Christ in behalf of the saints during the act of judgment, (2) the stated need for an eschatological judicial cancellation of sin, and (3) the identification of the forensic determinative character of the sentence pronounced on the saints in the judgment. The actual usage in this eschatological context of the classical, biblical soteriological terms pardon and justification, as a characterization of this sentence, further supports this observation. The assertion that man's present reception and possession of salvation will be subject to an eschatological judicial act of ratification is a unique feature in Adventist soteriology without any real correspondence to traditional

Lutheran-Protestant soteriology. The terms pardon and justification were used by Ellen White to describe both the present existential possession as well as the eschatological, judicial ratification of salvation. While these terms are used in two different temporal contexts, they are still used in the same soteriological meaning. The conceptual similarities in the judicial meaning assigned to these terms, both in her present and eschatological usages, including their soteriological rationale, are so striking that they cannot be ignored. In both temporal dimensions, the terms pardon and justification carry a forensic meaning expressive of the divine forgiveness and acceptance granted by the highest legal and judicial authority in the universe based exclusively on the provisions of Christ. The conceptual similarities thus seem to create a real tension between the present existential and eschatological judicial dimensions in Adventist soteriology, but the problem, however, seems to be dissolved in the context of Ellen White's unique understanding of the mediatorial role of Christ.

#### The Meritorious Intercession of Christ

Ellen White's conception of the meritorious and intercessory functions of Christ constitutes the core of her Sanctuary Doctrine. Christ was depicted as man's contemporary substitute and surety in the presence of God, performing a continuous, meritorious, and intercessory function that would culminate in the eschatological judgment. This intercessory function was seen as legally necessary for the present continuous imputation of His righteousness and merits as well as the present continuous impartation of all the sanctifying provisions of divine grace. Ellen White perceived Christ as being not only transcendently present continuously before God but also as being immanently present continuously with the believer through the Spirit, as a real union and covenant is established with Christ through faith. Ellen White's emphasis upon Christ's objective work as dying substitute and living intercessor, as the foundation for a present reception and possession of salvation including its eschatological judicial

ratiification, demonstrates that her soteriology cannot be divorced from her sanctuary christology. The decisive sentence of approval in the judgment was seen by her as based exclusively in the redemption in Christ previously received and previously possessed by virtue of His continual intercession, which means that the very moment a believer is related to Christ by faith he possesses the soteriological substance that determines his eternal destiny. The christological doctrine with regard to the continuous meritorious intercession of Christ thus provides a connective principle by which an eschatological reality may actually be fully receivable and possessable as a present reality--as the true believer according to this principle will instantly possess all that the saving provisions in Christ will ever effect, regardless of the time of its realization.

This christological principle, furthermore, makes it possible to distinguish more sharply between the objective and subjective sides of salvation. Viewed from an objective perspective, the eschatological judgment may be identified as the crucial moment that forensically determines the eternal destiny of the individual believer. However, viewed from a subjective perspective, the presence of faith may be identified as the decisive moment that existentially determines the eternal destiny of the individual believer. Ellen White's general usage of the soteriological term justification in a present sense seems perfectly consistent when salvation is viewed from the subjective perspective of how, when, and where a true believer existentially receives and possesses a full salvation through a faith relationship with the continuously mediating Christ. Likewise, her usage of the terms in an eschatological sense seems perfectly consistent when salvation is viewed from the objective perspective of how, when, and where the problem of sin will ultimately be resolved forensically. When the issue is viewed in the context of the larger salvation-historical perspective provided by the Sanctuary Doctrine, her present and eschatological usages of these terms may appear perfectly consistent. The christological dimension in the Sanctuary Doctrine thus provides the central key of

interpretation, not only with regard to the interrelationships of the various parts of the Sanctuary Doctrine itself, but also to the present and eschatological usage of the terms pardon and justification.

Pardon and justification understood as a decisive forensic verdict of approval by God apparently belong in the thematic context of the divine judgment. The temporal location of the great event, where the heavenly tribunal would convene to perform such an action, to make such a decision, and to pronounce such a sentence, was identified as the eschatological judgment of the saints according to the Sanctuary Doctrine. The judicially decisive sentence of approval in the judgment was, however, depicted as being based exclusively in the saving provisions of Christ previously received and previously possessed by the believers by virtue of their faith relationship with Christ throughout His preceding intercession. While the forensic aspect of salvation thus, thematically speaking, belongs to the eschatological judgment, it was nevertheless presented as being received and possessed as a present reality by the believers by virtue of Christ's continuous mediation. The Sanctuary Doctrine thus provides a theological rationale by which the present existential reception and possession of pardon and justification could consistently be interpreted as mediated eschatology.

#### Sanctification and the Judgment

Ellen White's soteriological principles imply that the presence of the sanctifying role of faith, without being meritorious, will by necessity prove, demonstrate, and vindicate a believer's possession of true justifying faith. Sanctification not only progressively testifies to the presence of faith, it also reaches its ultimate revealing, testifying, and vindicating functions regarding the eschatological-judicial ratification of the saints. It is not the degree of sanctification but the real presence of true sanctification as evidence of genuine faith in Christ that is the primary issue with regard to the approval of the saints in the judgment. The fact that the sanctifying effect of faith, from

a temporal perspective, precedes the judicial ratification of the saints in the judgment does not attribute to sanctification any meritorious role, as the existentially determinative moment of reception and possession of the saving righteousness in Christ actually precedes sanctification and actually constitutes its cause. This understanding fully correlates with her conception of the double and indivisible role of faith, which instantly saves by virtue of its relational function and which sanctifies progressively by virtue of its spiritual cause, substance, and attributes. The theological principles governing her sanctuary theology, which imply that salvation is instantly receivable and possessable through a faith relationship with the mediating Christ, and which imply that the eschatological, judicial ratification of man's salvation is based on his prior reception and possession of salvation, further exclude sanctification from any meritorious or contributory role with regard to man's salvation. These principles thus limit the function of sanctification in the judgment to that of proving, vindicating, and demonstrating the presence of genuine faith, including the believer's prior possession of salvation through a faith relationship with the mediating Christ.

#### A Concluding Comparison with Lutheran Soteriology

The guiding question in this research was formulated as follows: Does the inclusion of an eschatological dimension in Adventist christology and soteriology necessarily imply that the two traditions are mutually exclusive in terms of fundamental soteriological principles, as claimed by the critics, or does a basic unity and continuity exist between the soteriologies of the two traditions, as claimed by Adventism? The core of the conflict between the two traditions is related to the fact that Adventism, as reflected by Ellen White, integrated the eschatological dimension of the Final Judgment in its soteriology proper, while the Lutheran-Protestant tradition excluded it.

The dual temporal perspective in Adventist soteriology, with its distinction

between the present existential reception and the eschatological forensic ratification of salvation, is thus absent in Lutheran soteriology. The unique Adventist emphasis on Christ's mediatorial role and its connective function with regard to the present and eschatological dimensions in her soteriology is likewise absent in Lutheran thought. The Lutherans did not have a real temporal distinction between the existential reception and the forensic ratification of salvation. The rationale for this exclusion was related to an absence in Lutheran soteriology of a real temporal distinction between the existential reception and the forensic ratification of salvation--both aspects were seen basically as a present reality. The true believer is seen as fully justified in a forensic sense as long as genuine faith in Christ endures, even through the moment of death; thus no further forensic action was seen as being necessary or even possible. The forensic aspect of salvation thus seems excluded from the sphere of eschatology in Lutheran thought.

Ellen White's location of the forensic confirmatory dimension of salvation as an eschatological reality collides directly with the Lutheran article on forensic justification with respect to the time aspect. Even to propose the idea that the present reception and possession of a forensically complete salvation needs an eschatological judicial ratification in a judgment involving works seems not only to be a proposal of a logical contradiction, but it also seems to be an infringement upon the biblical principles of grace alone, Christ alone, and faith alone, and thus an infringement upon the genuine believer's immediate possession of a forensically complete salvation. Without a knowledge of the dual temporal dimension in Adventist soteriology including its fundamental christological rationale, the Adventist doctrine of judgment will appear disturbing, controversial, and even incompatible with the Lutheran doctrine of forensic justification and all that it signifies as a presently complete reality. The Sanctuary Doctrine, however, provides a theological rationale by which it seems possible to include eschatology

in soteriology proper without infringement upon the time and rationale of a believer's present existential reception and possession of salvation.

Traditional Protestant soteriology, however, has continually experienced a deep tension with regard to the biblical assertion that man is saved by faith and ultimately judged according to works. Scholars such as Wilfried Joest, Albrecht Peters, Ole Modalslie, G. C. Berkouwer, and James P. Martin<sup>1</sup> all recognized the presence of a deep tension between the assertion that forensic justification as a complete present reality has eschatological validity and the idea that progressive sanctification will be subject to a Final Judgment according to works. Ivan T. Blazen, a New Testament scholar from the Adventist tradition, summed up the traditional problem as follows: "Varied attempts have been made to resolve what was seen as a tension or contradiction between these two doctrines. Often their attempts have taken the form of minimizing or negating one or the other of these teachings."<sup>2</sup> Martin claimed that this

<sup>1</sup>The disturbing question according to Joest concerns the significance of this judgment and hence the real significance of progressive sanctification in the scheme of salvation. Joest, Gesetz und Freiheit, 9-15. Peters responded to the challenge of Joest by a study of Luther's theology of faith. Albrecht Peters, Glaube und Werk. Luthers Rechtfertigungslehre im Lichte der Heiligen Schrift (Berlin: Lutherrisches Verlagshaus, 1967), 5-26. Modalslie responded to the challenge of Joest by a thorough investigation of the place and meaning of the Final Judgment in terms of Luther's soteriology. Modalslie, Das Gericht nach den Werken, 7-16. Berkouwer stated the issue as follows: "We need not be astonished that, when we have expressed the Reformed Confession of justification, others remind us of the Bible's insistence that we shall all be judged according to the works done in the flesh." Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, 103. Berkouwer considered this issue to be so serious that he stated that we are forced "to ask ourselves whether the radical sola fide doctrine has failed to consider the whole of the multiform preaching of Scripture." Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ivan T. Blazen, "Justification and Judgment," RH, 21 July 1983, 4. In the following article he presents four major approaches to the tissue. In the rejectionist view the Final Judgment was presented as a hangover from Judaism basically being in conflict with the new insight on justification. The imperfectionist view presented the believer as being judged in the Final Judgment not according to his Christian works but according to Christ's works. In the perfectionist or the partitionistic view, the believer was presented as justified initially by faith but finally by the attainment through grace of the standard of perfection. A fourth view states that judgment only assesses the sizes of rewards but does not determine man's salvation since this question was settled through present justification. Idem, "Justification and Judgment," RH, 11 Aug. 1983, 7-8.

problem stemmed from the presence of an incompleteness in the Lutheran-Protestant understanding of the biblical meaning of forensic justification as seen from a textual thematic-exegetical point of view.<sup>1</sup>

The salvation-historical structure of the Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine seems intriguing as it provides a christological perspective, which in Adventist soteriology apparently dissolves the tension that Lutheran-Protestant soteriology has experienced with regard to the biblical assertion that man will be saved by faith as a present reality while he ultimately will be judged according to works as an eschatological reality. The doctrinal idea that made it possible to structure Adventist soteriology differently from that of the Lutheran-Protestant tradition, without infringing upon its basic soteriological principles, was the realistic conception of Christ's continuous, meritorious, and intercessory role both prior to and during the judgment by which salvation full and complete was seen as being mediated to the believer as a present existential reality. Despite the apparent difference with regard to the actual time of the formal forensic ratification of man's salvation, the two traditions, nevertheless, appear to be in essential accord with respect to the soteriological principles governing their theologies, that is, the principles of grace alone, Christ alone, and faith alone. While the doctrine regarding faith in the

<sup>1</sup> Through a historical-theological study, James P. Martin analyzed the place and meaning of the Last Judgment in Orthodox-Protestant theology. Martin claimed that Protestant theology structured its soteriology in such a way that the biblical doctrine on the Final Judgment was neglected to such a degree that it could be ultimately abandoned without consequences for their soteriology. Martin, The Last Judgment, 5-47. He specifically declared that "justification is not merely retrospective, but appears indifferent to the categories of past, present, future as, for example, in the language of Romans 8: 33 and 34. Justification is in fact an anticipated last Judgment. . . . Orthodoxy often lost sight of this eschatological perspective." Ibid. 16. Martin added that "it was the failure of Orthodoxy to relate the life of the Christian positively to the Last Judgment as the consummation of Salvation." Ibid., 81. He amplified this assertion by saying that "the judgment did lose this status because unlike the New Testament church, the principle christological and soteriological emphasis in Protestant theology had been formulated apart from their truly eschatological relations." Ibid., 74. See also ibid., 80-81, 84, 164. Martin thus saw the New Testament concept of justification as truly eschatological and thus transcending the historical Protestant understanding with regard to its temporal dimension.

present Christ is central to both soteriologies, yet, the christological theme regarding the present mediation of Christ has in Adventist theology been developed in a manner that transcends the Lutheran tradition.

The central christological principle, with regard to Christ's continuous meritorious intercession prior to and during the act of judgment, apparently constitutes a new and intriguing dimension in the structure and form of Protestant soteriology: because (1) it provides a solution to the existing tension with regard to the integration of the Protestant doctrine of justification with the biblical doctrine of judgment without infringing upon its basic soteriological principles, and (2) it seems to correlate with some of the new insights in current New Testament studies where the term justification is perceived as an eschatological judicial concept. It is proposed in some of these New Testament studies that present justification may actually be interpreted as anticipated eschatology or realized eschatology. Ellen White, however, provides an Adventist theological rationale by which a believer's present justification could consistently be interpreted as mediated eschatology.

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