

# Are the Gospel and the 1844 Theology Compatible?

by

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## What Is the Gospel?

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Yes, what is the gospel? That is the one question which needs to be decisively answered in all biblical interpretation. Unless this question is answered, the Bible remains a sealed book and nothing can be rightly understood. But those who know what the gospel is know what the essential content of the Bible is. They are then well qualified to judge all doctrines and teachings.

The New Testament has two basic things to say about the gospel:

### The Gospel Is about Christ

The gospel is called "the gospel of God" and "the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:1; 15:19). God is its Author, but Christ is its decisive content. "The gospel is centred in God's Son" (Rom. 1:3, Phillips). "It is about His Son. . . . It is about Jesus Christ . . ." (Rom. 1:3, 5, NEB).

Let not the simplicity of this point blind us to its bright reality. If anything but the person and work of Christ becomes our burning passion—whether denominational distinctives, end-of-the-world speculations or our own religious experiences—we have wandered from the gospel. A good musician must not only strike the right notes; he must

correctly interpret the spirit and soul of the composer's work. It has been said that Beethoven was not troubled if a musician made a technical mistake, but he became angry if the musician misinterpreted the spirit of his composition. Charles H. Spurgeon once said:

I know a minister whose shoe latchet I am unworthy to unloose, whose preaching is often little better than sacred miniature painting—I might almost say holy trifling. He is great upon the ten toes of the beast, the four faces of the cherubim, the mystical meaning of badgers' skins, and the typical bearings of the staves of the ark, and the windows of Solomon's temple, but the sins of businessmen, the temptations of the times, and the needs of the age, he scarcely ever touches upon. Such preaching reminds me of a lion engaged in mouse-hunting or a man-of-war cruising after a lost water-butt.

More and more I am jealous lest any views upon prophecy, church government, politics, or even systematic theology, should withdraw one of us from glorifying in the Cross of Christ. Salvation is a theme for which I would fain enlist every holy tongue. I am greedy after witnesses for the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. O that Christ crucified were the universal burden of men of God. Your guess at the number of the beast, your Napoleonic speculations, your conjectures concerning a personal antichrist—forgive me, I count them but mere bones for dogs; while men are dying and hell is filling, it seems to me the veriest drivel to be muttering about an Armageddon at Sebastopol or Sadowa or Sedan and peeping between the folded leaves of destiny to discover the fate of Germany.

Of all I would wish to say this is the sum: my brethren, preach *Christ*, always and evermore. He is the whole Gospel. His Person, offices, and work must be our one great, all comprehending theme. The world needs still to be told of its Savior, and of the way to reach him. Justification by faith should be far more than it is the daily testimony of Protestant pulpits; and if with this master-truth there should be more generally associated the other great doctrines of grace, the better for our churches and our age.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Quoted in Al Fasol, *Selected Readings in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980).

## The Gospel Is about the Fulfillment of the Old Testament

The good tidings (or gospel) of Jesus Christ is expressed by the New Testament authors in a variety of ways. But one idea unites the New Testament witness: *Jesus of Nazareth fulfills the Old Testament*. He fulfills its history, law and promises (Matt. 5:17; Acts 13:32, 33; Rom. 1:2; 3:21; 10:4; 2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 3:8).

Jesus fulfills Old Testament history because He is the goal to which Old Testament history moved. In becoming the new Adam and the new Israel, Jesus rewrote all human history. By His death on the cross He buried our sinful history so that we could become identified with His new, holy history.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament law because He is the reality of all the Jewish sacrifices and ceremonies. More than that, His faithful obedience to God is the righteousness which the law or will of God demands of the human race.

Jesus fulfilled the promises made by the prophets in two different ways. First, He is the Seed of Abraham and, therefore, the true Israel to whom all the promises were made (Gal. 3:16-19). He is also the substance or reality of all that God ever promised Jew or Gentile (Acts 3:24-26; Gal. 3:8; Eph. 1:3).

## The Implications of Such a Gospel

Thus far we have made two points about the gospel. It is about Christ and about how He has fulfilled the Old Testament. This has startling implications:

**The Gospel Is (about) a Finished Thing.** Jesus was deeply conscious that Moses and the prophets wrote of Him and that His mission was to fulfill the Old Testament (John 5:39). His last words on the cross

triumphantly announced, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

The gospel is the good news of Christ's finished work. He has made atonement for sin (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2), destroyed death (2 Tim. 1:10) and defeated the devil (Heb. 2:14). He has been raised from the dead and has taken His place as Lord of all at God's right hand (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:34-36; Rom. 8:34). Man's lost dominion has been restored in this Man (one Man), who reigns over all principalities and powers (1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20-22).

When we examine the great New Testament statements about the gospel, they clearly indicate a historical thing which is done and finished:

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.—1 Cor. 15:1-4.

. . . having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.—Col. 2:14, 15.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.—Heb. 1:3.

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time He waits for His enemies to be made His footstool, because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.—Heb. 10:11-14.

The New Testament gospel is not presented as if it were an Old Testament promise of what God will do. It is the announcement of what He has done. The whole deed of our salvation was worked out and secured by God's act in Christ. If what men preach about is not already *finished*, it is not gospel.

The gospel, therefore, concerns a finished thing. This is most certainly true.

**The Gospel Is a Final Thing.** In the Old Testament God spoke "through the prophets at many times and in various ways" (Heb. 1:1). But when at last He spoke "by His Son," this was His final word to man (Heb. 1:2).

In Jesus all the will of God is accomplished, all the revelation of God, all the promises of God. God had sent His Word on many occasions in the past, but all that He had said on those earlier occasions was summed up and perfected in the unfolding of His glory seen in the passion and triumph of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Christ is God's final word to man.<sup>3</sup>

Two New Testament documents specifically emphasize the finality of Christ. They are the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews. John presents Jesus as the Word of God incarnate, the Tabernacle in whom dwells the glory of God (John 1:1-14), the One who alone is the revelation of the Father (John 1:18; 14:9). To believe on Him means to pass from death to life eternal (John 5:24). The writer to the Hebrews presents Him as superior to the prophets, the angels, Moses or Aaron. He stresses the finality of Christ by the repeated use of the Greek word *hapax*, which means *once and for all time*—that is, something final and unrepeatable:

He sacrificed for their sins *once for all* when He offered Himself.—Heb. 7:27.

2. F. F. Bruce, *The Defence of the Gospel in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), p. 100.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Nor did He enter heaven to offer Himself again and again. . . . He has appeared *once for all* at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.—Heb. 9:25, 26.

We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*.—Heb. 10:10.

God revealed all and did all that was necessary for our salvation when He acted in Christ. This act was final and unrepeatable. The gospel is the publication of God's last will and testament.

Since Christ is God's final word to man, it follows that the gospel of Christ is "the final word beyond which there is no more to be said or experienced."<sup>4</sup> For this reason there is never a hint that the New Testament community waits for the Spirit (the latter rain), the sealing, the verdict of the final judgment, or some more abundant life. It only waits for one thing—for the Son of God to come from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 9:28). Until that revelation takes place, there is no way to go on from hearing the gospel to some higher knowledge or to some more profound experience of God.

The gospel is therefore a final thing. This is most certainly true.

**The Gospel Is a Complete Thing.** By this we mean that the apostolic gospel did not lack any necessary features. It was a complete disposition (will and testament) of heaven which would not admit the addition of any new feature or any new information. As Jude 3 declares, it was "once for all entrusted to the saints." Paul declared, "I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19).

The apostle Paul did not favorably respond to those who felt that they must add something to the apostolic gospel (Gal. 1:6-8). We need to be on our guard against

4. Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), p. 10.

the idea that since we now live in the last days, we need to preach on aspects of Christ's redemptive work which were not proclaimed by the apostles.

The gospel is therefore a complete thing. This is most certainly true.

**The Gospel Is an Eschatological Thing.** The proclamation of the gospel is something which belongs to the last days. It is therefore the clearest evidence that we are living in the last days. "The proclamation of the Gospel is an eschatological event."<sup>5</sup> This is proved to us in a number of ways:

1. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that Christ "has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). Calvary, therefore, was an end-time event.

It is not that the consummation of the ages was the time when, in fact, He appeared; it is rather that His coming and achievement made that particular time the consummation of the ages.<sup>6</sup>

2. The outpouring of the Spirit to proclaim the gospel took place on the Day of Pentecost. Peter announced that it was the fulfillment of what Joel had prophesied would take place in the last days (Acts 2:16, 17).

3. The New Testament repeatedly declares that the last days have arrived (Acts 2:16, 17; Heb. 1:1, 2; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20). The great blessings which the gospel offers, to be accepted by faith, are gifts which belong to the end of the world—that is, justification is the liberating verdict of the final judgment (Rom. 2:13, 16), eternal life is the life of the age to come (John 5:24), the gift of the Spirit is the down payment of glorification (Eph.

5. Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, tr. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 2:729.

6. Bruce, *Defence of the Gospel*, p. 89.

1:13, 14), and salvation is deliverance from God's wrath (Rom. 5:9).

4. That the gospel is an eschatological thing follows from the fact that it is a final thing. Anyone who grasps that the gospel is God's final word, beyond which there is no more to be said or experienced, waits for Christ to come from heaven as the next great event in God's program. To proclaim the gospel means to proclaim that God's victory has already been achieved in Christ. Nothing prevents God from sending Jesus except His patience and mercy toward sinners, whom He wishes to save (2 Pet. 3:8, 9). The resurrection of Christ from the dead and the return of Christ belong together as two parts of one great act of God. The first makes the second something which is ready to take place and will take place at the hidden time of God's appointment (Acts 1:7; 17:31).

The gospel is therefore an eschatological thing. This is most certainly true.

#### **The Gospel Is an All-Sufficient Thing.**

In the gospel of Christ crucified and risen from the dead, God has given a final revelation of Himself. In times past He spoke through dreams and visions of the prophets (things which belong to the age of pre-maturity), but in the fullness of time He spoke clearly and definitively in His Son to reveal His love, justice, mercy, wrath and wisdom. All that we can know about God is revealed in the incarnate Word. Christ in the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth is the truth (John 14:6)—the truth about God, the truth about the past (election) and the truth about the future (eschatology).

The gospel gives us all that God and the future have to give us. It gives us life eternal (John 3:16; 5:24). It gives us the Spirit as the firstfruits of glorification (Rom. 8:23-25). It gives us the seal of God (Eph. 1:13). No New Testament believer waits for the Spirit, but by the Spirit He waits for the Lord to come (Rom. 5:5). Belief in the gospel message con-

stitutes him ready for Christ to come (Rom. 5:1; 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:7). Because he is in Christ, the believer is without fault and blameless in God's sight (Col. 1:20-22).

It is a denial of the gospel to talk about a future sealing or a future gift of the Spirit as if there were something above and beyond hearing the gospel. All that God can possibly give us is contained in the gospel and is to be accepted by faith *now!*

The gospel is therefore an all-sufficient thing. This is most certainly true.

**The Gospel Is a Clear and Certain Thing.** This cannot be said about the Old Testament revelation, which was given through the prophets in many and fragmentary ways. Here the mystery of God's plan remains veiled in enigmatic symbols and visions. But when God at last speaks in His Son, the mystery is unveiled and God's secret is out (Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 3:4, 5).

The gospel is not a dark mystery. It is not a hidden thing. ("If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."—2 Cor. 4:3, 4.) There is nothing obscure about the gospel. It is a clear and certain light. Said Luther:

For what solemn truth can the Scriptures still be concealing, now that the seals are broken, the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb, and that greatest of all mysteries brought to light—that Christ, God's Son, became man, that God is Three in One, that Christ suffered for us, and will reign for ever? And are not these things known, and sung in our streets? Take Christ from the Scriptures—and what more will you find in them? You see, then, that the entire content of the Scriptures has now been brought to light, even though some passages which contain unknown words remain obscure.<sup>7</sup>

7. Martin Luther, *Martin Luther on the Bondage of the Will*, tr. and ed. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1957), p. 71.

Look at the clear witness of John 3:16:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Christ is the Promised One who has died to take away sin so that all who believe find forgiveness and life everlasting. Nothing could be clearer than this—to the uneducated as well as the educated (many of the first Christians could not even read), rich or poor, black or white. Someone, anxious to know if he had been elected to salvation, once wrote Luther. In reply, the great Reformer exhorted the poor man to take hold of his own nose and see if he could determine whether he was a goose or a cow or a member of the human race. Luther then directed him to John 3:16 and the words, "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

A great cloud of witnesses in the New Testament speak to us clearly about salvation through faith in Christ. Romans 10:9 is an example: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." The essential content of the gospel is so clear and certain that it will shine through any translation. If one text seems somewhat ambiguous, there are many more that are unambiguous. The gospel does not rest on someone's ingenious interpretation of one or two mysterious sayings found in some shadowy type or apocalyptic prophecy. It rests on the unambiguous testimony of the apostles of Christ.

The gospel is therefore a clear and certain thing. This is most surely true.

**The Gospel Is a Decisive Thing.** Because the gospel is a final thing, an eschatological thing, an all-sufficient thing, and a clear and certain thing, it is by its very nature the final testing truth which God brings to every soul. By the word of the gospel which goes forth in these last days, God judges people (John 3:18, 19; Rev. 14:6,

7). Those who obey the gospel are constituted children of God. They are sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13, 14). They are given eternal life (John 5:24). Those who disobey the gospel are condemned already. The wrath of God remains on them (John 3:18, 36). This means that the final judgment is mysteriously present in the preaching of the gospel (John 3:18, 19; 5:24; 9:39; 12:31).

God does not require any further judgment to determine who are the children of God. Those who believe and continue believing the gospel<sup>8</sup> are "once [and for all time] [*hapax*] . . . enlightened" (Heb. 6:4). By the sacrifice of Christ "once for all," they have been "made perfect forever" (Heb. 10:10, 14). They are already judged (justified), sealed and have eternal life. The Lord knows His sheep (John 10:14). He knows those who belong to Him (2 Tim. 2:19). The gospel, therefore, is the reality of the pre-advent judgment. Just as the believer waits for no experience beyond the gospel except the public revelation of the Lord of the gospel, so he waits for no judgment except the public judgment on the last day (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10). Since by faith he already passes its acquitting verdict, the judgment day holds no terrors for him.

The gospel is therefore a finished thing, a final thing, a complete thing, an eschatological thing, an all-sufficient thing, a clear and certain thing, and a decisive thing. This is most certainly true.

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8. The New Testament word translated "believe" is generally written in the present continuous tense rather than the aorist tense—e.g., John 3:16. God's children are those who believe and keep on believing. See 1 Cor. 15:2; Col. 1:23.

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## The Gospel and the 1844 Theology

The date 1844 and the teaching on the two-phased ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary are the nerve center of traditional Adventism. As Ellen White says, "The scripture which above all others had been both the foundation and the central pillar of the advent faith was the declaration: 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.' Daniel 8:14."<sup>1</sup>

From this understanding of 1844 comes a plethora of unique Seventh-day Adventist teachings such as the investigative judgment, the two apartments or ministrations in the heavenly sanctuary, the remnant church, the special sealing and blotting out of sins, the latter rain, close of probation and Spirit of Prophecy.

Adventism is now in crisis because these "pillars of the faith" are being subjected to intense discussion and reevaluation. Everything we do and teach must be brought

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1. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), p. 409.



under the judgment of the gospel. If we ourselves are judged by the gospel (John 3:18, 19), then surely all our teachings must be subjected to the searching scrutiny of the gospel. Everything out of harmony with this final thing, this all-sufficient thing, and this clear and certain thing is to be rejected no matter how much it has been venerated by tradition.

Dare we test even the doctrine of 1844 by the apostolic gospel? Some may feel like the brother who said he would not dare to re-examine the matter because it was sinful to doubt. To which we reply that God never damned an honest doubter; He only damns the dishonest ones. Does not truth permit, even welcome, the most searching scrutiny? Ellen White herself said, "If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it."<sup>2</sup>

In the current discussions on 1844 and the investigative judgment, we must not allow the arguments to be adjudicated in any light but the gospel. If the matter has little or nothing to do with the gospel, then further debate is a useless pastime. If the matter is vitally related to the gospel, why resort to every argument but the gospel to prove or disprove the question under discussion? This matter will not be settled by involved explanations of the obscurities of Daniel. It must be judged by the clear light of the gospel.

## Judged by This Finished Thing

The pioneer Seventh-day Adventists did not appear to grasp the New Testament's message about the finished work of Christ. O. R. L. Crosier's pathfinding treatise on the sanctuary in *The Day-Star Extra* of 1846 explicitly declared that Christ did not even

2. Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1946), p. 44.

begin His work of atonement on the cross.<sup>3</sup> In 1877, Uriah Smith was just as bold when he declared: "Christ did not make the atonement when he shed his blood upon the cross. Let this fact be fixed forever in the mind."<sup>4</sup> Many similar statements appeared in early Adventist literature.

Ellen White was more moderate. She could refer to Christ's death as an atonement. But when she set forth the historic sanctuary doctrine in *The Great Controversy*, she copied Uriah Smith very closely. Thus, she declared that the "final atonement" is made in the most holy place subsequent to 1844.<sup>5</sup>

We need to understand that the pioneers of Adventism, in developing their 1844 theology, proceeded on the assumption that Christ's atonement was not completed on the cross. Consequently, the Seventh-day Adventist gospel has generally been preached as a promise of what God will do for us if we fulfill certain conditions. For example, He will forgive us if we repent, exercise faith and promise to keep His law. He will help us overcome every defect of character so that we can receive the seal of God and the latter rain. He will blot out our sins if we pass the scrutiny of the investigative judgment. It is

3. See O. R. L. Crosier, "The Law of Moses," *The Day-Star Extra*, 7 Feb. 1846.

4. Uriah Smith, *The Sanctuary and the Twenty-Three Hundred Days of Daniel VIII*, 14 (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn., 1877), p. 276.

5. See White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 420-22; idem, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1882), p. 253. W. W. Fletcher (1879-1947), a prominent Seventh-day Adventist evangelist and administrator who later left Adventism, was puzzled by the observation that Ellen White sometimes wrote like the pioneers (final atonement made after 1844) and sometimes wrote more evangelically (atonement on the cross). Recent research has clearly demonstrated that when writing about distinctive Adventist themes, Mrs. White copied men like Uriah Smith quite closely. At other times, when copying evangelical authors such as John Harris, she could write in a surprisingly orthodox, evangelical tone—e.g., "He reverently presents at the mercy seat His finished redemption for His people" (idem, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1923], p. 21).

no exaggeration to say that Adventism has lived more as an Old Testament community with a gospel of promise than a New Testament community with a gospel of something already finished.

The basis of a soundly Pauline and Reformational doctrine of justification by faith is a finished atonement. In 1929-1930, W. W. Fletcher concluded that the New Testament doctrine of a finished atonement and the Adventist doctrine of an investigative judgment were incompatible. In a paper on Fletcher, presented at the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee, Alfred S. Jorgensen agrees: "As is only too evident, the doctrines of the Atonement as completed at the Cross and the investigative judgment as held by Seventh-day Adventists are mutually exclusive."<sup>6</sup> Although Adventists are not futurists on the matter of prophetic interpretation, they are the greatest futurists in the world on the matter of the gospel.

## Judged by This Final Thing

The Old Testament revelation which God gave through Moses, Isaiah and Daniel was veiled. But in the unveiled gospel of the New Testament we have God's final word about the essential meaning of the Old Testament. This means that we must interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New. In its use of the book of Daniel and of Old Testament typology, Adventism has generally done the reverse. It tries to explain the meaning of the enigmatic statements of Old Testament apocalyptists as if they were clear descriptions of reality. Trying to make the gospel fit these interpretations of Daniel turns the clear New Testament reality into an enigma.

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6. Alfred S. Jorgensen, "The Fletcher Case: A Report of the Salient Teachings of W. W. Fletcher and the Administrative Actions Taken by the Australasian Union Conference in Dealing with Him," June 1980 (Paper prepared for the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee, August 10-15, 1980), p. 17.

For example, if the New Testament declares that Daniel 7:14 was fulfilled in the resurrection and ascension of Christ (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:32-36; 1 Cor. 15:25, 27; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 1:5), we must not presume to go beyond God's final word. If the New Testament declares that all God's promises to Israel were fulfilled in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ (Acts 13:32, 33; 2 Cor. 1:20), that must include the promise of Daniel 8:14. Remember too that nothing could pass from the law (e.g., circumcision) until everything was fulfilled (Matt. 5:18). "Everything" must include the Day of Atonement ritual as well as the Passover.

Not only have we tried to interpret the gospel in the light of our understanding of Daniel, but we have tried to interpret heavenly realities in the light of Old Testament ceremonies. For example, since Aaron went into the holy of holies to make the atonement, the pioneers of Adventism reasoned that Christ must have gone into the heavenly sanctuary to make the atonement. They reasoned, As in the type, so in the antitype.<sup>7</sup> They tried to project a Levitical schema into Christ's Melchizedek ministry. They did not understand that the book of Hebrews emphasizes the contrasts between type and antitype more than their parallels. *Unlike* Aaron, Christ made the atonement once and for all and then went into the presence of God (Heb. 1:3; 2:17; 9:12, 25, 26). His new-covenant ministry breaks through the limitations of the old order and utterly transcends anything like a two-apartment schema. Like the animal blood, the two-apartment schema of the Levitical tabernacle was an illustration of its inadequacy (Heb. 9:6-10). Why project such inadequate things into heaven? That is why Hebrews says nothing about two apartments or a two-phased ministration in heaven. In

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7. "And what was done in type in the ministration of the earthly sanctuary is done in reality in the ministration of the heavenly sanctuary" (White, *Great Controversy*, p. 420).

the old system there were daily and yearly sacrifices. The gospel dispensation has one sacrifice for all time. The book of Hebrews knows nothing about some further ministration which Christ must perform to prepare His people for His coming, "because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Heb. 10:14).

So the gospel, being God's final word about the meaning of the Old Testament, calls our traditional hermeneutics into question. We need a gospel hermeneutic which interprets the book of Daniel and Old Testament typology in the light of the transcendent reality of God's final act in Christ.

Something else is called into question by the gospel. The finality of the gospel means that Christ's atonement on the cross was once and for all. Here our Lord fulfilled the entire propitiatory service of the Day of Atonement. Calvary was the reality of the mercy-seat transaction (sprinkling the blood) as well as the reality of the Day of Atonement sacrifice (shedding the blood). Christ makes no offering in the heavenly sanctuary. He sprinkles no blood there. He makes no atonement in the sanctuary. All this He did once and for all when He offered up Himself.<sup>8</sup>

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8. For a fascinating discussion on the debate whether Christ offers His sacrifice in heaven, see Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 329-54. Apparently, the idea of Christ's offering His sacrifice or making an atonement in heaven goes back to Socinius and has reappeared wherever the classical or legal view of the atonement (Anselm and the Reformers) has been rejected in favor of the "moral-influence" view. The idea of a perpetual sacrificial offering by Christ has also been supported by some Catholics and Anglo-Catholics because it is more consistent with their view of the mass. The great weight of the best Protestant thought, however, has supported the view that both the sacrifice and the offering of the sacrifice took place once and for all at the cross. Those who hold this position point out that the author of Hebrews always applies Christ's high-priestly offering to the cross, never to the sanctuary (Heb. 7:26, 27; 9:25, 26; 10:5-14). In a forthcoming article entitled "The Gospel According to Hebrews 9," to be published in the journal, *New Testament Studies*, Avondale theologian Norman H. Young agrees that Christ is not represented as offering His sacrificial blood in heaven.

Aaron made the sacrifice and offered the blood before the mercy seat while dressed in lowly linen attire (Lev. 16:4). The propitiatory aspects of the Levitical service were all performed by Aaron in the linen garments. So Christ accomplished His atoning or propitiatory ministry during the state of His humiliation.<sup>9</sup> He performs no atoning ministry in heaven! The cleansing of the heavenly things was all done on the cross (Heb. 9:23, 25, 26)—once and for all. Therefore, the entire idea of Christ's going into the most holy place in 1844 to make a final atonement or to cleanse the heavenly reality by His blood is contrary to the gospel, which affirms that Christ's atonement on the cross was final and unrepeatable.

It is true that while the book of Hebrews portrays Christ's fulfillment of the propitiatory ritual of the Day of Atonement on the cross, the book of Revelation uses Day of Atonement imagery to describe events connected with the second advent of our Lord. But there is no suggestion in Revelation of a propitiatory service performed in heaven which corresponds to "the cleansing of the sanctuary." While some aspects of inaugurated eschatology are fulfilled again in consummated eschatology, this does not apply to any aspect of Christ's sin-bearing (propitiatory) ministry. He did all this on the cross once and for all time. Again we say that we cannot use the imagery of Aaron's sprinkling the blood before the mercy seat to describe the nature of Christ's high-priestly role in heaven. The mercy-seat transaction was enacted on the cross once for all (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 9:12, 25, 26; 10:5-14; 1 John 2:2). Christ makes no propitiatory offering in heaven. That is why His ministry, at this point, is not like Aaron's but unlike Aaron's. Aaron went into the sanctuary to make

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9. See two fine statements in Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898), p. 25; idem, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), p. 33.

atonement. Christ made atonement and went in (Heb. 9:12, 25, 26). Christ's intercession in heaven is not that of an Aaronic priest standing before God to offer the blood. His intercession is that of a King seated on His throne, exercising the rights and titles gained by His finished work of atonement.<sup>10</sup>

## Judged by This Complete Thing

The traditional 1844 theology implies that the apostolic gospel was not complete—that is, it did not contain all the light necessary to prepare the church for translation. In 1844 the time had supposedly come to proclaim a new ministry of Christ with redemptive significance. According to Uriah Smith and Ellen White, salvation now depends on accepting the benefits of this new ministration of Christ.<sup>11</sup> Something happened in 1844 which changed God's relationship to the world as decidedly as Christ's death on the cross and the inauguration of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>12</sup> We are told that to reject this new work of Jesus is as serious as rejecting His work on the cross.<sup>13</sup> In the words of Ellen White:

That door of hope and mercy by which men had for eighteen hundred years found access to God, was closed, another door was opened, and forgiveness of sins was offered to men through the intercession of Christ in the most holy. One part of His ministration had closed, only to give place to another.<sup>14</sup>

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10. In contending for an ongoing work of atonement in heaven, Adventism has not followed the better line of Protestant scholarship. Rather, it has followed the Catholics, Anglo-Catholics, Socinians and moral-atonement advocates, who all reject the "finished work" on the cross. In the continuing discussion within Adventism, Loma Linda's "moral-influence" theory will be seen as the only approach compatible with the traditional 1844 theology.

11. See White, *Great Controversy*, p. 430; idem, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), p. 575.

12. See White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 430-31.

13. See *ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 429-30.

In the same chapter Ellen White even speaks of "new duties" that are necessary this side of 1844 which correspond to the new ministry of Christ.<sup>15</sup>

If I am to take these claims for 1844 at face value, they mean that salvation no longer depends on faith in the apostolic gospel. I must also believe in redemptive events which were not proclaimed in apostolic times. This means that the 1844 "event" must be accompanied by the preaching of a new gospel—for would not preaching about a new event of redemptive significance, and the necessity of our performing new duties, constitute a new gospel?

All this is opposed to the gospel "once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3)—a gospel containing all things necessary to prepare us for Christ's coming (Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 1:7), a gospel so complete that it would not tolerate the addition of new features or conditions. If the New Testament gospel announces a finished thing, a final thing and a complete thing, how can we possibly be justified in heralding to the world a new phase of Christ's ministry in 1844? This entire teaching is utterly excluded because there is nothing beyond the apostolic gospel except the coming of Christ in power and great glory. If our interpretation of the Jewish sanctuary or the book of Daniel is opposed to this apostolic gospel, we must abandon such interpretations. There is nothing about a two-phased ministry of Christ in the book of Hebrews, as the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee admitted.<sup>16</sup> But we must go further than the Glacier View statement and say that not only is the "two-phased" concept absent from the book of Hebrews; it is utterly denied by the book of Hebrews. The Epistle declares, "He entered [past tense] the Most Holy Place once for all" (Heb. 9:12). Whether we say Christ entered the

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15. See *ibid.*, pp. 424-25.

16. "... neither Daniel nor a two-phased ministry are referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews" ("Statement on Desmond Ford Document," *Ministry*, Oct. 1980, p. 21).

most holy place in 1844 or He began a second phase of His ministry in 1844 makes no difference. We cannot reconcile these claims with the gospel according to Hebrews.

Either we accept the apostolic gospel as a complete thing, or we accept a new phase of Christ's ministry beginning in 1844. The two are mutually exclusive.

## Judged by This Eschatological Thing

The pioneers of Adventism developed their 1844 theology on the assumption that the last days did not arrive until the 1844 era.<sup>17</sup> This led them to think that they had to have a new message corresponding to the new era they had entered. They did not realize that the death-resurrection event inaugurated the last days (Acts 2:16, 17; Heb. 1:1, 2; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20) and that the apostolic gospel was an eschatological event and the preeminent sign of the end times.

Obviously, if the apostles saw themselves as living at the very end of time (1 Cor. 10:11; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:37; 1 John 2:18; Rev. 1:3; 22:20), their gospel was designed to prepare men for Christ's coming. From the apostolic perspective, nothing prevented Christ's coming except the patience and mercy of God toward unsaved sinners (2 Pet. 3:8, 9). But traditional Adventism claims that Christ could not have come before He began His final work in 1844. On this assumption there was no message which could really prepare the church for Christ's coming prior to 1844.<sup>18</sup> The apostles certainly did not know about a second phase of

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17. See J. N. Andrews, *The Three Messages of Revelation XIV, 6-12, Particularly the Third Angel's Message, and Two-Horned Beast*, 5th ed., rev. (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review & Herald Publishing Co., 1892), pp. 15-18; quoted in Robert D. Brinsmead, *1844 Re-Examined*, rev. ed. (Fallbrook, Calif.: I.H.I., 1979), pp. 153-54. See also White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 356, 439, 445.

18. See White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 424-31.

Christ's ministry and an investigative judgment beginning in 1844. But now Adventism, with its insight into the unsealed book of Daniel, must go beyond the apostolic message. A new gospel indeed!

## Judged by This All-Sufficient Thing

Faith in the apostolic gospel gives us all that God and the future can give us. Traditional Adventism says, No, in order to be ready for Christ's coming there must not only be a further work of Christ in heaven, but there must be a further work of grace in the heart—an eschatological gift of the Spirit (latter rain) and an eschatological sealing of the saints which is something different than the saints have always enjoyed in the gospel. Thus, traditional Adventism waits for the final atonement, waits for the investigative judgment, waits for the latter rain and waits for the special sealing to be placed on a community of perfect Adventists. Great futurists!

But as we have seen, the gospel is God's final word, beyond which there is nothing to be said or experienced. There is no way of going on from hearing the gospel to some more profound or fuller knowledge of God. The gospel is that eschatological thing which brings the eschatological gift of the Spirit. This gift is the firstfruits of glorification (Rom. 8:23, 24; Eph. 1:13, 14). There is no theology of former and latter rain in the New Testament, for everything about the gospel is final. No New Testament believer waits for the Spirit—either former or latter rain—but by the Spirit he waits for Christ to come (Gal. 5:5). The gospel is that eschatological thing which brings the eschatological seal of God (Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30). Does someone say, "I know there is a gospel sealing, but I am talking about a special sealing"? To which we reply, This gospel sealing is the special sealing. Is there anything more special than the gospel? The

gospel brings eternal life itself (John 5:24). The blessings conveyed to us in the gospel are all-sufficient, all that are necessary to prepare us for Christ's coming (Rom. 5:1, 2; 8:30). "By one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Heb. 10:14). Believers possess a righteousness so pure and faultless that God Himself cannot find any deficiency in it. It is the righteousness of Christ Himself, which is ours by faith alone (Phil. 3:9).

Why look for future blessings or experiences to prepare us for the end when we have Christ and all things offered to us in the gospel? (Rom. 8:32; Eph. 1:3). This all-sufficient gospel puts all our talk about 1844 and our "special message" in a very poor light. If God wanted anything to emerge from the 1844 event, it was a restoration of the all-sufficient gospel, not the development of "light" in advance of the gospel.

## Judged by This Clear and Certain Thing

The gospel proclaims Christ's death and resurrection for our salvation. This is a clear and certain thing. There is nothing obscure about this gospel. It does not rest on a few obscure passages in the Bible. Much less does it depend on an involved interpretation of some obscure Old Testament passage. How many witnesses in the New Testament tell us what happened in about A.D. 31!<sup>19</sup> How many clear texts there are on the essential meaning of this event—John 3:16; Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Ephesians 2:8! Its essential meaning is so transparently clear that it will shine through any translation. We are not left to stake our eternal life on a doubtful phrase or one particular translation. Jesus of Nazareth was God's Son. He

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19. We say "about A.D. 31" because we cannot prove the exact year the resurrection took place. Most scholars prefer A.D. 30. We use the date A.D. 31 only as a concession to Adventist tradition.

lived a sinless life, died on the cross for us and rose from the dead to represent us at God's right hand. He who believes this in his heart is forgiven and saved to life eternal. This is a gospel well suited to go to all the world because it is so clear and certain. Even though people cannot read, they can hear this message of Christ and receive the Holy Spirit of adoption into God's family (Acts 10:45; Rom. 10:17; Gal. 3:1-3). Every believer can explain this faith. He may quote the unambiguous words of the New Testament and understand them for himself.

But what can we say about the 1844 "event"? It rests on one solitary text of Scripture—Daniel 8:14—and an Old Testament text at that. There is no New Testament confirmation of either the date 1844 or the new phase of Christ's work which was supposed to begin in 1844.

The meaning of the 1844 "event" is not clear in any reputable translation of the Bible. And many reputable versions of the Bible exclude the Adventist interpretation altogether. Even the figure 2,300 days cannot be proved, because the Hebrew of Daniel 8:14 says "2,300 evening-mornings" (meaning 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices). Many Jewish and Christian scholars have understood these 2,300 sacrifices to be the equivalent of 1,150 full days. While others may argue that Daniel 8:14 means 2,300 full days, there is no way of proving this without applying the scriptural rule, "A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (Deut. 19:15; cf. Matt. 18:16). There are no other witnesses to prove that the figure means 2,300 full days.

In order to determine the date 1844, traditional Adventism must engage in a lengthy chain of reasoning which again and again makes unproved assumptions and leaps across great chasms of nonexistent evidence. Adventism cannot prove that Daniel 8:14 means 2,300 full days. It cannot prove that the period must begin with 457 B.C. And it cannot prove that the 2,300 burnt offerings mean 2,300 lunar years. In fact, worldwide

research into apocalyptic literature over the last thirty years throws serious doubt on the assumption that the mysterious time periods of an apocalyptic book were ever meant to be calculated with mathematical precision.<sup>20</sup>

To begin with Daniel 8:14 and arrive at 1844 requires considerable skill in juggling. But to start with Daniel 8:14 and end with a theory of a two-phased ministry of Christ, an investigative judgment and a cleansing of the sanctuary by blotting out the record of believer's confessed sins (all of which are not even remotely suggested in the context of Daniel 8:14) is an astounding exegetical feat. Only a skilled linguist, chronologist, historian, apocalypticist and theologian could follow the involved arguments. Furthermore, if he were skilled in any of these areas, he would not accept the theory anyway. The rude fact is that in 140 years Adventists have never been able to convince a single recognized Bible scholar that their interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is worthy of a second thought. There is not an Adventist in ten thousand who would feel comfortable "proving" the 1844 doctrine from the Bible. It is an exegetical monstrosity. It took the pioneers fourteen years—from 1844 to 1857—to arrive at it, and one is tempted to suggest that it takes nearly as long to marshal the evidence to "prove" it. It is an elaborate apocalyptic conundrum which Adventism feels constrained to hold because it alone justifies the existence of Adventism as a movement with a special message and mission.

Imagine the apostles trying to prove what happened in the A.D. 31 event by resting their case on an ingenious and complicated interpretation of a single text in the Old Testament! Thank God that the Christian message has a better foundation than this! Christianity is a historical faith because it

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20. For a more detailed discussion of the difficulties in arriving at the date 1844, see Robert D. Brinsmead, *Judged by the Gospel: A Review of Adventism* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1980), pp. 73-103.

rests on the testimony to the concrete, historical event of the resurrection.

No one could seriously suggest that the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is as clear and certain as the gospel. It is an esoteric interpretation understood by only a few of the initiated.<sup>21</sup> Today, Adventist scholars are aware of the grave problems surrounding the traditional interpretation. But they are trying to justify the 1844 theology by concealing it in a fog of the vaguest kind of reasoning. Meanwhile, the poor sheep in the church are being told, "Have faith! The scholars say that our 1844 theology is still provable. Accept our word for it." The fact is that total confusion reigns among the scholars, and they are embarrassed to say anything about 1844 before those outside Adventist circles. If they have confidence in it, why do not the editors of the *Ministry* publish the traditional Adventist theology of 1844 in those special issues which are sent to the Protestant clergy? Why are there two versions of Adventist theology—one for "insiders" and another for "outsiders"?

It is not right to ask ordinary people to believe in a new event of redemptive significance which they cannot prove for themselves from Holy Scripture. At best, the 1844 faith can only rest on extrabiblical authority—and Raymond F. Cottrell, a leading Adventist scholar, frankly admits this.<sup>22</sup>

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21. Adventist scholar Raymond F. Cottrell frankly admits that the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 cannot be proved from the Bible but only from Ellen White. He even warns his brethren against trying to publicly preach the investigative judgment from the Bible. See Raymond F. Cottrell, "A Hermeneutic for Predictive Prophecy" (Paper prepared for the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee, August 10-15, 1980), esp. pp. 28-30.

22. See footnote 21.

## Judged by This Decisive Thing

Instead of an investigative judgment beginning in 1844, the New Testament knows only one pre-advent judgment. It is the apostolic gospel (John 3:17-19; 5:24; 12:31). By this gospel all men are tested and are thereby justified or condemned. As far as the apostles were concerned, the future judgment was not the one beginning in 1844 but that open, public judgment which will take place when Christ returns (Rom. 2:9-16; 1 Cor. 4:4, 5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 4:5).

The gospel, therefore, is the reality of the pre-advent judgment, and justification by faith is its liberating verdict. There is no judgment beyond the gospel except the appearance of Christ on the day of final judgment.

The structure of New Testament eschatology is trinitarian. That is to say, the end of the world unfolds in three dimensions—Calvary, the gospel and the Parousia.<sup>23</sup> Christ came to the cross, He came to His Father in heaven to sit at His right hand, and He comes again to judge the living and the dead. The New Testament tells us no more than this. Anything else is sectarian conjecture. The end-time judgment also unfolds in three dimensions. It took place at Calvary (John 12:31), it takes place as men are confronted with the gospel (John 3:17-19), and it will take place when Christ shall appear in glory. The first two phases are hidden except to the eye of faith. The last is open and public. In the theology of the New Testament there is no room for a fourth dimension of judgment—one beginning in 1844. The apostles certainly did not preach about it. And if they did not, neither should we. For the gospel is about something finished and therefore final, complete, eschatological, all-sufficient, clear, certain and decisive.

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23. *Parousia* is a New Testament word often used for the return of Christ.