

APPENDIX THREE

The Chequered History Of The Phrase “Within The Veil”

By

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A. A Brief History of Adventist Interpretation

A recent writer has described Luke-Acts as “a storm centre in New Testament Scholarship.”¹ The Epistle to the Hebrews may well warrant the same epitaph within Adventist New Testament interpretation. The phrase “within the veil,” tucked away in this Epistle in chapter 6:19, has experienced a notoriety and attention within Adventist history seemingly beyond its intrinsic importance.

As early as O.R.L. Crosier’s definitive article on the sanctuary back in 1846,² difficulty was experienced with this text. Heb. 6:19f. “is supposed to prove,” Crosier states, “that Christ entered the Holy of Holies at His ascension, because Paul said He had entered within the veil.”³ Crosier in reply points out that the tabernacle had two veils, and the one which separated the holy place from the most holy place is specifically designated as the “second veil” (Heb. 9:3). Thus, with challengeable logic, he concludes that the veil in “chapter 6, being the first of which he speaks, must be the **first** veil, which hung before the Holy / Place /.”⁴

In 1877 no less a pen than that of Uriah Smith gave attention to this phrase.⁵ Smith parades some arguments which can only be termed fatuous. For example, he argues, on the basis of the holy place being twice the size of the most holy place, that “if the earth is the holy place of the true sanctuary, and Heaven the most holy, it follows, the proportion being maintained, that this little diminutive earth, . . . , is twice as large as all Heaven!”⁶

Aside from such rationalistic aberrations, Smith relies on a linguistic defence. In his opinion the same Hebrew word and the same Greek word are applied to both the outer curtain at the entrance of the tabernacle and the inner curtain which divided the most holy from the holy place. Thus because the word for veil in the Old Testament (Hebrew and Greek) is ambivalent, Smith feels that “inasmuch as he (i.e., Paul)⁷ once specifies the second veil when he refers to that, we must understand him as referring to the first veil when not thus specified.”⁸

These explanations did not satisfy the searching criticisms of the former Adventist D.M. Canright. “Within the veil” means “within the most holy place,” Canright declares;⁹ and according to Hebrews 6:19 Jesus went into it at His ascension eighteen hundred years before A.D. 1844.¹⁰

An even greater challenge on the particular point of the phrase “within the veil” was made by another former Adventist, A.F. Ballenger. Ballenger spent fifteen pages of a small pamphlet¹¹ demonstrating that “within the veil” means within the second veil, i.e., in the most holy place. An answer was rather quick in forthcoming from E.E. Andross.¹²

Andross’s apologetic represents a significant shift from the position of Crosier and Uriah Smith. Andross accepts that Heb. 6:19 does refer to the second veil and that Jesus at His ascension did enter into the holiest. However, this was only momentarily. Andross, claiming the support of Heb. 9:21, sees this initial entrance into the holiest as an act of dedication of a heavenly sanctuary by means of the blood of Jesus. Following this act of consecration our great High Priest went out from the holiest and began His work in the first apartment.¹³

Another apparently original defence was made by the Australian W.W. Fletcher. Fletcher gave a series of Bible Studies at the Australasian Union Conference in 1925 on the subject of the sanctuary.¹⁴ In addition to the frequent Adventist argument from Heb. 9:3, that the inner

veil is qualified by the term "second veil," Fletcher argued cogently that in Num. 18:7 the very phrase "within the veil" is used in a general way of the sanctuary as a whole. Fletcher supported his contention by paralleling the verses as follows:

"The vessels of the sanctuary and ... the altar" (v. 3). "The sanctuary and the altar" (v. 5). "The altar, and ... within the veil" (v. 7).¹⁵

Fletcher thus took the phrase "within the veil" as an equivalent expression for "the sanctuary" (v. 5) and "the vessels of the sanctuary" (v. 3), hence his contention that in this instance the phrase has general reference to the sanctuary as a whole. Interestingly enough Fletcher at this time was having personal difficulties concerning this very point. These doctrinal doubts finally led him to present his views before the Australian leadership. After discussions in Australia and in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., he finally left the church in 1930. One of the basic causes of his secession was presented in the first of his three propositional declarations of his beliefs. It reads:

That it was the immediate unveiled presence of God as manifested in the Holy Shekinah that constituted the inner apartment of the earthly sanctuary the most holy place, and that consequently when at the time of His ascension the Lord Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of God, thus 'appearing in the presence of God for us,' He entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. There can be no place in heaven more holy than the place of the unveiled presence of Almighty God.¹⁶

A somewhat belated reply to D.M. Canright came out in 1933 from the pen of W.H. Branson. Branson's reply was the now familiar effort to refer Heb. 6:19 to the outer veil at the entrance of the tabernacle.¹⁷ To Fletcher's position on Heb. 6:19 a swifter answer was published. Though C.H. Watson's book on the atonement of Christ was a general treatise and makes no claim to be a formal refutation of Fletcher, there can be little doubt, however, that Fletcher's recent stir in Watson's home division was very much on his mind at places. He devotes a whole chapter to the topic "within the veil."¹⁸

Rather interestingly the main emphasis of Watson's argument is identical to that presented by Fletcher in 1925, five years prior to his secession. The details correspond so exactly that it is quite likely that Watson used Fletcher *contra* Fletcher.¹⁹ From the evidence of Numbers 18:7, Watson concludes:

In view of God's use of precisely the same expression with reference to the first veil, it is reasonable to conclude that when a New Testament writer uses these same words without qualification, they should be understood to refer to the same veil as that to which God has plainly applied them in the Old Testament.²⁰

Watson added to Numbers 18:7 a reference to Lev. 21:23, claiming that this latter, along with the former, is an example where the word 'veil' describes the curtain at the entrance of the tabernacle. These two texts form the basis of an identical apologetic in an article in the *Ministry* by W.E. Howell.²¹

B. The Biblical Facts

It is certainly true, as Uriah Smith noted, that the Greek word for veil in Heb. 6:19 (*Katapetasma*) is used indiscriminately in the Septuagint for *masak* and *paroketh* i.e., the hanging at the courtyard gate, at the tabernacle entrance, and between the holy places.

It is also true that Lev. 21:23 and Num. 18:7 are the only possible references out of the some twenty-four occurrences of *paroketh* (veil) which do not refer to the inner veil.²² The Septuagint, it should be noted, always translates *paroketh* by *katapetasma*.²³

The word itself then is hardly capable of deciding the issue over which veil is referred to in Heb. 6:19. There are some other factors, however, which can be considered as decisive.

1. The outer veil of the tabernacle was cultically unimportant, it was the inner veil which possessed the real significance.²⁴ The Epistle to the Hebrews is more likely to make reference to this theologically meaningful veil, than the more innocuous curtain at the tabernacle's entrance.²⁵
2. The inner veil played a cultically rich role on the day of atonement. The Epistle to the Hebrews draws heavily upon the day of atonement imagery in portraying Christ's self-offering and high-priesthood and thus presumably has the inner veil and its day of atonement role in view.
3. The immediate context of Heb. 6:19f. speaks of Jesus' entrance "within the veil" as the act of one who has "become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." The only place in the Old Testament where it is said that the high priest enters "within the veil" is on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:2, 12, 15), and it here has reference to the Holy of Holies.
4. The Epistle to the Hebrews has a penchant for the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. The actual phrase *to esoteron tou katapetasmatos* (the inner of the veil) occurs in the Septuagint only in Ex. 26:33; Lev. 16:2, 12, 15 and refers always to the inner veil. We should notice that three of the four occurrences are found in the chapter referring to the day of atonement. The Hebrew phrase behind the Septuagint in these places, *mibeth haparoketh*, occurs in one other place, Numbers 18:7. This text probably refers to the outer veil as Fletcher, Watson and Howell assert, though some scholars do not agree. But Num. 18:7 does not give the same relevant background to Heb. 6:19 that the day of atonement chapter (Lev. 16) gives. What rules Num. 18:7 completely out of the question, however, as the source of the phrase "within the veil" in Heb. 6:19, is the fact that the Septuagint has *to endothen tou katapetasmatos* not *to esoteron tou katapetasmatos* as in Heb. 6:19.

We conclude, therefore, on the ground of these considerations of Old Testament usage, Septuagint language, and the context of Heb. 6:19, that the phrase "within the veil" in Heb. 6:19 means "within the holy of holies."

The *S.D.A Commentary* (Vol. VLL, p. 437f.) senses the weight of these arguments and offers three views:

1. The veil referred to is the inner curtain but Paul is speaking of Christ's entrance into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary in order to dedicate it.

This is apparently the same as Andross's position and implies Christ later came out into the first apartment. This is unlikely because, as noted, the phrase "within the veil" has a day of atonement background, it is never used in connection with the dedication of the sanctuary. Hebrews assimilated the dedication ritual to the day of atonement (Heb. 9:21-25) while this position tends to do the reverse.

2. "Within the veil" is a figure of speech, and means simply to be in the presence of God.

One may well describe this as Fletcher's view, and even Ballenger's. This is undoubtedly the correct view provided we do not lose sight of the fact that the figure of speech which the writer is using is the annual entrance of the high priest on the day of atonement into the holy of holies.

3. The "veil" in Heb. 6:19, unlike Heb. 9:3, is unqualified and must refer to the curtain at the door of the tabernacle.

This view goes back to Crosier and Uriah Smith, and is reiterated by every Adventist apologist since 1846. In fact "veil" *is* further described, namely by the word "within" (*esoterus*), and this indicates unequivocally the inner veil.

C. The Problem of E.G. White's Usage

I set forth my thoughts here tentatively and invite the contributions and criticisms of my fellow believers.

It is beyond question that E.G. White occasionally uses the phrase "within the veil" not for the inner but for the outer curtain. Thus she writes:

The ministration of the priest throughout the year in the first apartment of the sanctuary, 'within the veil' which formed the door and separated the holy place from the outer court, represents the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His ascension.

She then goes on to speak of the disciples' hopes centring in the holy place "within the veil" (Heb. 6:19 is quoted). The reference is clearly to the first apartment for she adds, "For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary."²⁶

Yet it is also incontestable that even as early as February, 1845, E.G. White quite realized that the phrase "within the veil" referred to the inner curtain. Speaking of the new sanctuary teaching she says, "I saw the Father rise from the throne, and in a flaming chariot go into the holy of holies within the veil, and did sit."²⁷ She also rather frequently speaks of the saints' prayers or hope entering to that "within the veil,"²⁸ and one gains the impression she here means into the holiest.

In all these latter references, of course, E.G. White is speaking of the post A.D. 1844 situation, nevertheless, it indicates that she fully realized what Heb. 6:19 meant by the phrase "within the veil." If, then, she knew that the words "within the veil" meant the inner curtain, and did herself so employ the phrase for the situation after A.D. 1844, why did she use Heb. 6:19 in *Great Controversy* to describe Christ's ascension and passage through the first curtain into, the holy place?

The answer is that for the writer of Hebrews the bifurcated tabernacle was a symbol of the two ages, two religions (Judaism and Christianity), two priesthoods (Aaron's and Christ's); while for E.G. White the two-part tabernacle is a symbol of a two-phased ministry of the risen Christ. Because of this different outlook, E.G. White used phrases from the Book of Hebrews with prophetic freedom without any thought of exegeting the text, but in order to project her own viewpoint.²⁹ For Hebrews the holy place represented pre-Christian Judaism; that which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, that which decays and waxes old and is

ready to vanish away (Heb. 9:10; 8:13). For E.G. White the holy place represented "the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His ascension" (*Great Controversy*, p. 420).

Neither writer literalized the location with this symbolic usage, they do not contradict each other, they merely employ the same symbol to describe quite different spiritual realities. Hebrews maintains that at the ascension Christ entered not into a figure of the true but into the very presence of God, not for a moment as the earthly high priest, but for ever. E.G. White when speaking of Christ's ascension can also speak in this way (see below); but in connection with the Adventist exposition of Daniel 8:14 she used the language of entering the holiest on the day of atonement, not to proclaim the end of the earthly priesthood and the entrance of Christ into the divine presence as Hebrews does, but to proclaim a turning-point in the ministry of the risen Lord.³⁰

When declaring the privileged access that Christ's death has made available, rather than the prophetic symbolism of the two-part tabernacle, E.G. White writes in the same vein as the Epistle to the Hebrews: For example:

The great sacrifice has been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all. [cf. Heb. 10:19]. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Saviour was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens.³¹

The mercy seat, upon which the glory of God rested in the holiest of all, is opened to all who accept Christ as the propitiation for sin, and through its medium, they are brought into fellowship with God. The veil is rent, the partition walls broken down, the handwriting of ordinances cancelled. By virtue of His blood the enmity is abolished. Through faith in Christ Jew and Gentile may partake of the living bread.³²

This last statement, paralleling the rent veil and the broken down partition walls, makes it plain that the following quotation is also to be understood to include the two compartments of the temple.

Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God.³³

Again we have a homily on Heb. 10:19 similar to the one quoted from *The Desire of Ages*:

A new and living way, before which there hangs no veil, is offered to all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest.³⁴

D. Conclusion

When E.G. White quotes from scripture we must not think that this is necessarily a literal exposition of the text. As is well known the New Testament uses the Old Testament in a creative manner³⁵ and no Old Testament scholar feels bound to exegete the Old Testament text precisely in the manner of Matthew or Paul. Likewise, we must allow E.G. White the same creative freedom. E.G. White uses the language of Hebrews in three distinct ways. First, in describing Christ's entrance into the holiest at His ascension; secondly, when referring to His ascension viewed as the first phase of a two-part heavenly ministry; and thirdly, for the inception and continuance of His A.D. 1844 ministry. It is only in the second usage that she limits "within the veil" to the outer curtain; her purpose in doing so to clarify the prophetic interpretation of a twofold ministry of the risen Christ. Paul can ring the

changes on his use of such metaphors as 'temple' (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19f.); the same license must be allowed to E.G. White in her usage of 'veil.'

The harmonization of Heb. 6:19 and *Great Controversy*, pp. 420f., is simply that one speaks of the access into the holiest (i.e. the presence of God) made available through the death of Christ, while the other speaks of the beginning of the pronouncement of a pre-Advent judgment and the final ministry of Christ.

Our reluctance in the past to face the meaning of Heb. 6:19 is really based on the groundless fear that it contradicted the message of Adventism.

¹ W.C. Van Unnik, "Luke-Acts: A Storm Centre in Contemporary Scholarship," in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L.E. Reek and J.L. Martyn (Nashville, 1966), pp. 15ff.

² O.R.L. Crosier, "The Law of Moses," *The Day Star* (Feb. 7th, 1846), p. 41. Despite Crosier's effort and the solutions proffered in the intervening years since 1846, Norman F. Douty still uses Heb. 6:19 as an argument against Adventist Sanctuary doctrine, see Norman F. Douty, *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventist*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), p. 108.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ U. Smith, *The Sanctuary and the Twenty-Three Hundred Days of Daniel VIII*, 14 (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press, 1877) pp. 221ff. Smith's earlier work *The 2300 Days and the Sanctuary* (1854), has not been available to me. Smith virtually repeats his arguments of 1877 verbatim in *Looking Unto Jesus* (Chicago: R.H., 1898), pp. 126ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁷ The Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews was universally accepted by early Adventist writers.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁹ D.M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* (New York: Revell, 1889), p. 122. He appeals to Ex. 26:33; Lev. 16:2, 12, 13 (an error for v. 15)

¹⁰ Canright cites as further proof, Ex. 27:21; 30:6; 40:22-26; Lev. 4:6, 17; 16:15; 24:3; Num. 18:7; Matt. 27:51.

¹¹ A.F. Ballenger, *Cast Out For the Cross of Christ* (Riverside, Cal.: sometime after 1905). I have not had access to this pamphlet. Ballenger's views were kept alive through the periodical *The Gathering Call*, which was edited by himself and later by his brother E.S. Ballenger beginning in 1915 and current up till at least 1951.

¹² E.E. Andross, *A More Excellent Ministry* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press, 1912).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 53. James White had earlier explained Dan. 9:24 in a similar way *Bible Adventism* (Battle Creek, Mich.: N D.), p. 167.

¹⁴ W.W. Fletcher, *Studies on the Subject of the Sanctuary* (Cooranbong, Aust.: 1925).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 81f.

¹⁶ *Idem.* *The Reasons For My Faith* (Sydney, Aust.: 1932), p. 11.

¹⁷ W.H. Branson, *Reply to Canright* (Washington, D.C.: R.H., 1933), p. 222f.

¹⁸ C.H. Watson, *The Atoning Work of Christ* (Washington, D.C.: R.H., 1934), pp. 181-191.

¹⁹ Both writers, for example, parallel vv. 3, 5, and 7 from Numbers 18, and as well use Fenton's mistranslation of *mibeth laparoketh*, 'house of the veils' instead of 'within the veil.'

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

²¹ W.E. Howell, "The Meaning of the Veil," *The Ministry* 13 (1940), pp. 13ff.

²² Koehler-Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros, s.v. paroketh.*

²³ The phrase *paroketh hamasak* (= the veil of the screen) occurs four times (Ex. 35:12; 39:34; 40:21; Num. 4:5). The LXX does not translate Ex. 39:34; Ex. 35:12 is rendered *katapetasma* (= the veil), for Ex. 40:21 for *katakalumma tou katapetasmatos* (= the covering of the veil) and for Num. 4:5 for *katapetasma to suskiazon* (= the shading veil). In these constructs the LXX always translates *paroketh* by *katapetasma*, this is so even in Ex. 40:21 where the genitive *tou katapetasmatos* probably represents the construct *paroketh*, and thus mistranslates the Hebrew.

²⁴ C. Schneider, "*katapetasma*," *TDNT* III, p. 629.

²⁵ An entrance into the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary would hardly represent the "better" motif that the author labours to project; for this would be less than what the Aaronic priest hood annually accomplished.

²⁶ *GC*, pp. 420f. Cf. *SG I*, p. 159; *EW*, p. 251.

²⁷ *To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad*, quoted by F.D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Washington, D.C.: R.H., 1951), 1951), p. 178. Cf. *EW*, p. 55.

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- ²⁸ *IT*, p. 566; *57*, p. 113; *SD*, p. 354; *MYP*, p. 89; *COL*, p. 1; *SDABC VII*, p. 930. Often she further qualifies the phrase in these contexts by adding 'second' to 'veil,' cf. *Present Truth* (March, 1850), p. 64; *EW*, p. 72; *SG II*, p. 291. The reference to the metaphor of hope as an anchor in some of these texts makes it clear that Heb. 6:19 is quoted.
- ²⁹ It is rather a dangerous description of E.G. White's writings to call them 'a divine commentary,' that is, if this description means her exegesis makes all other efforts superfluous or invalid.
- ³⁰ *PP*, p. 357.
- ³¹ *DA*, p. 757, Cf. the different way that Heb. 9:12 is used in *GC*, p. 421.
- ³² Letter 230, 1907 (Quoted in *SDABC V*, p. 1109).
- ³³ *COL*, p. 386. The context of letter 230 and the *COL* quotation are identical, both speak of the breaking down of the barriers between Jew and Gentile. Cf. *MS 101*, 1897 (quoted in *SDABC V*, p. 1109)
- ³⁴ *YI*, June 21, 1900 (Quoted in *SDABC V*, p. 1109)
- ³⁵ See C.K. Barrett, "The Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible I*, ed. P.R. Acroyd and C.F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 390 ff.