

APPENDIX ONE

Waggoner On The Investigative Judgment

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A long time ago I found that the only way to avoid misunderstandings in Bible discussions was to keep clear of theological terms not found in Scripture, and hence not susceptible of Bible explanation. A brief consideration of the Judgment in general will show that there is no place for an “investigative” Judgment before the coming of Christ. You will pardon me for quoting several passages of Scripture in full, instead of merely giving the references. I want the truth that they contain to stand out so boldly that it will be apparent what a libel upon God it is to assume that He is under the necessity of investigating the record of men’s lives and characters, in order to ascertain whether or not He can take them to Heaven.

“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.”

“Can any hide himself in secret, that I shall not see him? said the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.”

“The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and laid open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

“O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.”

“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His.”

“Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man.”

“Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him.”

In the face of this truth so often repeated, how can any thoughtful believer of the Bible teach that it is necessary for God to spend years in searching records, to find out who are true followers of Him, and who are not? **We are expected to teach as a fundamental article of faith, that it has already taken God, assisted by hosts of angels, almost seventy-two years to go over the records (several times longer, by the way, than it was supposed would be required), and still the work is not done. It brings God down to the level of man.**

But is there not to be a Judgment? Most certainly; for the Scriptures teach that “when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him,” then He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and the dead, small and great, of all nations, shall stand before Him to be judged; but they nowhere say anything about any Judgment before Christ’s coming.

The object of the Judgment is not that God may learn all about men, but men may learn the truth about God. They will not learn it through the preaching of His Word, so they must see everything for themselves, just as it was in relation to every other thing, so that every knee, even Satan’s, shall involuntarily bow, and every tongue confess to God,

acknowledging that Jesus Christ is our Lord. Everyone that is cut off must acknowledge that his punishment is just; and even the righteous, who have trusted God and believed in His goodness and justice, without understanding all things, must have all things set before them so clearly that there will be no possibility for any doubt or question ever to arise.

Seventh-day Adventist teaching concerning the sanctuary, with its “Investigative Judgment” to precede the blotting out of sins, is virtually a denial of the atonement. True, much is made of the “antitypical day of atonement” beginning in 1844; but that very thing minimizes, if it does not nullify, the value of the blood of Christ, in that it teaches that a man may receive the blood — the life — and not receive the atonement.

Let me note, by the way, an inconsistency on the part of those who insist that everything must “fit the type.” In the type, the atonement day was just one day out of 360 days — the last day of the year. According to SDA teaching, Christ was in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary from His ascension till 1844, or 1810 years, which time corresponded to the yearly service in the tabernacle, leading up to the day of atonement. The 1810 years corresponded to the 359 days in the type. Now 359 days is to one day as 1810 years is to five years and fifteen days. Therefore if the type were to be followed exactly, the “antitypical day of atonement” ought to have ended some time in 1849. Why insist on following the “type” so closely in other respects, and ignore it in the important matter of time?

But to come to the really serious indictment, I have said that the teaching that atonement for sins was deferred until 1844, and that no sins were blotted out till then, the sins of the living not being blotted out even yet, minimizes or even nullifies the value of the blood of Christ. It makes a distinction between things that do not differ, and teaches that the blood — the life — of Christ received by a person exercises only a portion of its virtue at the time of its reception, — that it is divided in its action. Seventh-day Adventists do believe in the forgiveness of sins. At least it is taught in the denomination, and is believed by many. But forgiveness is obtained only by the reception, consciously, of the life of Christ, which is given freely on the cross for all men. We are “justified [made righteous] freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” This forgiveness is reconciliation to God, for it was our “wicked works” that constituted our enmity to God, and Christ has reconciled us in the body of His flesh, through death. Col. 1:21, 22. Justified by His blood is the same as reconciled by His death (Rom. 5:9, 10), and this is the atonement. By Christ “we have now received the atonement.” I know that there is an attempt to evade this truth, by using the word “reconciliation,” which is given in the margin; but the fact remains that reconciliation and atonement are identical. Reconciliation implies previous enmity. In this case the enmity was all on our side; we were enemies of God, who is the Friend of sinners. It is we who are reconciled to God, by the destruction of the enmity that was in us. Once we hated His way; now we love and yield to them, and are at one with Him. We have received the atonement, namely, the life of God in Christ.

And this is the blotting out of sins. How can it be otherwise, when the enmity is destroyed, “slain,” and the enmity is the body of sin? “It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul,” and this blood — life — is not divided. I am sure that you still sing with as much fervour as when we used to sing it together twenty-eight years ago,

“Amazing Grace! ‘tis heaven below
To feel the blood applied;”

and I hope that sometimes even yet Adventist congregations join in singing from the old hymn book,

“My sin, O the bliss of the glorious thought!
My sin, not in part, but the whole,
Is nailed to His cross, and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!”

and also from “Christ in Song,”

“Christ has for sin atonement made;
What a wonderful Saviour!
I am redeemed, the price is paid;
What a wonderful Saviour!”

I know that hymns do not establish doctrine; but my joy in singing these lines comes from the knowledge that they are Scriptural. “We have received the atonement.” We should not dare come into the presence of God as law-breakers knowing that our sins were charged up against us; but we can come with boldness to the Throne of Grace, when we have this gracious assurance and invitation: “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.”

I think there is no disagreement as to the fact that the blotting out of sins is the atonement. What I object to is the denominational teaching that this is only a book transaction. That makes the atonement not a personal matter at all, but something which can take place without in the least affecting the individual concerned. It is like blotting out extreme hot or cold weather by breaking the thermometer. What possible difference can it make to a man what is done with a record of his sins, written in a book, when he himself has had them removed from him “as far as the east is from the west”? A sick man is taken to a hospital and treated. When he enters his condition is noted, and every day that he is there a careful record of his case is made. Every rise of temperature is set down, together with every unfavourable symptom. By and by he is discharged, cured. That record of the course of his disease will remain on file in the hospital as long as the hospital stands; but the man knows nothing and cares nothing about it. He is freed from the disease, and that is all that he cares about. Just as little can the man who is forgiven and cleansed from sin care for or be affected by any record of his former sins. In saying this I am not implying that there will be retained forever the record of men’s sins. What I do mean is that the blotting out of sins is a vital thing in the sinner himself, and not a mere matter of bookkeeping.

I have often gone into a Roman Catholic church during the celebration of the mass, and it seemed to me that it was an exact picture of the SDA idea of Christ’s work as a priest. The people were all down in the body of the church, and the priest stood at the altar, far away from them, and with his back to them, going through forms and saying words of which they understood nothing. The priest’s mummery had no manner of connection with the people for whom he was supposed to be ministering. Even so the denominational teaching separates the work of Christ from the people — making the atonement consist of forms and not of fact. I believe you will agree with me, that the following lines by Van Dyke were Scriptural:

“Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
And not within thy heart, thy soul shall dwell forlorn.

The cross on Golgotha thou lookest to in vain,
Unless within thyself it be set up again.”

The idea of making a man's salvation depend to any degree whatever upon his belief, or the fact, of whether or not Christ stood for a certain number of years upon one side or the other of a partition wall would be childish, if the matter were not so serious. Will nothing ever emancipate the denomination from the bondage of the observance of “days, and months, and times, and years”? Will they forever encumber and smother the glorious message of the everlasting Gospel with endless details of ceremonialism? Must the whole Levitical system be transferred to heaven till the end of time, and it be continually taught that God regards even His own followers as mere ticket-of-leave men?

What do I mean by this? I have reference to the teaching that no matter how humbly and contritely a man may confess his sins to God, how heartily he accepts Christ as his sacrifice and Saviour, his sins are only provisionally forgiven; that they are held against him to see how he will “hold out.” What is this but to make him a ticket-of-leave man? It is at best but suspended sentence. You don't forgive your children that way. No real man forgives an offender in such a manner, but whole-heartedly, letting the evil of the past be as though it had not been. Why should Christians charge God with doing that which in them would be unchristian? Why not be content with the teaching that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness? And that “as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us”?

The whole theory of a postponed blotting out of sin seems to be based upon the superficial reading of Acts 3:19. You know, of course, that the proper reading of that text is found in the Revised Version: “Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that so seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” There is no intimation that the blotting out of sins is to be delayed indefinitely after the repentance and conversion, for such a thing is an impossibility. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin, when we repent, and then we have “fellowship” with the Father and the Son. We are at one with them. Where are the sins after we have been cleansed from them? Where was the leprosy after Christ touched the leper, and cleansed him from it? Where was Peter's wife's mother's fever after Jesus touched her hand, and it left her? Where did it go? And where was it kept stored up? Where is the pain after the healing balm has been administered? Where is the hunger after the nourishing food has been eaten? Where is the thirst after the refreshing draught? Where was the man's blindness after his eyes were opened? Where was the man's lameness after his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he leaped and walked? Where is the sin, after a man becomes a new creature?

Just the other day I picked up an old volume of “*Thoughts on Daniel*” and read that the work of Christ since 1844 “consists in the remission of the sins of those who should be found worthy to have them remitted.” I pass by the teaching that the remission of sins depends on a man's worthiness. That is too baldly evangelical to need threshing out again. But we are taught in the Bible that remission of sins is something that is received by whosoever believeth in Jesus. Acts 10:43. Christ, in imparting the Spirit to the apostles, said: “Whose sins soever ye remit, they are remitted.” There is no teaching of a future remission. The remission of sins is as real a thing as the healing of disease, and cannot take place apart from the individual.

The objection is raised, that to teach that Christ made atonement for sins on the cross is to teach the doctrine of indulgence, the forgiveness of sins before they are committed. That objection does not hold, so far as I am concerned, and does not lie against Scripture teaching. Christ does make atonement for sins on the cross; for, as I have set forth, the cross is an ever-present reality. How else could Paul say, "I am crucified with Christ"? Or how could he reproach the Galatians for their defection, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been set forth, evidently crucified among you"? Do not Seventh-day Adventist preachers ever appeal to sinners to "come to the cross"? Where else but at the cross can the bonds be loosed, and the burden of sin be removed?

Well, I might as well stop here, although the temptation is strong to go on with many other lines branching out of this. All that I wanted was to let you know where I stand, and the reason for it. I couldn't stand otherwise, and believe the Gospel. Yet I know that you believe the Gospel and at the same hold, nominally, at least, to the denominational teaching on the sanctuary. I know that you are very busy; but I wish that for the sake of old times you would point out to me where I am wrong.

How could I honestly hold my place as a preacher and teacher in the denomination so long as I did, if I feel that my views would keep me out of the denominational ministry now?

For one thing, my views were not so sharply defined as they are now, since they were a gradual growth. Moreover, the lines are drawn much more closely now than they were then. You know that men have been retired from the ministry for differing on so uncertain a matter as the interpretation of Dan. 11. What, then, would be the fate of a man in the ministry who should announce his dissent from the denominational teaching on the "Sanctuary Question," which is considered to be the keystone of the whole arch? Besides, I was never a belligerent, and as I always held, and do still, what I deemed to be the really essential truths of the message, I contented myself with teaching them, and holding my peace concerning things that I knew were not Biblical. Of course, I was often accused of "not preaching the message;" but things would be tolerated in one already long in the work, that would not be in one just entering it, or re-entering it after long absence. You know that in spite of my non-militant attitude, I was in hot water a good deal of the time.

E.G. Waggoner, "Confession of Faith," pp. 22-29.

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