

“The Typology and Theology of The Pre-Advent Judgment”

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The many comments generated by the last newsletter (No. 73) on “Ellen White: Prophet or Plagiarist?,” by William Fagal, have made me forcefully aware of the fact that Ellen White is perhaps more controversial today than she has ever been in the past. Frankly, I did not anticipate to receive so many negative comments from Adventists who express their reservations about the prophetic leadership of Ellen White.

What I find distressing is the method used by some to discredit the writings and ministry of Ellen White. Simply stated the method consists in appealing to some alleged mistakes to prove that Ellen White was in error in everything she wrote or did. Incidentally this is the method Dr. Robert Morey used this afternoon, September 6, 2001, in a debate on the Sabbath sponsored by a popular Christian Radio Station (WTRU) in Winston-Salem, NC. I was invited to discuss with him for two hours whether or not the Sabbath is still relevant for Christians today. He began by attacking the Sabbath as the creation of Ellen White—a mentally disturbed woman who was a false prophet because of her statements on “amalgamation.”

Rest assured that I responded immediately by exposing the falsity of Dr. Morey’s allegations. I told him that he was grossly mistaken on two counts. First, because the Sabbath is a divine creation and second, because a mentally disturbed woman could hardly have guided the Adventist Church in its formative years and help her become a global movement with 12 million members, who enjoy the best educational, medical, and evangelistic programs any church has to offer.

The strategy of attacking Ellen White on the basis of some alleged mistakes she made, is faulty, because it ignores the manifold contributions that Ellen White has made to the educational, medical, theological, evangelistic aspects of our Adventist message and mission. The truth of the matter is that our Adventist church would not be today a global movement with 12 million members, had it not been for the enlightened leadership Ellen White gave to the church during its formative years.

Few years ago four of us Adventist scholars had a fruitful dialogue with delegates of the Church of God Seventh day, with its headquarters in Denver, Colorado. At the end of a session on the role of Ellen White in the Adventist church, one delegate of the Church of God Seventh day said: “I wish that our Church of God had had the prophetic leadership of someone like Ellen White. We would not have experienced so many splits over the years.”

To discredit the enduring contributions Ellen White has made to the message and mission of our Adventist church, by focusing on few alleged mistakes, it is like striking out at a beautiful forest because few of its trees are ugly. It is unfortunate that some fail to look at the larger picture of the contributions of Ellen White, because they find fault with some of her statements. For example, several subscribers to our newsletter wrote that they cannot accept Ellen White because of her statements about “amalgamation.”

Whether or not Ellen White’s statements about the amalgamation between humans and animals, are correct or incorrect, it is not for me to decide. No one knows what happened before the Flood. All what Scripture tells is that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5).

In my view the issue is not whether or not Ellen White's statements about amalgamation or about anything else are accurate, but whether such isolated statements can be legitimately used to discredit her all her writings and contributions to the Adventist church. This method reminds me of those who ask to have their addresses immediately removed from the ENDTIME ISSUES subscription list, when I express a view which is unacceptable to them. The least that can be said about these people is that they are shortsighted. They automatically reject anything or anyone who disagrees with them in a particular area.

Do Inspired Writers Make Mistakes?

The method used to discredit Ellen White has been repeatedly used by critics to discredit the Bible. They point to the alleged mistakes and contradictions found in the Bible. This strategy is based on the popular assumption that people inspired by God never made a mistake, because they were constantly supervised by the Holy Spirit in everything they said or wrote. This popular assumption is faulty because it ignores the mysterious blending of the human and divine elements present in inspired writers. A careful reading of Scripture confronts us with the presence of the human element.

To illustrate this point, let us consider Paul's counsel found in 1 Corinthians 7:8: "To the unmarried and the widow I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do." There is no question that Paul's terse advice contradicts God's explicit statement: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen 2:18). If God Himself stated at creation that living alone without a marital partner "is not good," what business did Paul have to encourage people to remain single like himself? Would it not have been wiser for Paul to keep his personal opinion to himself?

Undoubtedly Paul did not foresee the problems his personal advice would cause during the course of Christian history. Many have appealed to Paul's personal opinion found in the Bible, to exalt celibacy as a superior life calling than that of a married life. One of the many questions I plan to ask Paul on resurrection day, is this: "Paul, why didn't you keep your personal opinion about remaining single to yourself? Didn't you realize how many people would appeal to your personal advice in order to promote priestly celibacy—a practice that runs contrary to God's original design for human beings? How do you reconcile your advice to remain single with your own injunction that a church leader should be the husband of one wife? (1 Tim 3:2)" I look forward to hear how Paul will answer these and other important questions raised by his writings.

Frankly, I wish that the Holy Spirit had restrained Paul from expressing his personal views and also guided him to write with greater clarity on such important issues as the relationship between law and grace. Countless scholars have tried to reconcile the apparent contradictions between Paul's negation of the law (Rom 3:28) on one hand and affirmation of the law (1 Cor 7:19) on the other hand. Much of the existing confusion could have been avoided if the Holy Spirit had controlled Paul's mind and literary style, to ensure that the apostle would define relationship between law and grace with clarity and simplicity for the lay person to understand.

It is evident that this is not the way God chooses to operate. He does not suppress the individual freedom, even when writing about eternal truths. What this means is that we do not reject Paul's writings and discredit his ministry because some of the things he wrote are unacceptable. We must recognize the fact that Paul had the right to express his own opinions and that God did not deem it necessary to prevent him from doing so. His contributions to the mission and message of the Christian church are not diminished by the few things we may find unacceptable or contradictory.

The Need for a Balanced Interpretation of Ellen White

The same principle applies to the writings of Ellen White. She had the right to express her own views, especially when dialoguing or writing to friends. The problem arises when we assume that all the 100,000 plus pages she wrote, whether as personal

letters or formal writings, are the product of divine supervision and consequently normative for defining beliefs and practices.

During the over twenty years of his ministry, Paul must have written hundreds of letters to the churches he established. Of them only 13 have been preserved and have become part of the New Testament. By contrast, in the case of Ellen White, practically everything she ever wrote, whether private letters to friends or formal writings for the church, have been preserved. In fact all her writings are readily available on a CD-ROM and are used without any consideration to the time and circumstances in which they were written.

Our church failure to develop a balanced and realistic use and application of Ellen White writings, could be a reason for a growing resentment toward her writings and influence. We are facing today a paradoxical situation. Some Adventists, especially in some European countries, do not want to hear any reference to Ellen White's writings in sermons or articles. By contrast, other Adventists have gone to the other extreme and have "canonized" Ellen White into a "saint" like the Catholic have done with Mary. They appeal to any statement Ellen White ever made, even in her private correspondence, to promote their own agenda.

The solution to this divisive situation is the development of a balanced understanding and use of Ellen White's writings. The same applies to the Bible. This requires the use of common sense. Unfortunately, common sense is becoming increasingly uncommon. Thus, we need to pray daily for the Holy Spirit to grant us a larger measure of common sense to rightly divide the words of truth. It is my firm conviction that Ellen White still speaks to our spiritual needs today. To discredit her writings and prophetic leadership, can only leave us poorer, both as individuals and as a church. On the other hand, a balanced use of her writings can enrich our understanding and experience of biblical truths.

AN UPDATE ON THE TWO CD-ROM PRODUCTION

The response to the offer of my PowerPoint seminars and my 16 books in two CD-ROMs, has surpassed my fondest expectations. This has encouraged me to include in the first CD-ROM not only my books, but also all the 70 plus ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTERS and a collection of 30 articles/sermons produced during the past 30 years of biblical research

During the past month I have worked every waking moment to convert all my published material (about 5000 pages) into ADOBE PDF format. This tedious project was completed few days ago and now all the files are now in the hands an Adventist, who is a computer expert, designing programs for Apple. He has reassured me that within the next two weeks he will complete the task of linking all the files to an ACROBAT search engine. This will make it possible for anyone with a PC or Apple computer to locate immediately what I wrote on any given topic. By typing in the name of a topic or of a text, you will have at your finger tips the findings of my research.

The second CD-ROM contains all my popular PowerPoint seminars presentations on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Lifestyle. Each lecture is illustrated with about 100 colorful slides. The text explaining each slide comes with the PowerPoint program itself and can be printed separately. This makes it possible for anyone to use and modify my lectures. I have spent over 1000 hours on this project which I will endeavor to complete within the next two weeks.

The expected delivery date of the two CD-ROM is by the end of this month, September 2001. The pre-publication price for each CD-ROM is only \$50.00 (\$100.00 for both of them) instead of the regular price of \$70.00 each. The two CD-ROM are compatible with PC and APPLE computers. If you choose to pay by credit card, the charge will not be processed until the CD-ROMs are ready for mailing. You can order the two CD-ROMs by calling us at (616) 471-2915 or by mailing your check to: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103. Please note that the special offer expires on September 30, 2001.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A POWERFUL POWERBOOK COMPUTER?

If you are looking for a powerful PowerBook computer at a bargain price, you might be interested in the offer of my fast TITANIUM G4 400 PowerBook which I bought three months ago. I am very excited about the marvellous performance of this new Apple computer which has a huge 15.2" screen and a DVD-ROM drive. The only problem is that the hard drive has only 10 GB of memory which is already filled up with all my 16 books, PowerPoint lectures, and over 10,000 evangelistic art pictures. I should have spent \$1000.00 more and purchase the Apple TITANIUM G4 500 which has a 20 GB hard drive. If I can sell the G4 400 I will buy immediately the G4 500 with twice as much storage capacity in the hard drive.

The special offer on my TITANIUM G4 400 is only \$2000.00, instead of the \$2800.00 which I paid for it three months ago. The PowerBook comes with an additional 256 MB RAM memory upgrade, and an external ZIP drive. If interested, you can have the computer loaded with all my 16 books, articles, PowerPoint seminars, and a variety of programs, all for only \$2000.00. I have used the computer a dozen of times on weekends to present my PowerPoint seminars. At home I have two other desk top computers. The PowerBook is practically new and still under warrantee. If interested, feel free to call me at (616) 471-2915. I will gladly mail it to you overnight express in the original box.

GROWING INTEREST FOR THE SABBATH

The interest for the Sabbath appears to be constantly growing. This afternoon, Wednesday, September 6, I was invited by a popular Christian Radio station (WTRU) in Winston-Salem, NC, to debate the Sabbath/Sunday question with Dr. Robert Morey, author of the book, *Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath*. We had an animated discussion during the two-hours talk show. The program is called "Truth Talk Live" and is heard in neighboring states. In fact, some of the callers lived outside Carolina.

Dr. Morey argued that the Sabbath is part of the Old Covenant given to the Jews and terminated by Christ. I emphatically rejected this senseless dispensational view, using three arguments. First, the Sabbath is part of the creation seven days week which was established by God for mankind, not for the Jews. The fact that we still use the seven days week shows that mankind at large accepts the sabbatical structure of time established by God at creation. Second, by resting, blessing, and hallowing the seventh day, God set apart this day for the benefit of mankind. Third, Jesus reiterated that the Sabbath was made for mankind (Mark 2:27), not just for the Jews. Lastly, Hebrews 4:9 explicitly states that *sabbatismos*, which is the technical term for seventh-day Sabbathkeeping (as recognized even by the latest scholarly symposium *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day*), "remains for the people of God."

Mr. Stew Epperson, the host of the TRUTH TALK LIVE show, called me after the program to tell me how much he appreciated my passionate comments. He asked me to mail him immediately all my books because he want me to address in future talk shows some of the Christian lifestyle topics examined in my books. I look forward to present our timely message on this radio station which reaches beyond Carolina into neighboring states.

The other day I received a call from Prof Michael K. Lake, Ph. D., who teaches at the Biblical Life College and Seminary in Marshfield, Missouri. He told me that he had been reading with great interest my three books on the Sabbath he had ordered few weeks ago. I asked him if he was a sabbatarian. He replied: "Not yet, but I am in the process of becoming one. Your research has convinced me of the need to share the Sabbath with the 4000 students attending our university from across the USA. I plan to introduce a new class on the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, which will include the study of the Sabbath." He asked me for a special discount on a large quantity order that his secretary will place sometimes in the next few days. It is encouraging to see that there are educators and church leaders who feel convicted by the Holy Spirit to help people discover the meaning and blessings of the Sabbath for today.

Marion Inman, an Adventist builder from Cicero, Indiana, mailed me a copy of the *Indianapolis Star*, of Saturday, August 25. The Section B of the paper on CITY AND STATE, carries an article entitled "They Honor the True Sabbath." The article reports that two local bishops, R. J. Anthony and Herman H. Davis, have moved their church services from Sunday to Saturday, loosing only few members. Apparently some Adventist books mentioned in the article helped these church leaders to accept the Sabbath and teach it to their respective congregations. At the request of Brother Inman, I have mailed a supply of my Sabbath books to both bishops. I will update on future developments.

Just as I was getting ready to email you this newsletter, I received a call from Pastor Ronald Krout, a 42 years old minister of the of the Towering Pine Community Church, in Cameron, Wisconsin. He called me to order some of my books. I asked him if he was a sabbatarian minister. He replied: "Not yet, but I am becoming one. Your books have been of great help to me. I am working to help my congregation to accept the Sabbath."

Pastor Ron, as he likes to be called, touched my heart when he told me about his struggle to give up long held beliefs. The leaders of his former denomination have strongly denounced his abandonment of the church doctrines. During the past five years he has worked single handed to build a new congregation which he hopes will soon become Sabbatarian and move their services from Sunday to Saturday. I was so deeply moved by Pastor Ron's testimony, that I decided to mail him free of charge my video Sabbath lectures, in addition to the set of 16 books which he paid for.

Let us pray for Pastor Ron and his congregation. If you want to email him a note of encouragement, his address is: krautfam@shibardun.net. Be sure to be nice to him. He has subscribed to this newsletter and will receive this issue.

This brief report on the growing interest for the Sabbath is of encouragement at a time when some of Adventist pastors and church members are abandoning the Sabbath. Even this week I received reports of some Adventist members who are rejecting the Sabbath and embracing the so-called New Covenant theology. Some of them have sent me documents for me to examine. It is evident that while the Evil One attempts to undermine God's Holy Day, the Spirit of the Lord is bringing conviction about the Sabbath to the heart of sincere church leaders.

SPECIAL WEBSITE WITH EXCELLENT ADVENTIST ART IMAGES

If you are looking for a website that offers excellent evangelistic art resources, go to: <http://www.maranathamedia.com.au/> It is the website of Adrian Ebens, a gifted Australian Pastor whom I met personally at the Waitara SDA Church in Sydney. He is doing a fantastic job in collecting art work for PowerPoint presentations. If you want to contact him directly, his email address is: Adrian Ebens <aebens@bigpond.com>

THANK YOU FOR INVITING YOUR FRIENDS TO SUBSCRIBE

Every week I receive a average of 100 new subscription from people who received an ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER from a friend. Thank you for sharing these Bible studies with your friends. Just let them know that all what they need to do to subscribe is to email me a request at: <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net> As a result of your promotional endeavors over 13,000 people are already benefiting from these Bible studies.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the seminars for the months of September and October 2001. Every Sabbath it is a great privilege for me to meet many subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminar. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area sometimes during 2002. All the weekends for 2001 are now taken. Each of the three seminars on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Lifestyle are now presented with PowerPoint slides which give added realism to our message. If you have attended one of my seminars in the past, you will find the new PowerPoint version to be substantially improved, with hundreds of fine pictures and graphics.

AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 1: LOS ANGELES, CA: TEMPLE CITY SDA CHURCH

Location: 9664 Broadway, Temple city, CA 91780

For information call Pastor Ben Del Pozo at (626) 286-5437 or (626) 292-2249

SEPTEMBER 7-8: MIAMI, FLORIDA: LAUDERHILL SDA CHURCH

Location: 4100 NW 11th Court, Lauderhill, Florida 3313

For information call Pastor Leroy Liburd at (954) 485-2529 or (954) 730-7016

SEPTEMBER 14-15: LEXINGTON, SC: COLUMBIA-FIRST SDA CHURCH

Location: 243 Riverchase Way, Lexington, South Carolina 29072

For information call Pastor Tony Cirigliano at (803) 791-4600 or (803) 791-1135

SEPTEMBER 21-22: DENVER, CO: ARVADA SDA CHURCH

Location: 7090 West 64th Avenue, Arvada, CO 80003

For information call Pastor Gordon Anic at (303) 464-9749

SEPTEMBER 28-29: NEAR LOMA LINDA, CA: UPLAND INDONESIAN SDA CHURCH

Location: 11100 Cedar Avenue, Bloomington, California

For information call Pastor Fred Macarewa at (909) 423-0406 or (909) 874-7697

OCTOBER 5-6-7: FRANKFURT, GERMANY : DARMSTADT SDA CHURCH

Location: Advent Gemeinde Darmstadt-Eberstadt, Heidelberger Land Strasse 191

For information call Pastor Detlef Roeske at 0049-6151-183560 or email him at detlef_oeske@roehm.com. You can also call the local elder, Brother Lothar Mueller. at: 06151-144390

OCTOBER 12-13: ATLANTA, GA: CONYERS SDA CHURCH

Location: Conyers SDA Church, Conyers, Georgia

For information contact Pastor Michael Leno. Telephone number will be provided in the next newsletter

OCTOBER 18-20: AMES AND NEVADA, IOWA

Location: October 18 and 19: Iowa State University, in Ames, Iowa.

For information call Prof Graeme Quick at (515) 294-1320

October 20: Nevada SDA Church located at 224 South Sixth Street, Nevada, IA 50201.

For information call Pastor David Lincoln at (515) 382-4134

OCTOBER 26-27: SANDY SDA CHURCH, OREGON

Location: 17150 University Avenue, Sandy, OR 97055

For information call Pastor Greg Middlestetter at (503) 668-6144

“THE TYPOLOGY AND THEOLOGY OF THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT”

**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University**

The choice of this topic “The Typology and Theology of the Pre-Advent Judgment,” was influenced by our current Sabbath School lessons for August 31 and September 7, 2001. Both lessons deal with the investigative judgment in the light of the typology of the Day of Atonement. This is a distinctive Adventist belief that has come under considerable attack in recent years.

Some Adventist are embarrassed by the doctrine of the investigative judgment. At a recent church fellowship dinner, a medical doctor who was sitting next to me asked me the question: “When do you think our Adventist church will give up the doctrine of the investigative judgment? My two sons, both medical doctors, have left the church because they find this doctrine unacceptable.” I replied: “I sincerely hope that our Adventist church will never give up this doctrine, because it is a fundamental biblical teaching that enhances our appreciation of God’s justice.”

Our Sabbath School lessons offer very few theological reflections on the relevance of the evaluative phase of the final judgment for our Christian life today. I trust that this newsletter will find this void. A number of subscribers have asked me if I have addressed this subject in my books. The answer is yes. I have examined this topic in three of my books: *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness, Resurrection or Immortality?* and *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History: Volume 2 -The Fall Festivals*. In this newsletter I am excerpting few thoughts especially from the last book on *The Fall Festivals*.

Contributions of My Research

The contributions of my research to the Adventist understanding of the final judgment, both in its evaluative and executive phases, lies in two major areas. The first is on the typology of the Pre-Advent judgment. The second is on the theological significance of the Pre-Advent judgment for our Christian life today.

Regarding the typology of the Pre-Advent judgment, I am proposing to broaden the typological basis of this doctrine by including the Feast of Trumpets as well. Let me explain what I mean. Our traditional Adventist understanding of the Pre-Advent judgment is largely based on our interpretation of the ritual of the Day of Atonement. The annual entrance of the High Priest into the Most Holy Place to cleanse the sanctuary by removing the sins of the people in a permanent way, has been understood as the beginning of the investigative phase of the final judgment which began in the heavenly sanctuary in 1844.

Personally I have no problems with the notion of the Pre-Advent evaluative phase of the final judgment. In fact, I have shown in my research that this concept can be clearly substantiated by the teachings of Jesus, Paul, Hebrews, Daniel, and Revelation. Read *Fall Festivals* pp. 110-117. Paul, for example, clearly places the judgment of the “living and the dead” before Christ’s appearing and the establishment of His Kingdom (2 Tim 4:1-2).

He also describes the Second Advent as the time “when God’s righteous judgment will be *revealed*” (Rom 2:5). This revelation of “God’s righteous judgment” presupposes some prior process of investigation that determines who is to receive the gift of eternal life and who “the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thess 1:8-9).

The problem that I see, is not the notion of a Pre-Advent judgment, which I find it to be an underlying biblical assumption, but its typological basis. Our pioneers developed the doctrine of the investigative judgment primarily from the typology of the Day of Atonement. My study of the Feast of Trumpets in biblical and extra-biblical history, suggests that the judgment process began, not on the Day of Atonement, but ten days

earlier with the Feast of Trumpets, when the *shophar* was blown throughout the land to announce the beginning of the judgment in heaven. The judgment process lasted 10 days and terminated on the Day of Atonement. I will explain these concepts more fully below.

For the sake of brevity and clarity I will briefly summarize the findings of my research, referring interested readers to the fuller treatment found especially to *The Fall Festivals*.

The Great Controversy Concept. The Adventist understanding of the final judgment is largely derived from the “Great Controversy” concept. This concept embraces the origin, development, and final resolution of the conflict between good and evil. A most dramatic description of the origin of this conflict is found in the well-known imagery of Revelation 12, which speaks of a war that “arose in heaven” in which Satan and his angels “were defeated” and expelled (vv. 7-9). This conflict which began in heaven was extended on this earth (vv. 13-17), where it will continue until Satan is imprisoned for “a thousand years” (Rev 20:1-3). At the end of this period Satan will be ultimately destroyed in “the lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev 20:7-10).

The final judgment is seen in Adventist theology as a vital, climactic aspect of the divine resolution of this “Great Controversy” which extends beyond the human world to include heavenly beings (Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:15; Rom 8:38). Through the final judgment God accomplishes at least two important objectives. On the one hand, God reveals and executes His “righteous judgment” (Rom 2:5-6), which will terminate the human and the heavenly rebellion and usher in His everlasting kingdom. On the other hand, through the final judgment God provides an opportunity to His moral creatures to understand and accept the justice of His giving eternal life to some and everlasting death to others (Rev 15:3, 4).

Evaluative and Executive Phases. The eternal security of a moral universe is largely determined by the extent to which its rational created beings understand and accept the justice of God’s judgments. This trustful acceptance of the rightness of God’s judgments could hardly be gained from a final judgment consisting exclusively of a unilateral and inscrutable executive act of Christ, who at His Advent renders to each person reward or retribution according to his words.

Thus, Seventh-day Adventists believe that God’s final judgment encompasses both an *evaluative* and an *executive* phase. The latter is carried out by Christ at His Return when He will grant the gift of eternal life to living and resurrected believers and the punishment of death to the living wicked (2 Thess 1:7-10; Matt 25:31-32; Rom 2:5-7).

The former—the *evaluative phase*—takes place before and after the Second Advent. An important purpose of this investigative process is to enable heavenly and human beings fully to understand and accept the rightness of God’s final judgment. This Adventist understanding of the final judgment as consisting of both an evaluative and an executive phase preserves the singularity, unity, and finality which the Scripture attributes to this event.

This understanding provides also a valid criterion for harmonizing those passages which describe the final judgment as an *executive act*, with those which portray it as an *investigative process* involving heavenly or human beings. Ultimately, the “wholistic” Adventist understanding of the final judgment enhances our appreciation of God’s justice and it strengthens our expectation of the Second Advent.

THE FEAST OF THE TRUMPETS AND THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT

A study of the Feast of the Trumpets in ancient Israel enhances our understanding of the Pre-Advent judgment. The reason is that the Feast of Trumpets in Old Testament times was understood and experienced as the inauguration of a judgment process that culminated on the Day of Atonement with the final disposition of all the sins committed during the previous year.

The Feast of Trumpets in the Old Testament

The three Fall Feasts of ancient Israel coincided with the end of the harvest season and were ushered in by the Feast of the Trumpets which fell on the first day of the seventh month. After the return from the Babylonian exile, the name *Rosh Hashanah*, which means “New Year” (literally, “head of the year”), was attached to the feast. Within the same seventh month, the last two important feasts were observed, namely, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) on the tenth day and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) from the fifteenth to the twenty first day. These three Fall Feasts typify the process of the consummation of redemption: judgment, cleansing, and celebration of a new beginning.

The Feast of Trumpets reflects God’s desire to summon His people to repentance so that He can vindicate them on the day of His judgment. The name of the feast is derived from the blowing of the trumpets (shofar) which was its distinguishing characteristic. The massive blowing of the shofar on the first day of the seventh month was understood by the Jews as the beginning of their trial before the heavenly court where books would be opened and the destiny of each individual would be decided. The trial lasted ten days until the Day of Atonement (*Yom kippur*) when God would dispose of their sins in a permanent way.

The blowing of the shofar during the Ten Days of Penitence served not only to call upon the Jews to repent but also to reassure them that God would remember and vindicate them on the day of judgment. The ten days preceding the Day of Atonement were not an abstract theological truth, but an existential reality lived out with real trumpet-calls to repentance, trusting in God’s mercy to vindicate them. The Jews developed some interesting customs and ceremonies to help them live out their belief that God would judge them with mercy during the ten days preceding the Day of Atonement. You can read about these customs in the *Fall Feasts* pp. 69-77.

The Feast of Trumpets in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the Feast of Trumpets is not explicitly mentioned. The themes of the feast, however, are frequently found in the book of Revelation. The same holds true for the Fall Feasts of Atonement and Tabernacles, both of which are clearly alluded to in Revelation. The reason the imagery of the Fall Feasts is present especially in Revelation is to be found in the fact that these feasts typify the consummation of redemption which is the focus of the book. Furthermore, since the entire book of Revelation has a comprehensive sanctuary setting with a rich sanctuary festival typology, one would expect to find in it more allusions to the feasts than in other books of the New Testament.

The themes of the Feast of Trumpets are evident in the seven trumpets of Revelation which serve to announce God’s final judgment like the blowing of the shofar during the feast in Old Testament times. My study suggests that the blowing of the seven trumpets in Revelation corresponds to the blowing of trumpets at the seven New Moon festivals in the Old Testament. Each new moon trumpet blowing was understood as a day of judgment in miniature, which warned people to prepare for the final judgment ushered in by the Feast of Trumpets. Correspondingly, the blowing of the first six trumpets in Revelation warns people to prepare for the final judgment inaugurated by the blowing of the seventh trumpet.

Support for this interpretation is provided by the warning function of the first six trumpets (Rev 9:20-21) and by the explicit announcement of the final judgment at the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:18). The seventh trumpet is unique because it announces the judgment that transpires in heaven: "The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth" (Rev 11:15, 18).

It is noteworthy that the announcement of the judgment is followed by the opening of the most Holy Place of the heavenly temple where the ark of the covenant is seen (Rev 11:19). This is a clear allusion to the Day of Atonement which finds its antitypical fulfillment in the coming of Christ as indicated by the manifestation of the cosmic signs of the End. "There were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail" (Rev 11:19; cf. Rev 16:18; 6:12-14). The association of the cosmic signs of the End with the ritual of the Day of Atonement, suggests that Christ's coming represents the antitypical fulfillment of the disposition of sin typified by the Day of Atonement.

The thematic development of the seven trumpets reveals a movement from the warning judgment messages on this earth in conjunction with the blowing of the first six trumpets, to the announcement of God's enthronement and the inauguration of His heavenly judgment at the blowing of the seventh trumpet. The same movement can be seen in the blowing of the trumpets during the seven new moons of the Hebrew religious calendar. During the new moons of the first six months, the trumpets were blown to warn the people about the forthcoming judgment, but on the new moon of the seventh month the trumpets were blown to announce the inauguration of the heavenly judgment. These thematic similarities suggest that the seven trumpets represent the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets.

The Feast of Trumpets in the Old and New Testaments reveals that God is not in the business to punish but to save. He uses attention-catching methods to warn and lead His people to repentance before executing His judgments. In the Old Testament, God summoned His people by means of the annual trumpets blasting to repent and amend their lives in view of the judgment going on in heaven. In the New Testament, God sounds the same clarion call to mankind by the flying angel of Revelation who proclaims with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:7).

Christians today, like God's people in ancient times, need to hear the annual trumpet-call to stand trial before God and seek for His cleansing grace. After all, Christians, too, need to be reminded periodically that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10). No significant attempt has been made to translate such a belief in some religious practices.

As Adventists we believe, somewhat like the Jews, in a heavenly judgment process that precedes the Second Advent. We call it "the Pre-Advent Judgment." But to the average Adventist, the pre-Advent judgment is primarily something that goes on in heaven. No significant attempt is made to integrate this belief in the church calendar or in the daily life of our members. The major thing pastors or evangelists may do about "the Judgment Message" is to proclaim that "the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:7). Even this proclamation is seldom heard today, because it is not popular.

Our Adventist church calendar does not include an annual summon to repent and amend our lives in view of the judgment going on in heaven. The result is that fewer and fewer Adventists know what the pre-Advent judgment is all about. Recently, in my college Bible class of 45 college students, I was surprised to find out that only three of them had heard about the pre-Advent judgment, though this doctrine is a fundamental belief of our Seventh-day Adventist Church. This problem could be largely resolved in our Adventist church were to develop a church calendar which would include a special "Judgment Emphasis Sabbath," that would encourage believers to examine their lives and repent of any known sin, in view of the judgment process going on in heaven.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AND THE FINAL JUDGMENT

The Day of Atonement in the Old Testament

The Day of Atonement was the grand climax of the religious year in ancient Israel. The rites performed on that day concluded the atoning process of the sins of the Israelites by removing them permanently from the sanctuary. The record of forgiven sins was kept in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement because such sins were to be reviewed by the heavenly court during the final judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets. The Day of Atonement was the culmination of the judgment process in which God executed His judgment by giving life to those who had confessed their sins and availed themselves of the divine provision for their atonement. It was also a day of death for impenitent sinners who rejected God's provision for the cleansing of their sins.

The sacrificial rites of the Day of Atonement provided *total* cleansing from all the sins of God's people. The totality of the cleansing is emphasized several times in Leviticus 16 by the expression "all your sins" (Lev 16:16, 30, 34). In contrast to the sacrificial rites of the bull and Lord's goat, the rite of the scapegoat was non-sacrificial. Its function was to dispose of the sins of God's people in a desert region where there is no life.

The emphasis of the Day of Atonement on judgment and cleansing, sin and atonement, fasting and prayer was designed to drive home important lessons to the Israelites. It showed them the seriousness of sin and the divine provision for its eradication through confession, sacrifice, recording, judgment, and final disposition. It taught the Israelites that before their sins could be cleansed and permanently eliminated on the Day of Atonement, they had to be repented of, forsaken, and judged by the heavenly court.

The Day of Atonement in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the Day of Atonement is alluded to several times, especially in the books of Hebrews and Revelation. Its antitypical fulfillment is associated especially with the cleansing and removal of sin by Christ at His Second Coming. Hebrews recognizes that the work of cleansing and removing sins typified by the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement has a *past*, a *present*, and a *future* aspect. In the *past*, Christ "*has appeared* once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:26). In the *present* ("now"), Christ "*appears* in the presence of God on our behalf" (9:24). In the *future*, Christ "*will appear* a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (9:28). The last of these is accomplished by Christ at His Second Advent when He will appear, like the High Priest at the close of the Day of Atonement, not to atone for sins but to save the believers and punish the unbelievers.

The past, the present, and the future ministries of Christ are in Hebrews ideologically connected because they are all dependent upon the same "once for all" sacrifice on the Cross. It is the same atoning sacrifice that enables Christ to fulfill the two phases of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary: intercession and judgment.

In Revelation, the vision of the Day of Atonement (Rev 11:19) occurs immediately after the announcement of the judgment (Rev 11:18), with the opening of the most Holy Place of the heavenly temple where the ark of the covenant is seen. "Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant was seen within the temple" (Rev 11:19). This is the first and clearest allusion to the Day of Atonement because only on that day the door to the Most Holy Place was open and the High Priest could see "the ark of the covenant" while he officiated in front of it.

The opening of the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple on the Day of Atonement is accompanied by the manifestation of the cosmic signs of the Second Advent. "There were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail" (Rev 11:19; cf. Rev 16:18; 6:12-14). The association of the cosmic signs of the Second Advent with the ritual of the Day of Atonement suggests that Christ's coming is seen as the antitypical fulfillment of the disposition of sin typified by the Day of Atonement. The sequential order in Revelation, namely, announcement of the judgment, opening of the Most Holy Place, and the Second Advent, corresponds to the progression from the typology of the Feast of Trumpets to that of the Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement in the Old and New Testaments embodies the Good News of God's provision for the cleansing of sins and restoration to fellowship with Him through Christ's atoning sacrifice. At a time when many are experiencing the crushing isolation of sin, the Day of Atonement has a message of hope. It reassures Christians that Christ will soon appear the second time, like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, to punish unbelievers, to bind Satan, to cleanse believers and restore them to an harmonious relationship with Him. Such a hope gives us reasons to encourage "one another, and all the more as . . . [we] see the Day drawing near" (Heb 10:25).

THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Our study of the pre-Advent phase of the final judgment typified especially by the Feast of Trumpets raises some important questions. What does this doctrine tell us about God's nature, His relationship to the universe, the outcome of the conflict between good and evil, the value of human life and actions, our attitude toward God, and our view of ourselves? We attempt to answer such questions by considering the major theological implications of the doctrine of the final judgment, both in its pre-Advent and Advent phases.

A Transcendent Moral Order. The final judgment points first of all to the existence of a transcendent moral order in the universe. It tells us that there is a supreme Moral Arbiter in this universe who is working out His eternal purposes. This message has tremendous significance in our time when disorder, hate, immorality, wars, and senseless destruction of human life and property prevail. The message of the judgment reassures us that the eternal destiny of each individual and of the world as a whole is not in the hands of some mad, blind forces, but in the hands of our Almighty God. "He's got the whole world in His hands." The scroll of human destiny rests safely in the hands of the Lamb (Rev 5:7).

The pre-Advent judgment conducted around God's throne, in the presence of myriads of beings and on the basis of a perfect record of each individual, tells us that there is a moral order governing this universe, an order to which each individual is ultimately accountable. Those who think they have fooled everybody and every system will be surprised to discover that they never fooled God. The judgment will disclose all their deeds and punish them accordingly.

The pre-Advent judgment constantly reminds us that we cannot flaunt God's moral principles with impunity because "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10). This reality makes all our actions, decisions, and choices significant because they have both immediate and ultimate consequences.

Substance to Our Faith. The final judgment gives substance to our faith by reminding us that our relationship to God, the Moral Ruler of the Universe, is based not merely on the profession but on the practice of our faith. At the final judgment, Christ will invite into His kingdom "not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' . . . but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 7:21).

"Works" are the criteria of the final judgment because they substantiate faith. Salvation is a divine gift that brings upon us a divine claim "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13).

What all of this means is that our day-by-day round of thoughts, words, deeds, and attitudes counts for eternity. When the records are examined in the pre-Advent judgment, our daily living will reveal what kind of persons we have been. Have we lived self-centered lives ignoring God's moral principles or God-centered lives reflecting His moral values?

Just as the Jews in Old Testament times, so mankind today needs to hear the trumpet call to stand trial before God during the antitypical Feast of Trumpets. This has never been a popular message. When governor Felix invited Paul to speak to him, the Apostle used the opportunity to talk not about the social unrest in Palestine or the political situation in the Empire but "about justice and self-control and future judgment" (Acts 24:25).

The three are interrelated because it is the final judgment that reveals if a person has lived justly and temperately. "Felix was alarmed" by the thought of a future judgment, but he chose to ignore it. Many today, like Felix, would rather not hear about the trumpet call of the final judgment, preferring instead to live under the false assumption that they will never have to give account for their immoral behavior.

A Revelation of Individual Worth. The mention of "books" where our thoughts, attitudes, and actions are recorded and examined before the heavenly court indicates that God places great value on each individual person. In a society where people are often regarded as cogs in a machine or numbers in a computer, it is reassuring to know that God places a transcendent significance on our personal identity. He has written the name of each believer "before the foundation of the world in the book of life" (Rev 13:8).

The importance which God attaches to each person extends to single decisions and actions. The judgment teaches us that nothing we do is worthless or inconsequential in the sight of God. Even the "careless word" (Matt 12:36) is considered in the pre-Advent judgment. The reason is that careless, thoughtless talk is often a most accurate reflection of our inner self. Moreover, "idle talk" may sometimes have even a greater impact on others than "serious talk." Thus, every thought, word, and action is potentially determinative of our destiny.

The far-reaching inclusiveness of the final judgment is awesome. Yet at the same time, the thought that all we do, think, and say matters in God's sight makes our life worth living. The fact that even the most insignificant action, such as the giving of a cup of cold water (Matt 10:42; 25:35-40), will not go unnoticed gives a sense of dignity, of importance, to all that we do, think, and say.

Sometimes it seems that even our highest motives and best efforts are misunderstood. The judgment gives us courage to face human misunderstanding and criticism, with the reassurance that God understands and takes notice of all our overt and covert actions. Nothing is ignored in the sight of God and everything will receive due consideration in the final judgment.

A Vindication of God's Justice and Mercy. Why does the Bible speak of a judgment process that precedes and that follows the coming of Christ? Does God need a judicial process to gather information necessary to execute a just universal judgment? Obviously not. After all, God is the Author of the books which are used in His final judgment. The heavenly records represent not the acquisition on the part of God of new knowledge, but the revelation of old knowledge to moral intelligences.

One of the most telling evidences that God is not seeking new information through an investigative judgment is the post-Advent judgment of the unsaved. This judgment is designed to enable redeemed humanity to understand more fully God's justice in not saving the unrighteous. The very fact that the lost have no part in the first resurrection of believers (Rev 20:5) indicates that God has already decided their destiny.

Yet, before their final destruction at the end of the millennium, God offers redeemed humanity the opportunity to examine the record of their lives to understand the justice of His judgment. It is noteworthy that both before rewarding believers with eternal salvation and before punishing unbelievers with eternal destruction, God invites His moral creatures to evaluate the basis of His judgment.

God Is Not on Trial. In a sense, the ones who are "on trial" in the investigative phases of the final judgment are not the saved or the unsaved, but God Himself. It is God's justice and mercy manifested in His decision to save some and condemn others that is being judged by moral intelligences. But why should God submit His judgments to the scrutiny of His created beings? Obviously, God is not morally obligated to go "on trial" before the universe. First, He has no moral debt toward His creatures. He has no confession to make as to possible defects in the making of the universe or of human

beings. Nor has God any admission to make as to possible unfairness in His administration of the universe.

Second, God has no external obligation because He is the Sovereign Ruler who has freely created and redeemed His creatures. As He has freely created the universe, so He could freely dissolve it, starting all over again, without being in default toward anyone. Third, even if heavenly or human beings should find some fault in God's creation or administration—an absurd hypothesis, they could not dethrone God and enthrone another God in His place.

Whether the universe accepts or rejects the justice of God's government and judgments, does not affect His Sovereignty. God would still be the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. What is in jeopardy is not the eternal security of God but that of moral beings in the universe. Thus, fundamentally, the one who is on trial is not God, but the moral universe.

God Is on Trial. Yet there is a sense in which God is "on trial" before His moral universe. For several reasons, God is willing and expected to give an account of His creative, redemptive, and punitive activities. First, God has chosen to operate on the principle of freedom of choice. God has granted His moral creatures the freedom to choose between His love and justice and Satan's hostility and injustice. Not only has God granted this freedom of choice, but He also invites His moral beings to exercise this freedom by examining His moral principles and His judicial actions.

Second, God has chosen to operate on the principle of love and not of coercion. It was love that motivated God to create a universe of free moral beings who could be the recipients of His love and who could in perfect freedom reciprocate His love. It was love that motivated God to redeem mankind by entering into the limitations, suffering, and death of human flesh in order to provide moral beings with the greatest incentive to choose His love rather than Satan's hostility. It is love that motivates God to submit the records of His judgments to the scrutiny of the moral universe so that His love and justice may be fully understood and accepted.

Love can render this universe eternally secure only if it becomes grounded on unquestionable *trust*. An attitude of trust and loyalty cannot be demanded, it must be freely given. It is only when we have had occasion to see the integrity, fairness, and trustworthiness of a person that we develop an attitude of trust toward such a person. A vital function of the pre- and post-Advent judgments is to provide an opportunity to the moral beings of the universe to deepen their trust in God by verifying, validating, and vindicating the justice of His judgments.

This trust is expressed by the redeemed—represented in Revelation as standing beside a sea of glass—singing: "Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are they ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed" (Rev 15:3-4).

It is noteworthy that the reason given for the universal acclamation of the greatness, justice, and truthfulness of God is the fact that His "judgments have been revealed" (Rev 15:4). Ellen G. White aptly comments in this regard: "Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy will then have been made plain. In the judgment of the universe, God will stand clear of blame for the existence or continuance of evil."

The revelation of the justice of God's judgment is in a sense also a vindication of the redeemed. This was an important function of the Feast of Trumpets, namely, to reassure the people that God will remember and vindicate them on the day of judgment. The same truth is expressed in the vision of Daniel 7, where the Ancient of Days pronounces "judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom" (Dan 7:22, NIV).

A Basis for Hope and Confidence. The Biblical view of the final judgment as the decisive and final triumph of God's justice, manifested in the vindication and salvation of believers and in the condemnation and destruction of unbelievers, is an event to be anticipated with solemnity and joy. We have found that this was the mood of the celebration of the Feast of Trumpets. The Jews viewed the ten days before the Day of Atonement with *solemnity* (Days of Awe) because their eternal destiny was being decided by the heavenly court. They also looked upon this period with *joy* because it represented for them their final vindication and salvation.

The pre-Advent judgment announced by the Feast of the Trumpets does not destroy our joy and assurance of salvation because it is not a scheme or retribution but a revelation of our standing before God as we are found to be in Christ. "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" asks Paul. "It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?" (Rom 8:33-34). As our records are opened in heaven during the antitypical Feast of Trumpets, we have nothing to fear because our Mediator stands for us. Essentially, this judgment is the outworking of the message of the Gospel which contains the Good News that God not only justifies penitent sinners in this present life, but also vindicates them on the day of His judgment by giving them the reward of eternal life.

The close connection between the Gospel and the final judgment is clearly expressed by Paul when he speaks of the "day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" (Rom 2:16). The judgment is according to the Gospel in the sense that it is part of the gracious provision of salvation through Jesus Christ who offers us forgiveness of our sins in this present life and vindication of our forgiven sins in the final judgment. Thus, the Christian can "have confidence for the day of judgment" (1 John 4:17). This confidence rests on the assurance that Christ "is able to keep [us] from falling" in this present life and "to present [us] without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing" on the day of His judgment (Jude 24). Thus, for God's people, the announcement of the final judgment by the Feast of Trumpets represents the revelation of their faith and love for Christ and their vindication before the angelic host. It represents the coming of better days when Christ will soon appear, like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, to reveal the truth about them.

Conclusion

The doctrine of the final judgment enshrines many vital truths. It points to the existence of a transcendent moral order and of a Moral Ruler. This gives meaning and seriousness to our daily living. It reveals that God places a great value on each person as well as on each of our decisions and actions. This gives a sense of accountability and moral worth to our living. It reassures us that God operates on the principle of love and freedom and that ultimately all the moral universe will be given the opportunity fully to understand and accept the justice and mercy of God. The vindication of God's justice will result in the vindication of His people.

The final judgment guarantees that the conflict between good and evil will not last forever, but will be terminated by God in a final and decisive way. It helps us overcome a self-centered type of religion by reminding us that our eternal destiny is linked to the cosmic vindication and triumph of God's love and justice which will guarantee the eternal security, peace, and harmony of this universe and its inhabitants. Lastly, the final judgment inspires us to live godly lives with joy, confidence, and hope while "awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

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