

APPENDIX TWENTY-FOUR

The Historical Development Of The Doctrine Of The Investigative Judgment

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In our last editorial (Feb. 7) we investigated early documents dealing with the subject of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and discovered that, except for a few vague references to a breastplate of judgment that the High Priest wore, **as late as 1850 writers we consulted on the sanctuary and the 2300 days say nothing about an investigative judgment.** (Emphasis ours).

However, in one of her early statements Ellen White gives a hint of a judgment. She says, “I saw that Jesus would not leave the Most Holy Place, until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction.” — *The Present Truth*, vol. 1, no. 3 (August, 1849).

This hint was not immediately picked up by other writers. As late as 1853, in a series of articles J.N. Andrews wrote in the *Review and Herald*, he explained the cleansing of the sanctuary only as the blotting out of sin and the transfer of sins to the scapegoat. — Feb. 3, 1853.

However, the next year J.N. Loughborough connected the cleansing of the sanctuary with the declaration, in the first angel’s message, “The hour of his judgment is come” (Rev. 14:7):

“What was that work of cleansing? Is the work of cleansing the Sanctuary fitly heralded by the first angel’s message? In other words, Is it a work of judgment? For light on this subject, we shall be obliged to go to the type. Let us look at the type. See the high priest preparing himself to cleanse the Sanctuary; almost the first thing he did was to gird upon him the breast plate of judgment. For what does he put that on? It certainly looks as though he was going to do a judgment work. ...

“Now I read 1 Pet. iv. Verse 5 declares that Christ is ready to judge the quick and the dead. Verse 7. ‘But the end of all things is at hand.’ Verse 11. ‘If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.’ (Oracles — ten commandments. See Acts vii, 38.) Why speak as the oracles of God? Because the oracles are the duty brought out by the third angel’s message. Verse 17. The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?’ Verse 19. Commit the keeping of your souls to God. 1 Tim. v. 24. ‘Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment.’ We see by this what the judgment is that the first angel of Rev. xiv, refers to.” — *Ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1854.

The next year, Uriah Smith enlarged on the idea of judgment. He stated plainly, “The work of cleansing the earthly sanctuary was a work of judgment.” — *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1855. Citing Daniel 7:10 and Revelation 20:12, he called attention to the books that would be used in the judgment. Then mentioning 1 Peter 4:17 and 1 Timothy 5:24, he observed:

“This must be a judgment of the same nature and can refer to no other work than the closing up of the ministration of the heavenly Sanctuary, hence that work must embrace the examination of individual character; and we conclude that the lives of the children of God, not only those who are living, but all who have ever lived, whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, will during this time pass in final review before that

great tribunal. We see, therefore, how in this respect, the work of the type, is infinitely surpassed by that of the antitype ...

“The first angel proclaimed, Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his Judgment is come. At the end of the 2300 days, when that message closed, had that time come? If the judgment scene which takes place in the second apartment of the Sanctuary, to which this proclamation doubtless refers, did not then commence, it had not come; and the first angel with his message, was too fast. But we believe that work did there commence; that there was the time when judgment began at the house of God, and the time came when Daniel, and all the righteous in the person of their Advocate should stand in their lot.” — *Ibid.*

Finally, in an article entitled, “The Judgment,” James White introduced the phrase “investigative judgment.” He said:

“The investigative judgment of the house, or church, of God will take place before the first resurrection; so will the judgment of the wicked take place during the 1000 years of Rev. xx, and they will be raised at the close of that period.” — *Ibid.* Jan. 29, 1857.

The term *investigative* calls attention to the fact that in the judgment conducted in the Holy of Holies, the records of the lives of all those who have at one time or another entered the service of Christ will be investigated. “Every name [of those who have believed on Jesus] is mentioned, every case closely investigated.” — *The Great Controversy*, p. 483. The scrutiny will be thorough, and sentences will be rendered on the basis of the records.

The fully developed doctrine of the investigative judgment has been dealt with in various Seventh-day Adventist publications and will not be discussed in detail here. A readily available source is Ellen White’s *The Great Controversy*, which devotes a chapter to this topic (pp. 479-491).

Thus it required some 13 years **after the passing of the time in the autumn of 1844 before the subject of the investigative judgment was fully developed.** (Emphasis ours).

We now come back to the question - How is the investigative judgment related to the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary? We have already stated that the two are not identical. The cleansing that began in 1844 was the antitype of the Day of Atonement services described in Leviticus 16. The emphasis in that chapter is on the removal once each year of sins accumulated in the sanctuary throughout the year. The pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church understood the antitype to refer to the once-and-for-all removal of sins from the heavenly sanctuary at the end of the age. They also spoke of this removal of sin as a blotting out of sin.

The investigative judgment enters into this work of blotting out of sin at the point of deciding whose sins will be blotted out. Ellen White explained it this way: “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. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. But before this can be accomplished, there must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement. The cleansing of the

sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation — a work of judgment.” — *Ibid.*, pp. 421,422.

One should not, therefore, equate the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary with the investigative judgment.* One should instead say, as did Ellen White, that “the cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation — a work of judgment.”

Some have not borne this distinction in mind and have made the judgment the major significance of 1844.* The judgment is an important event, but the final atonement and the blotting out of sin were the items upon which the ritual on the Day of Atonement focused. D.F.N.

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* Emphasis ours.