

Revised and Enlarged

*Beyond
Belief*
REVIEWED

**Jack Sequeira's book,
Beyond Belief, examined
in the light of the Bible
and Spirit of Prophecy.**

***Revised and Enlarged
Second Edition***

• BY KEVIN PAULSON •

Beyond Belief
Reviewed

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Revised and Enlarged

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**He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.
Proverbs 28:13**

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. - II Chronicles 7:14

"The unconditional pardon of sin never has been, and never will be." - Patriarchs & Prophets p. 522

"God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place..." - Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 366.

Preface

B *BEYOND BELIEF* contains many valuable insights. Like the 1888 Message Study Committee, with whom Jack Sequeira has often associated, the book places strong emphasis on self-sacrificing love as the only acceptable motive for Christian behavior (pp. 20–26, 90–91). It stresses the meaning of the cross beyond the assumptions and trivial icons of mainstream Christianity (p. 67), declaring that “what Satan and the world did to Christ on the cross, they will do to us. This is the ‘offense of the cross’ that all true believers must endure” (p. 70). Sequeira effectively shows how the depth of what happened at Calvary has been obscured by the false doctrine of natural immortality (p. 75). And he states quite clearly that Christ in the incarnation took fallen humanity, and was thus forced to contend with the flesh and its desires like any fallen human being (pp. 146–147, 154).

Sadly, however, the book contains serious errors as well as blatant contradictions. Elder Sequeira makes copious use of the favorite terminology of evangelical Adventism, commonly known as the New Theology. Phrases like the “objective” and “subjective” gospels (pp. 31–33, 36, 64, 89, 99, 101, 137, 175), the “doing and dying” of Christ (pp. 93, 104), and the gospel as “good news, not good advice” (p. 104), are scattered throughout the book. Those familiar with recent Adventist theological history will remember the prominence of these expressions in the teachings of Desmond Ford,¹ Robert Brinsmead,² and Geoffrey Paxton.³ Neither these terms nor the concepts they represent are found in Scripture or in the writings of Ellen White. Rather, they are the product of post-Refor-

mation Protestantism, which is where many modern Adventists have gone to get their theology. Over a year ago I first attended some meetings given by the author of *Beyond Belief*, where he spoke of having received a speaking invitation from a group of evangelical pastors who, in the author's own words, invited him because he, unlike other Adventists, "knew the gospel." Such an accolade from ministers who do not know the present truth certainly would not confirm the rightness of Sequeira's position.

Like so much of contemporary Adventism, Sequeira's book misstates the nature of legalism, and proceeds to misinterpret the gospel of grace. The fact that these errors are mingled with the truths we noted earlier makes the misunderstandings all the more dangerous. The book is a theological Picasso, an amalgamation which blurs the irreconcilable contrast between the evangelical and historic Adventist beliefs now contending for the soul of God's remnant church. In truth, *Beyond Belief* is an attempted marriage between historic and evangelical Adventism, a romance far too many have encouraged in recent times. The purpose of this review is to demonstrate, from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, the utter incompatibility of this relationship.

Chapter One

The Gospel and Salvation

BYOND BELIEF begins with Jack Sequeira speaking several times of the “unconditional” good news of the gospel (pp. 8, 25, 29, 36). He declares that the two great systems of Protestant theology, Calvinism and Arminianism, offer only conditional good news, in that the one (Calvinism) offers salvation only to those God has predestined to be saved, while the other (Arminianism) offers salvation to all, but on the provision that they believe and repent (p. 8). By contrast, Sequeira teaches that “God actually and unconditionally saved all humanity at the cross so that we are justified and reconciled to God by that act. See Romans 5: 10, 18; 2 Corinthians 5:18–19. I believe that the only reason anyone will be lost is because he or she willfully and persistently rejects God’s gift of salvation in Christ (see John 3:18, 36)” (p.8). We will address this concept at length in the pages to follow.

While Sequeira does not teach that all humanity will eventually receive eternal life, he clearly maintains that the believer’s assurance is grounded in a universal salvation which supposedly has already taken place for everyone (pp. 32–33, 91, 103, 170). This concept of two salvations, or two justifications, is central to Sequeira’s entire thesis. Thus, instead of salvation being a provision available to all, with the option either to accept or reject, Sequeira holds salvation to be an accomplished fact with an option either to resist or not to resist. The difference is between my being interested in a girl and my announcing

to her the “good news” that she and I are legally married already, whether she likes it or not.

Some of Sequeira’s defenders maintain that his theology does not teach two justifications, but only one justification with two distinct phases.⁴ Sadly, this kind of talk serves only to confuse people, since it really means the same thing.

We will later discuss what the cross and the plan of salvation have in fact accomplished for every human being. Nowhere does the Bible or Ellen White speak of salvation or the good news of the gospel as being unconditional. No inspired writer ever uses this adjective in describing the saving process. It was not Arminius or any of his followers who invented the concept that believing the gospel is conditional on repentance. Jesus Himself said this: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Mark 1:14–15.⁵ Calling people to repent sounds very much like good advice, and it does not sound unconditional. Ellen White agrees:

“The very essence of the gospel is restoration.”⁶

“Perfection of character is attainable by every one who strives for it. This is made the very foundation of the new covenant of the gospel. The law of Jehovah is the tree; the gospel is the fragrant blossoms and fruit which it bears.”⁷

“The law is the gospel embodied, and the gospel is the law unfolded. The law is the root, the gospel is the fragrant blossoms and fruit which it bears.”⁸

“The gospel message proclaimed by Christ’s disciples was the announcement of His first advent to the world. It bore to men the good tidings of salvation through faith in

Him. It pointed forward to His second coming in glory to redeem His people, and it set before men the hope, through faith and obedience, of sharing the inheritance of the saints in light. This message is given to men today, and at this time there is coupled with it the announcement of Christ's second coming as at hand."⁹

"The Lord desires His servants today to preach the old gospel doctrine, sorrow for sin, repentance, and confession."¹⁰

"Said the apostle, speaking of the gospel, 'To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.'"¹¹

"Teach them the first principle of the gospel, which is Christ formed within, the hope of glory."¹²

"The gospel of Christ is the law exemplified in character."¹³

At a recent series of meetings Elder Sequeira stated, "Christian living is not the gospel; it is the fruit of the gospel."¹⁴ We can see how the above inspired comments turn this statement upside down. Ellen White does not say that the *results* of the gospel are repentance, restoration, and the indwelling Christ. We do not read that the *fruit* of the gospel is the law exemplified in character. Rather, Inspiration declares these elements to be part of the gospel itself. By stating that the law is the root and the gospel is the fruit, she is simply echoing the Biblical teaching that the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (see Galatians 3:24), and that once we surrender to Christ, the law becomes the mechanism by which our hearts are transformed (see Deuteronomy 30:14; Psalm 19:7; 119:11; Jeremiah 31:33; Romans 10:8; 2 Corinthians 3:3;

Hebrews 8:8–10). This transformation is the essence of the gospel.

Sequeira's statement that the gospel is good news, not good advice (p. 104) is directly at odds with the following inspired passages:

“Repentance is associated with faith, and is urged in the gospel as essential to salvation.”¹⁵

“The gospel of Christ requires penitence for sin, and sin is the transgression of the law.”¹⁶

“Individual responsibility, individual effort, personal sacrifice, is the requirement of the gospel.”¹⁷

“The union of Christlike work for the body and Christlike work for the soul is the true interpretation of the gospel.”¹⁸

“When temperance is presented as a part of the gospel, many will see their need of reform.”¹⁹

“The Lord has given instruction that the gospel is to be carried forward; and the gospel includes health reform in all its phases.”²⁰

Notice again that we do not read of repentance, individual effort, personal sacrifice, and health reform being the natural result of accepting the gospel. Rather, we read that the gospel *requires* and *includes* these things. Quite simply, to speak of the Biblical gospel as being unconditional good news is to ignore the plainest inspired evidence.

While it is true that God's love for all humanity is unconditional, salvation is quite another matter. This point is clarified in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Thus, while the whole world is the beneficiary of God's love, only those who believe in Him (with all that

“believe” implies) will receive salvation. A similar distinction is made by Ellen White in the following statement:

“Calling and justification are not one and the same thing. Calling is the drawing of the sinner to Christ, and it is a work wrought by the Holy Spirit upon the heart, convicting of sin, and inviting to repentance.”²¹

Jesus clarified the conditional nature of salvation to Nicodemus when He declared, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3. Later, when the rich, young ruler asked Him, “What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”, Jesus answered, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” Matthew 19:16–17. Many in contemporary Adventism would call someone a legalist for giving an answer like that, but these words came from the lips of our Lord Himself. When the lawyer to whom Jesus told the good Samaritan story asked Him the same question, Jesus gave the same answer. See Luke 10:25–28. Ellen White echoes the words of Jesus in the following statements:

“In reply to this question Jesus told him that obedience to the commandments of God was necessary if he would obtain eternal life; and He quoted several of the commandments which show man’s duty to his fellow men. . . .

“Christ’s dealing with the young man is presented as an object lesson. God has given us the rule of conduct which every one of His servants must follow. It is obedience to His law, not merely a legal obedience, but an obedience which enters into the life, and is exemplified in the character. God has set His own standard of character for all who would become subjects of His kingdom.”²²

“When the lawyer came to Christ, saying, ‘Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ the Saviour did not say,

Believe, only believe, and you will be saved. ‘What is written in the law?’ He said; ‘how readest thou?’ . . . Here the false doctrine that man has nothing to do but believe is swept away. Eternal life is given to us on the condition that we obey the commandments of God.”²³

“The keeping of these [ten] commandments comprises the whole duty of man, and presents the conditions of eternal life. Now the question is, Will man comply with the requirements? Will he love God supremely and his neighbor as himself? There is no possible way for man to do this in his own strength. The divine power of Christ must be added to the effort of humanity.”²⁴

“His [the Christian’s] perfect obedience to all God’s commandments, opens to him the gates of the Holy City.”²⁵

“The gospel that is to be preached to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples presents the truth in clear lines, showing that obedience is the condition of gaining eternal life.”²⁶

Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Romans 1:16. One chapter later he declared, “Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” Romans 2:13. “And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.” Hebrews 5:9. The Old Testament, of course, is the basis of Paul’s teachings: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” Proverbs 28:13. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Isaiah 55:7.

None of this sounds like unconditional salvation. Ellen White, as we have seen already, agrees with scripture:

“There are conditions to our receiving justification and sanctification, and the righteousness of Christ.”²⁷

“The unconditional pardon of sin never has been, and never will be.”²⁸

“Let none say that there are no conditions to salvation. There are decided conditions, and everyone is put to the strenuous task of diligently inquiring and searching for the truth from God’s Word. At the peril of our souls we must know the prescribed conditions given by Him who has given His own life to save us from ruin.”²⁹

“There is no salvation without repentance. No impenitent sinner can believe with his heart unto righteousness. Repentance is described by Paul as godly sorrow for sin, that ‘worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.’ 2 Corinthians 7:10.”³⁰

“No man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place.”³¹

“Without regeneration through faith in His blood, there is no remission of sins, no treasure for any perishing soul.”³²

“The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.”³³

“A knowledge of Christ will avail nothing unless we become like Him in character. . . . Christ is of no value to us unless He is formed within, the hope of glory.”³⁴

In His discourse to Nicodemus, Jesus clarified that belief and obedience are one and the same thing: “The one believing into the Son has everlasting life; but the one disobeying the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” John 3:36, Interlinear Bible. This text underscores just how much is meant by the Biblical command to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Acts 16:31. Thus Ellen White defines belief in Jesus as follows:

“To believe on Christ is to have God dwell in the soul and have not merely the acts, but the words, and even the thoughts, brought into subjection to the Spirit of Christ.”³⁵

“We hear many say, ‘Believe, believe; all that you have to do is to believe in Jesus.’ But it is our privilege to inquire, ‘What does this belief take in? and what does it comprehend?’ There are many of us who have a nominal faith but we do not bring that faith into our characters. . . . We must have that faith which works by love and purifies the soul, that this belief in Christ will lead us to put away everything that is offensive in His sight.”³⁶

As we have seen, Sequeira denies that salvation is a provision which cannot become reality apart from belief and repentance (p. 8). Yet, Ellen White repeatedly uses the word “provision” to describe the salvation God offers:

“Contemplating the fullness of the provision that God has made whereby every son and daughter of Adam may be saved, we are led to exclaim with John, ‘Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.’ 1 John 3:1.”³⁷

“Although a fearful separation had taken place between God and man, yet provision had been made through the

offering of His beloved Son by which man might be saved. But their only hope was through a life of humble repentance, and faith in the provision made.”³⁸

“Christ died for us, making full and abundant provision for our redemption. Although by our disobedience we have merited God’s displeasure and condemnation, yet He has not forsaken us, leaving us to grapple with the power of the enemy in our own finite strength.”³⁹

“Christ commenced the work of redemption just where the ruin began. He made provision to reinstate man in His God-like purity if he accepted the help brought him.”⁴⁰

“He [the sinner] simply grasps by faith the free and ample provision made in the blood of Christ. He believes the promises of God, which through Christ are made unto him sanctification and righteousness and redemption.”⁴¹

“Every provision has been made for the salvation of the fallen race. All power has been given to Him who offered Himself as a sacrifice for the redemption of every son and daughter of Adam.”⁴²

“He [Paul] could rejoice in the fact that provision had been made for his redemption, through the merits of the blood of the Only Begotten Son of God, and that pardon could be written against his name.”⁴³

“Salvation is the free gift of God, and it is to be received by faith. It is provided for the repentant soul by Christ through the great plan of redemption.”⁴⁴

Notice not only that the words “provision” and “provided” are used here with reference to salvation but also this provision is offered so that men and women *might* be saved through faith and repentance. No hint of anything unconditional can be found in these statements. In per-

haps her clearest distinction on this point, the prophet declares:

“He is elected [to salvation] who will have faith continually, and who will be obedient to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. The *provisions* of redemption are free to all; the *results* of redemption will be enjoyed by those who have complied with the conditions.”⁴⁵ (Emphasis in original.)

Sequeira does maintain, in contrast with evangelical Adventism, that righteousness by faith includes both justification and sanctification (pp. 95, 101). However, he embraces a far more fundamental principle of the evangelicals—the idea that salvation is by justification alone. While he does not deny the importance or necessity of sanctification and the inward work of grace, Sequeira claims that these are the results of salvation, not the grounds or means thereof. In his own words:

“The righteousness God obtained for all humanity in Christ [justification] is full of merit. It is this alone that qualifies us for heaven, now and in the judgment (see Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:5). The righteousness God produces in us, on the other hand, has no saving value” (p. 170).

“We describe the second aspect of salvation—the subjective gospel—as the *imparted* righteousness of Christ. This is what gives evidence of the reality of the imputed righteousness of Christ in the life. It does not contribute in the slightest way to our qualification for heaven; it witnesses, or demonstrates, what is already true of us in Christ. Imparted righteousness does not qualify us for heaven” (p. 32). Emphasis in original.

“Righteousness ‘in Christ’ [justification] is the only means of our salvation, and unless we resist and reject it, it fully qualifies us for heaven both now and in the judgment (see Acts 13:39; Romans 3:28; 10:4; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5). ‘Christ in you’ witnesses to—or gives evidence of—our salvation in Christ, but it is not meritorious (see Matthew 5:14–16; John 13:34–35; 14:12; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8)” (p. 33).

“Justification means *all* of Christ’s righteousness that He provided for us so that nothing more is required of us to qualify for heaven” (p. 103).

Moreover, reminiscent of Robert Brinsmead and Geoffrey Paxton during the 1970s,⁴⁶ Jack Sequeira makes the following claim:

“The gospel of faith plus works, or justification plus sanctification, is at the heart of Roman Catholic theology. It is a subtle form of legalism” (p. 25).

The above statements begin to expose the contradictions in the author’s theology. On the one hand, he says that “Christ in you” and the work of sanctification have no merit or saving value (pp. 33, 170). On the other hand, he describes both justification and sanctification (objective and subjective gospels) as aspects of salvation (pp. 31–32). On the one hand, he insists that the subjective work of imparted righteousness “does not contribute in the slightest way to our qualification for heaven” (p. 32). On the other hand, he states that the Holy Spirit’s work “subjectively changes a person’s status from being ‘in Adam’ to being ‘in Christ’ and qualifies him for heaven” (p. 136). He cannot be right both times.

Despite the author’s ambiguity on this point, the Bible is exceedingly clear that sanctification and the Spirit’s work in us are part of the means of salvation, not merely

the fruits thereof. Though Sequeira piles a mass of Scripture around two of the statements cited earlier, not one of these passages denies that sanctification and the internal work of grace have merit or saving value. In fact, one verse which he quotes twice (pp. 33, 170) says exactly the opposite:

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Titus 3:5.

This passage clearly states that the Spirit’s work of regeneration and renewal are an actual part of the saving process, not its result. Another passage makes this even clearer:

“. . . God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

These verses should forever settle the question of whether regeneration and sanctification are part of the means of salvation or simply the results thereof. Moreover, the fact that these verses speak of renewal and sanctification “in [or by] the Spirit” makes it impossible for Sequeira to claim that the work here described is part of the completed “objective” salvation of all men—involving justification, sanctification, and glorification—which he claims was accomplished at Calvary (p. 30). These texts clearly maintain that regeneration and sanctification *by the Spirit*, here and now in the believers’ lives, are an integral part of how God saves us. Ellen White agrees:

“Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and *in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.*”⁴⁷ (All emphasis added unless otherwise noted.)

“The world is seeking for those things that perish with the using; its diligence and activity are not exerted to obtain

the salvation gained through the imparted righteousness of Christ.”⁴⁸

In contrast with Sequeira, who claims that “imparted righteousness does not qualify us for heaven” (p. 32), Ellen White states the following:

“Jesus says: . . . Through faith in My name He [the Father] will impart to you the sanctification and holiness which will fit you for His work in a world of sin, and *qualify* you for an immortal inheritance in his kingdom.”⁴⁹

She also writes:

“It is Christ formed within that makes a man worthy of receiving the crown of life, that fadeth not away.”⁵⁰

Some have claimed that when Sequeira says that sanctification does not contribute to our qualification for heaven, he is simply echoing Ellen White’s statement that “the righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven.”⁵¹ But she never speaks of title and fitness as though one has saving value and the other does not, as Sequeira says (p. 170). In another statement, Ellen White declares that “both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ.”⁵²

If Christ is the source of both, how could either lack saving value?

Ellen White is also clear that imputed righteousness, our title to heaven, requires and includes obedience:

“Little departures from right, little indulgences, seem a trifling thing at present, but Satan will lead us on a track that will separate us from righteousness and from God. We want not our ways but God’s ways. We want to strive with all the powers of being to bruise Satan under our feet

and be sure that we are right with God, that we have a clear title to our immortal inheritance.”⁵³

“God requires of all His subjects obedience, entire obedience to all His commandments. He demands, now as ever, perfect righteousness as the only title to heaven. Christ is our hope and our refuge. *His righteousness is imputed only to the obedient.*”⁵⁴

“By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him.”⁵⁵

“Through the imputed righteousness of Christ, the sinner may feel that he is pardoned, and may know that the law no more condemns him, *because he is in harmony with all its precepts.*”⁵⁶

Other statements make it clear that imparted righteousness and the keeping of God’s commandments are very much a part of the means of our acceptance with God:

“It was impossible for the sinner to keep the law of God, which was holy, just, and good; but this impossibility was removed by the impartation of the righteousness of Christ to the repenting, believing soul. The life and death of Christ in behalf of sinful man were for the purpose of restoring the sinner to God’s favor, through imparting to him the righteousness that would meet the claims of the law and find acceptance with the Father.”⁵⁷

“ ‘And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.’ . . . This is the pledge that God’s people are to make in these last days. Their acceptance with God depends on a faithful fulfillment of the terms of their agreement with Him. God includes in His covenant all who will obey Him.”⁵⁸

“Many of those who claim to believe the testing truths for these last days, act as though God took no note of their disrespect of, and manifest disobedience to, the principles of His holy law. The law is the expression of His will, and it is through obedience to that law that God proposes to accept the children of men as His sons and daughters.”⁵⁹

“There is no way back to innocence and life except through repentance for having transgressed God’s law, and faith in the merits of the divine sacrifice, who has suffered for your transgressions of the past; and you are accepted in the Beloved on condition of obedience to the commandments of your Creator.”⁶⁰

“Through Jesus there is divine sympathy between God and the human beings who, through obedience, are accepted in the Beloved. Thus humanity conforms to the will of divinity, fulfilling the words, ‘If ye love me, keep my commandments.’ John 14:15.”⁶¹

“Through obedience to all the commandments of God, we are accepted in the Beloved.”⁶²

Never is there any hint in Scripture or in Ellen White’s writings that one aspect of Christ’s righteousness is inferior to another. When Ellen White speaks of title and fitness, she is simply referring to the start and the completion of the experience of salvation. Never does she speak of justification as the root or basis of salvation, and sanctification as the fruit thereof. She does speak of obedience as the fruit of faith and inward holiness,⁶³ as does the Bible (see James 2:18), but not as the fruit of a finished salvation. We will see that according to both Scripture and Ellen White, salvation must be worked out through the process of sanctified obedience.

Echoing a favorite line of Desmond Ford,⁶⁴ Mr. Sequeira stated, during the series of meetings noted earlier,

that our standing in the judgment is based “not on the sin question, but on the Son question.”⁶⁵ However, the words of Jesus plainly contradict this in Matthew 25:34-46, as does Ellen White:

“In the day of judgment the course of the man who has retained the frailty and imperfection of humanity will not be vindicated. For him there will be no place in heaven; he could not enjoy the perfection of the saints in light. He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God.”⁶⁶

“The only question asked in the judgment will be, ‘Have they been obedient to My commandments?’ ”⁶⁷

Sequeira’s claim that the work of Christ in us lacks merit (p. 33) is also contradicted by Ellen White. She writes:

“Our Redeemer determined on nothing less than that through His merits the love of God should be transfused through the soul that believes in Him. As our life, the vitality of God’s love is to circulate through every part of our nature.”⁶⁸

“A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character.”⁶⁸

“Those who are loyal to the truth will, through the merits of Christ, overcome all weakness of character which has led them to be molded by every varying circumstance of life.”⁷⁰

“Could we see all the activity of human instrumentality, as it appears before God, we would see that only the work

accomplished by much prayer, which is *sanctified* by the merit of Christ, will stand the test of the judgment.”⁷¹

“We may make daily progress in the upward path to holiness and yet we find still greater heights to be reached; but every stretch of the spiritual muscles, every taxation of heart and brain, brings to light the abundance of the supply of grace essential for us as we advance.

“The more we contemplate these riches, the more we will come into possession of them, and the more we shall reveal the merits of Christ’s sacrifice.”⁷²

“We must seek to separate sin from us, relying upon the merits of the blood of Christ; and then in the day of affliction, when the enemy presses us, we shall walk among the angels.”⁷³

“When the law of God is thus implanted in the soul of the believer, he is approaching eternal life through the merits of Jesus. . .

“Here in this life is the testing, trying time. The angels of God are watching the development of character, and weighing moral worth. The whole question is settled in this: Is he obedient or disobedient to the commandments of God? has the sinner been transformed in this world, through the merits of Christ, to an obedient servant, so that he is fitted to join the heavenly society?”⁷⁴

“Through the merits of His blood, you may overcome every spiritual foe, and remedy every defect of character.”⁷⁵

These statements clarify beyond misunderstanding that the merits of Christ are imparted to the believer’s experience, and are not merely blotches on a record book light-years away.

The following statement is perhaps clearest of all:

“Becoming partakers of His divine nature, we are to learn to discern the temptations of Satan, and, in the strength of His grace, overcome the corruptions that are in the world through lust. He who was once a sinful human being may be refined and purified through the *imparted* merits of Christ, and stand before his fellow men as a laborer together with God.”⁷⁶

This issue of merit deserves a bit more attention. The first chapter of the Ellen White compilation *Faith and Works* is from Manuscript 36, 1890,⁷⁷ it is thought by many to be Ellen White’s definitive word on justification by faith. One of the most commonly quoted statements from this chapter is the following:

“There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone.”⁷⁸

We will later explain the distinction between man’s “own” works, as described in the writings of Ellen White, and the works of sanctified obedience. For now we are dealing with the subject of merit. Why does Inspiration say it is impossible for human beings to merit anything from God? The context of the following statement from *Faith and Works* explains why:

“There has been too little educating in clear lines upon this point. The Lord has lent man His own goods in trust—means which He requires be handed back to Him when His providence signifies and the upbuilding of His cause demands it. The Lord gave the intellect. He gave the health and the ability to gather earthly gain. He created the things of earth. He manifests His divine power to develop all its riches. They are His fruits from His own husbandry.

He gave the sun, the clouds, the showers of rain, to cause vegetation to flourish. As God's employed servants you gathered in His harvest to use what your wants required in an economical way and hold the balance for the call of God. You can say with David, 'For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given Thee.' 1 Chronicles 29:14. *So the satisfaction of creature merit cannot be in returning to the Lord His own, for it was always His own property to be used as He in His providence should direct. . . .*

"Now not a soul can give God anything that is not already His. Bear this in mind: 'All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given Thee.' This must be kept before the people wherever we go—that we possess nothing, can offer nothing in value, in work, in faith, which we have not first received of God and upon which He can lay His hand any time and say, They are Mine—gifts and blessings and endowments I entrusted to you, not to enrich yourself, but for wise improvement to benefit the world.

"The creation belongs to God. The Lord could, by neglecting man, stop his breath at once. All that he is and all that he has pertains to God. The entire world is God's. Man's houses, his personal acquirements, whatever is valuable or brilliant, is God's own endowment. It is all His gift to be returned back to God in helping to cultivate the heart of man. The most splendid offerings may be laid upon the altar of God, and men will praise, exalt, and laud the giver because of his liberality. In what? 'All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.' No work of man can merit for him the pardoning love of God, but the love of God pervading the soul will lead him to do those things which were always required of God and that he should do with pleasure. He has done only that which duty ever required of him."⁷⁹

This passage says it all. The impossibility of creature merit does not mean that man is denied any participatory role in salvation beyond passive belief. Neither this statement nor any other inspired statement teaches that. The absence of creature merit simply means that man can take no credit for his role in the process, because nothing he possesses at any time is his own. His cooperative effort is as much a gift of God as the power bestowed at conversion and ever after. Thus, while the merits of Christ can be imparted to us through regeneration and sanctification, it is impossible for merit of any kind to originate with us. As with the payment of tithes and offerings, we can only return to God what was His in the first place. This is the reason salvation cannot be earned. The process of earning requires two parties, each with independent resources, the one exchanging something of his for something belonging to the other. An employee gives to his employer time and effort, and in turn the employer gives the employee monetary pay. With man and God such an arrangement can never be, for everything in man's stewardship—self-discipline, courage, talent, wealth—was God's to begin with. None need fear that stressing an active human role in salvation is going to give cause for boasting as long as this principle is understood.

The analogy of wages and earning is amplified further by Paul when he states that “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23. Why is the result of sin a wage while eternal life is a gift? Because, unlike righteousness, sin does originate with us. Therefore, when we give God disobedience, we give Him something that was not His to start with, and thus we earn from Him the appropriate consequences. Earlier we quoted an Ellen White statement which speaks of how “by our disobedience we have merited God's displeasure and condemnation.”⁸⁰ Thus, while salvation cannot be merited, condemnation

can be. This is why the consequences of sin are described by the apostle as deserved (see Romans 6:23), while the consequences of faith and obedience are not. See Romans 4:4. The only righteousness we can give God is what He first gives us.

In describing the scope of justification, Sequeira again mixes historic with evangelical Adventism, and does so without any inspired authority. He correctly states that justification not only declares but also makes us righteous (p. 104). However, he also claims that the forgiving aspect of justification applies not only to past sins, but involves “the just penalty of the law on behalf of our sins, past, present, and future” (p. 103). This sounds disturbingly like the “overarching forgiveness” so popular among teachers of the New Theology,⁸¹ and often illustrated by pictures of a man wearing a black suit with a white umbrella overhead.⁸² It is important that we understand what *is not* the issue here. No one in Adventism has ever denied that Calvary’s sacrifice is capable of forgiving and restoring all human beings who have ever lived. Those who take issue with Sequeira’s concept here have no illusion that the blood of Jesus’ sacrifice was not once for all. What we question is the notion that *forgiveness* is once for all, which is what Jack Sequeira is teaching. This section in his book (p. 103) says nothing about anyone denying the completeness of Christ’s sacrifice. What it attacks is the belief that justification is for past sins only, implying clearly that when we believe on Jesus, we are forgiven not only for our past, but for the present and future sins as well. Those who have compared this teaching to the Catholic doctrine of indulgences can hardly be blamed for their protest.

The notion that tomorrow’s sins are forgiven today is utterly foreign to the inspired consensus. To teach overarching forgiveness is to teach that sin is inevitable, and the Bible denies this. “My little children, these things

write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. "If" is a conditional word. Forgiveness is available *if* we sin, not *when*.

Ellen White is equally clear about the scope of God's forgiveness:

"Christ bears the penalty of man's past transgressions, and by imparting to man His righteousness, makes it possible for man to keep God's holy law."⁸³

"The only way in which he [the sinner] can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure."⁸⁴

Nowhere is it stated that Christ's righteousness stands in the place of sanctified success, for indeed, Christ's righteousness and sanctified success are one and the same thing.

Brother Sequeira maintains, as many Christians do, that the law was never intended by God to be a means of salvation (pp. 16, 156, 157, 173). This is a half-truth which, as is often the case, conveys the effect of an untruth. In the first place, Sequeira himself acknowledges the role of the law as a fundamental aspect of salvation characterized as our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (p. 16). Paul makes a similar statement in Romans 3:20, when he declares that "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Unless the law performs this vital function, there can be no salvation, for unless we know we are sinners, we will feel no need of a Saviour. If the process goes no further, it is true that the law cannot save us, for it is not enough merely to be convicted of sin. The heart and life must be surrendered to God's control, without reservation. Thus the new covenant is realized, in which the law ceases to

be the outward lash of guilt, and becomes instead the motivation of the heart. See Deuteronomy 30:14; Jeremiah 31:31–33; Romans 10:8; 2 Corinthians 3:3; Hebrews 8:8–10. No wonder the Bible states elsewhere, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.” Psalm 19:7. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Psalm 119:11.

In short, the law cannot be a method of salvation so long as it remains outside of the heart. By contrast, when conversion takes place and the law is written upon the heart, it does become an instrument of our salvation. This gives new meaning to the Biblical statement that Christians are no longer “under the law, but under grace.” Romans 6:14. We find ourselves under the law when the law is outside our hearts, convicting us of sin and seeking to bring us to Christ. See Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24. However, once the law is within us by means of the New Covenant, we are no longer under it, for it has ceased to be merely a mechanism of guilt, and has become the joyful motivation of our lives. Thus the psalmist declares, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” Psalm 119:18.

When Jack Sequeira distinguishes the “works of faith” from the “works of the law” (pp. 96–97), he highlights an important Biblical truth which much of contemporary Adventism has failed to clarify. Unfortunately, he fails to perceive the force of his own point, since he makes no effort elsewhere to distinguish these two types of works. Indeed, the implications of this distinction are devastating for one of his main arguments that believers are not saved by sanctification (pp. 25, 32, 33, 170). The existence of these two kinds of works is obvious from the fact that in certain passages, scripture says we are not saved by works (see Romans 3:20, 28; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8–9), yet in other passages it says we are. See Romans 2:13; Philippians 2:12–13; James 2:24. It is im-

portant to note that the second group of these passages do not speak of works as a *response* to justification, but as part of the prerequisite and means thereof. We read that “the doers of the law *shall* be justified” Romans 2:13; “*by* works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” James 2:24. As we have already seen, Paul and James are simply reflecting Old Testament teachings on the forsaking of sin as a prerequisite for God’s forgiveness. See Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7. It is not that forgiveness is merited by the relinquishing of sin, but that the harboring of any known sin is a mortal threat to the work of grace. The two simply cannot abide with one another.

Both Paul and James illustrate the difference between the works of the law and the works of faith with three incidents from the life of Abraham. We speak here of the birth of Ishmael, the birth of Isaac, and Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. Paul states that the birth of Ishmael by Hagar was according to the flesh, while the birth of Isaac by Sarah was according to the promise. See Galatians 4:23. God had promised Abraham that he would have an heir, and that his descendants would be as numberless as the stars of heaven. See Genesis 15:5. However, Abraham, prefiguring legalists in every age, chose to devise his own way of carrying out God’s plan. God wished to illustrate, through the birth of the promised heir, man’s total reliance on Heaven’s power in the faith relationship that brings salvation. Yet the birth of Ishmael through Hagar required no such miracle, for Hagar was fully fertile and capable of childbearing. By contrast, Sarah was not. Hence the birth of Isaac required just such a miracle.

However, one point is often forgotten here. Abraham had a part to act in the conception of Isaac just as he did in the conception of Ishmael. Isaac was not virgin-born, as was Jesus. The book of Hebrews speaks of Christ taking on “the seed of Abraham.” Hebrews 2:16. The Greek word here is *spermatos*, which refers to Abraham’s physi-

cal substance. Obviously, the same physical act which resulted in the birth of one son was essential to the birth of the other. The difference was that one required no faith, while the other did. One was an act performed outside of God's direction; the other was performed *by* His direction and through His miraculous power.

Abraham's faith in the conception of Isaac was even more graphically illustrated by his willingness to sacrifice the son of promise on the summit of Mount Moriah at God's command. Thus James asks, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered his son Isaac upon the altar?" James 2:21.

Here we see the two kinds of works plainly distinguished. One kind is motivated by self, the other is motivated and empowered by God. The first involves human power by itself, the second involves the cooperation of the human with the Divine. The first will save no one, for it is powerless to remove sin completely from the life. The second is the means by which Biblical salvation is accomplished. Thus the New Testament declares:

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:12-13.

"To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." Colossians 1:27-29.

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." James 2:24.

In Ellen White's words:

"By perfect obedience to the requirements of the law, man is justified. Only through faith in Christ is such obedience possible." ⁸⁵

“Divine agencies are combining with the human in reshaping the character according to the perfect pattern, and man is to work out that which God works in.”⁸⁶

“While God was working in Daniel and his companions ‘to will and to do of his good pleasure,’ they were working out their own salvation. Philippians 2:13”⁸⁷

“The work of gaining salvation is one of copartnership, a joint operation. . . . Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works.”⁸⁸

Again we must underscore the fact that none of these statements speak of a salvation already finished. We do not read that Daniel and his companions were working out their *response* to salvation, or that the work of *responding* to salvation is one of copartnership. Instead, we read of *working out* and *gaining* salvation. These passages remind us of another which we quoted earlier, which is worth quoting again:

“The gospel that is to be preached to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples presents the truth in clear lines, showing that obedience is the condition of gaining eternal life.”⁸⁹

Elsewhere the working out of our salvation is depicted as the climbing of Peter’s ladder:

“We are saved by climbing round after round of the ladder, looking to Christ, clinging to Christ, mounting step by step to the height of Christ, so that He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity are the rounds of this ladder. All these graces are to be manifested in the Christian character; and ‘if ye do these things, ye shall

never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 2 Peter 1:10-11."⁹⁰

"Everyone who would be perfect must mount this ladder of progress [see 2 Peter 1:5-7]. Many have neglected to put their feet upon the first rounds of the ladder. They want to mount to the topmost rounds without the trouble of climbing, but the only sure way is to take the painstaking way of going up by gradual advance, round after round."⁹¹

One is amazed at those who think the 1888 message, which Ellen White endorsed, removes obedience from an active role in our salvation. If so, why did the Lord's messenger pen the following words at the very time the Minneapolis General Conference was in session?

"There is a work that every one of us must do if we would be saved in the eternal world. But while we must on our part do what God has given us to do, we must realize that, having done all, we should come far short of salvation, did not the Lord on His part do that which finite, sinful man cannot do for himself. The religious life is wholly dependent upon the blending of both human and divine forces. Man is to work out his own salvation, but he cannot do this without divine aid; and although Christ has paid an infinite price to save the souls of men from everlasting ruin, He will not do that part of the work which was left for man to perform. . . .

"In the work of salvation, God requires the cooperation of man. The Christian must put forth strenuous exertions, and God will unite divine grace with his human effort. The servant of God must avail himself of the precious privileges and opportunities that are given to him, that he may become efficient and successful in copying the divine Pat-

tern. In the work of salvation the grace of Christ is united with a willing and obedient service, on the part of man. The sincerity of our profession of love to God will be made manifest by our earnest endeavors to fulfill the requirements of His law. Those who are the servants of God will renounce all evil habits and associations. There will be constant and earnest efforts made to lift up the soul from its defilement. . . .

“We are not to be altogether passive, thinking that there has been no task allotted to those who would win immortality. No; no; God calls upon us to do our best with the powers that He has given us—to put to the stretch every faculty, and exercise every ability, that we may not fail of everlasting life. That man can be saved in indolence, in inactivity, is an utter impossibility. There is a constant conflict before those who would win eternal life. Faith and works go hand in hand. That man has nothing to do but to believe, is a fallacy and a most dangerous doctrine.”⁹²

Notice again that Ellen White speaks of our acting a part in the “work of salvation,” not the work of responding to salvation. She speaks of our need to “win immortality.” It does not sound as if immortality has already been won for us.

Moreover, this passage states very clearly what our part in the saving process is—to put away sin. This point is pressed home even more toward the end of her article:

“You are to open the door of the heart. You are to clear away the rubbish from the portals, and throw wide the door, that the heavenly Guest may find a welcome and an entrance. Christ will not enter a heart that is defiled with sin. *It is our work to put away all iniquity.*”⁹³

Thus, according to Inspiration, sanctified obedience is not merely the result of salvation, but an integral part

thereof. By distinguishing “works of the law” from “works of faith,” Brother Sequeira has stumbled onto a profound truth. Tragically, he fails to perceive the implications of this truth, for it is his contention that no human works of any kind have a part in salvation. It is correct to say, as we have already seen from Ellen White, that “salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone.”⁹⁴ Yet we must understand clearly that by “faith alone” she means faith as opposed to all actions or ideas of the unconverted heart, not faith as distinct from the works faith produces. The problem with the idea of “faith *plus* works” is that it conveys the impression that some works originate with us, while others originate with God, with both acting a part in our salvation. By contrast, while the Bible doctrine of “faith *that* works” also gives obedience an active part in salvation, it makes clear that only obedience springing from faith can play this part, “for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Romans 14:23. The problem with many who claim to believe in “faith that works” is that they think faith provides us with salvation before it ever starts working! However, the Scriptures deny this by commanding believers to work out their own salvation. Philippians 2:12. Ellen White agrees:

“When souls are converted, their salvation is not yet accomplished. They then have the race to run. An arduous struggle is before them.”⁹⁵

“He [Christ] has undertaken the work of salvation, and shown before unfallen worlds and the heavenly family that the work He has begun He is able to complete.”⁹⁶

When we discuss what it means to be saved by faith or by works, we need to ask the all-important question: *What is salvation?* Too many people think of salvation simply as a ticket to heaven, but the Bible offers a much broader picture. The first reference to salvation in the

New Testament declares, "And thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21. Does this process of saving man from sin involve human effort as well as divine initiative? sanctification as well as justification? According to Scripture, the answer is an emphatic "Yes":

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:12-13. *See also:* 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 6:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 12:4; James 4:7; 1 John 3:3. On the basis of these passages we are forced to conclude that human effort, empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit, is an integral part of the salvation process. Since being ultimately saved *from* sin is what Biblical salvation is all about, it follows that being saved and being sinless are one and the same thing. The same Ellen White who declares that we cannot say we are sinless,⁹⁷ also warns us that we cannot say we are saved.⁹⁸ She makes this connection most clearly in the following statements:

"If we are disobedient, our characters are out of harmony with God's moral rule of government, and it is stating a falsehood to say, 'I am saved.' No one is saved who is a transgressor of the law of God, which is the foundation of His government in heaven and in earth."⁹⁹

"Jesus regained heaven for man by bearing the test that Adam failed to endure; for He obeyed the law perfectly, and all who have a right conception of the plan of redemption will see that they cannot be saved while in transgression of God's holy precepts."¹⁰⁰

"You have been provided with means whereby you may ascertain what to do to make your calling and election

sure. Search the Scriptures, and you will find that not a son or daughter of Adam is elected to be saved in disobedience to God's commandments." ¹⁰¹

The process of being saved from sin will, of course, be completed before Jesus comes. See 2 Peter 3:11-14; 1 John 3:3. Only then, when the voice of God frees His people from their captivity and the accolade is thundered from the sky, "They come! they come! holy, harmless, and undefiled," ¹⁰² will such claims be safe on the lips of God's saints. Only God knows the depth of every heart; thus, it is He alone who can pronounce the human soul free from sin.

Some will recall certain inspired passages which speak of salvation occurring in the past tense. Titus 3:5 does speak of how "he saved us," in terms of a deed already done. Ellen White declares that the perishing sinner, looking to Calvary, may say, "I need not remain a moment longer unsaved." ¹⁰³ The difference between these passages and those cited above, is the difference between salvation from *known* sin, which the believer can be aware of, and salvation from *all* sin, a process whose completion time is known only to God. Ellen White makes this distinction in her use of the passage from Colossians 2:10: "Ye are complete in him." In one passage she writes, "Every soul may say: . . . 'He clothes me with His righteousness, which answers all the demands of the law. I am complete in Him who brings in everlasting righteousness.'" ¹⁰⁴ Yet in another passage she states, "It is our lifework to be reaching forward to the perfection of Christian character, striving constantly for conformity to God's will. Day by day we are to press upward, ever upward, until of us it can be said, 'Ye are complete in Him.' Colossians 2:10." ¹⁰⁵ These statements are not at all in conflict. They simply describe two different processes—one whose completion time the believer can know, the other whose completion time is

known only to God, since He alone knows the secrets of the heart.

When an evangelical Christian asks a Seventh-day Adventist, “Are you saved?” the most Biblically faithful answer we can give is, “I am *being* saved.” Sequeira insists that believers can say “we are saved,” “we are being saved,” and “we will be saved,” in reference to the work of justification, sanctification, and glorification (p. 119). The problem is: how can Sequeira describe sanctification as “being saved” while at the same time insisting that “the righteousness God produces in us, on the other hand, has no saving value”? (p. 170). The reader is again confronted with abject confusion.

Sequeira is quite wrong when he equates the gospel of “faith plus works” with the gospel of “justification plus sanctification” (p. 25), for sanctification is not a matter of faith plus works, but consists of faith *that* works. He strays even farther afield with his claim that the inclusion of man’s activity in the gospel, sanctified or otherwise, is to embrace the heart of Catholicism (p. 25).

This represents a profound misunderstanding of Catholic error. The problem with the papal system, as with New Testament Judaism, is not its emphasis on personal holiness, but the fact that the holiness it emphasizes is superficial and selective. In describing medieval Catholicism, Ellen White observes:

“They were taught not only to look to the pope as their mediator, but to trust to works of their own to atone for sin. Long pilgrimages, acts of penance, the worship of relics, the erection of churches, shrines, and altars, the payment of large sums to the church—these and many similar acts were enjoined to appease the wrath of God or to secure His favor.”¹⁰⁶

Human merit is fundamental to Roman Catholicism, which is why Ellen White states that, “If any man can

merit salvation by anything he may do, then he is in the same position as the Catholic to do penance for his sins. Salvation, then, is partly of debt, that may be earned as wages."¹⁰⁷ We discussed this point earlier, but creature merit is totally different from the Creator's imparted merit. It is important to understand that Sequeira denies both. Not only does he say that human works lack merit, but that the same is also true of the work of Christ in us (p. 33). How the work of Christ anywhere can lack merit is truly a mystery to me.

In short, the problem with the Catholic system is its focus on human merit and human injunction, as distinct from heartfelt surrender and obedience to the requirements of God. We have seen that submission to the law as a prerequisite for justification, is a Bible doctrine (see Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; Romans 2:13; James 2:24), having nothing to do with papal error. It is genuinely tragic that any Seventh-day Adventist would confuse the surrender of the heart, and the resulting obedience, with the Catholic system of sacraments, penances, and pointless rituals.

It is interesting to note that Ellen White never uses the expression "our *own* works" to refer to sanctified obedience. As in the above statement, this term is used consistently to refer to religious activity outside of conversion. The following statement is typical:

"He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience, *but his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure.* If a man could save himself by his own works, he might have something in himself in which to rejoice. The effort that man makes in his own strength to obtain salvation, is represented by the offering of Cain. All that man can do *without Christ* is polluted with self-

ishness and sin; but that which is wrought through faith is acceptable to God.”¹⁰⁸

Lately, some have alleged that this whole discussion is really just an argument over definitions of words. However, the problem is that we have no right to define the words of Inspiration differently than the way in which Inspiration defines them. When we take the language of inspired writings and give it a slant of our own, our listeners are likely to be terribly confused when they read those writings and find this language used differently than the way we have used it. When the Bible says “salvation [comes] through sanctification” (2 Thessalonians 2:13), what right have we to claim that “Christian living is not the gospel”?¹⁰⁹ When God’s prophet, Ellen White, says “the gospel includes health reform,”¹¹⁰ what right have we to claim that the gospel is not good advice (p. 104)? If Inspiration commands us to work out our own salvation (see Philippians 2:12–13), and declares that the work of gaining salvation is one of God and man working together,¹¹¹ what right have we to teach that salvation has been gained for us already (p. 30)?

The bottom line of this discussion is enormously practical. I am convinced that neither Jack Sequeira nor the vast majority of those I know among his followers have any desire to condone sin. Yet they need to consider the logical and practical implications of what they teach. If God is counting on us to cooperate with Him in the working out of our salvation, our insistence that He has worked it out already will surely make a difference in the practical seriousness of our lives. The history of the Christian church, not to mention the landscape of contemporary Adventism, is painfully clear in this regard.

Many insist that the joy of having been saved at the cross develops in believers the love motivation that produces obedience. In our next chapter we will address at length the question of whether the whole world has, in fact, been saved. Suffice it to say that the love of Christ will never constrain us to respond to something that does not exist. Our obedience must always be motivated by loving gratitude for the restoring power of God available at our command. Nevertheless, gratitude for a finished salvation is quite another matter, as we will soon see.

Elder Sequeira seems to embrace another popular, but erroneous belief in contemporary Adventism—the idea that the Biblical “fight of faith” means fighting with self, but not with specific sins (p. 137). At the series of meetings we have referred to several times, Brother Sequeira stated, “God doesn’t need our help. All He wants is our permission.”¹¹² This “let go and let God” approach to Christian living is not found either in the Scriptures or in the Spirit of Prophecy. The apostle Paul writes: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Corinthians 7:1. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:12. “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Hebrews 12:4. Ellen White agrees:

“The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan.”¹¹³

“Our part is to put away sin, to seek with determination for perfection of character. As we thus work, God cooperates with us.”¹¹⁴

“The Lord does not propose to perform for us either the willing or the doing. This is our proper work. As soon as we earnestly enter upon the work, God’s grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort.”¹¹⁵

“Each day he must renew his consecration, each day do battle with evil. Old habits, hereditary tendencies to wrong, will strive for the mastery, and against these he is to be ever on guard, striving in Christ’s strength for victory.”¹¹⁶

“We have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts.”¹¹⁷

“There must be a constant, earnest struggling of the soul against the evil imaginings of the mind. There must be a steadfast resistance of temptation to sin in thought or act. The soul must be kept from every stain, through faith in Him who is able to keep you from falling.”¹¹⁸

The following statements thoroughly erase any distinction between battles with self—what some call the fight of faith—and the struggle against sin and Satan:

“The Christian life is a warfare. The apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith.”¹¹⁹

“God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected.”¹²⁰

“ We must come, we must resist the Devil, we must strive to enter in at the strait gate, we must run the race with patience, we must fight the fight of faith, we must wrestle with principalities and powers, we must agonize before God in prayer, if we would stand blameless before the throne of God. We must have the faith that works, or it will be powerless.”¹²¹

The Two Adams

ELDER Sequeira understands the apostle Paul as teaching that humanity is divided into two camps—one headed by Adam, the other by Christ (pp. 51–65). This is the basis of his understanding of the sin problem (pp.11–17) and its resolution through what he calls the “in Christ” motif (pp. 33–35)—an understanding which launches him into some very dangerous waters.

While Sequeira claims to deny the Augustinian doctrine of inherited guilt (p. 54), he effectively agrees with this doctrine, since he places the human sin problem outside the realm of choice. This becomes clear as he describes our sinful human nature as the “presence of sin” (pp. 30, 119), a definition commonly used by the New Theology.¹²² Just as he believes that God “unconditionally saved *all* humanity at the cross” (p. 8), Sequeira claims that *all* human beings are sinners (pp. 15, 52–53, 56). This concept forms the basis of his whole theology of salvation; this becomes obvious as he explains why choosing to sin cannot be the basis of our condemnation, for if it were—so he claims—our choice to live righteously would be the basis of our redemption. He writes:

“If we insist that verse 12 [of Romans 5] means that all men die because ‘all have sinned’ as Adam sinned—then we must make the analogy fit by arguing that all men live (or are justified) because all have obeyed as Christ obeyed. Such an argument turns justification by faith into salvation by works, the very opposite of Paul’s clear teaching in Romans.” p. 53.

Elder Sequeira is right. Both condemnation and salvation must either be completely by our choice, or completely by the choice of another. Unfortunately, he comes down clearly on the wrong side of this issue. As we noted before, he fails to understand the implications of distinguishing “works of faith” from the “works of the law” (pp. 96–97). Paul does not say that by the works of *faith* shall no one be justified; he says that by the works of *the law* shall no flesh be justified. See Romans 3:20, 28; Galatians 2:16. When both Paul and James describe the involvement of works in our justification (see Romans 2:13; James 2:24), they are referring to the works of faith—“faith which worketh by love.” Galatians 5:6. However, Sequeira obscures this point by saying that if people were to be saved because they obey “as Christ obeyed” (p. 53), this would be the opposite of Paul’s teaching that salvation is not by works (p. 53). Nevertheless, was Christ obedient through the works of the law, or through the works of faith? The Bible is clear that faith was the means of Christ’s obedience (see John 5:19, 30; 8:28), as it is the means of ours (see Hebrews 11:6; 1 Peter 2:21–22; 1 John 3:3, 7). Paul’s theology is dangerously distorted if we claim that the duplication of Christ’s obedience in believers’ lives is not part of salvation, and that if we say it is, we are teaching salvation by works. When Paul declares that our salvation is not by works, he is speaking of works motivated by self-interest, to use Sequeira’s own words (p. 97). Paul is not speaking of the works of the indwelling Christ in the lives of converted Christians.

Jack Sequeira claims that according to Romans 5, the whole human race sinned “in Adam,” and fell when he fell (pp. 34, 52). The verse in question is Romans 5:12: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

Sequeira believes that when this passage says “all men sinned,” it really means that all men sinned “in Adam,” not individually (pp. 52-54). He offers five reasons in support of his position (pp. 52-53), each of which we will examine:

1. He declares, “It simply isn’t true that everyone dies because they have personally sinned as Adam did. Babies, for example, die even though they have no personal sins” (p. 52).

For starters, this statement opens the door to the absurd. Not only do babies die despite the absence of personal sins, so do animals. Are we prepared to say that animals die because they, too, sinned “in Adam”? The problem here is that Mr. Sequeira contradicts himself again. He clearly seems to be talking about the first death in this context as the focus of Romans 5:12. However, two pages later (p. 54) he says that the first death is not the issue in this verse at all, that the second death is what Paul is talking about. Sequeira is right the second time, but his contradictions are likely to seriously confuse the reader. At this juncture it should be noted that eternal life and eternal death are mentioned several times in the New Testament as simply life or death. The context shows that the Bible is speaking of eternity. See John 11:26; 1 John 5:12.

2. Brother Sequeira states that because “all have sinned” is in the past tense, it must refer to the corporate fall of all humanity sinning “in Adam” (pp. 52-53). Yet this is not necessarily what the verse is saying. In no way, grammatically or otherwise, does the past tense require that this passage refer to a “single past historical event” (p. 52), as Sequeira claims. The past tense can just as easily mean that the choices of free and responsible beings on earth have thus far been universally rebellious. Indeed, the totality of inspired writings show that this is the correct understanding. The Scriptures state elsewhere,

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.” Ezekiel 18:20. No interpretation of Romans 5 or any other passage should be accepted without consideration of everything God has said.

Commenting on the language of Romans 5, Ellen White observes:

“Human beings have degenerated. One after another they fall under the curse, because sin has entered the world, and death by sin. . . . We may choose God’s way, and live; we may choose our own way, and know that sin has entered into the world, and death by sin.”¹²³

Elder Sequeira teaches that the whole human race fell “in Adam” (p. 34). The above statement disagrees. It says we fall “one after another,” and that by our own choice.

Ellen White presents the same thought elsewhere:

“If the race had ceased to fall when Adam was driven from Eden, we should now be in a far more elevated condition physically, mentally, and morally. But while men deplore the fall of Adam, which has resulted in such unutterable woe, they disobey the express injunctions of God, as did Adam, although they have his example to warn them from doing as he did in violating the law of Jehovah. Would that man had stopped falling with Adam. But there has been a succession of falls.”¹²⁴

The fact that Jack Sequeira equates sinful human nature with sin itself (pp. 11, 13, 17, 30, 119), adds a new twist to contemporary Adventist discussions on the human nature of Christ. We noted at the beginning that Sequeira does teach, in harmony with Scripture and Ellen White, that Christ took fallen human nature during the incarnation (pp. 146–147, 154). However, he claims that

this sinful human nature was an actual part of the sin which Christ bore as our Sacrifice, and that He bore this not vicariously, but in actuality (pp. 42–44). Sequeira insists that the salvation of all mankind at Calvary was not vicarious, but actual (pp. 42–43). He equates sinful nature with actual sin.

Sequeira is right when he says that Jesus was made to be what He originally was not (pp. 43–44); but this is not only true of His assumption of *fallen* humanity, but of *any part of* humanity. Even if Christ had taken the unfallen nature of Adam, He still would have become something which He had not been before. However, to insist, as Sequeira and others do, that it is wrong to say Christ “had” a sinful nature, because this would mean He was not quite sinless, is to embrace—at least partly—the unscriptural teaching that sin is involuntary.

3. Sequeira claims that because verses 13 and 14 of Romans 5 state that death reigned from Adam to Moses even over those who had not sinned as Adam did, that Paul must be teaching that all humanity fell “in Adam” (p. 53). Again, Mr. Sequeira is unclear as to which death Paul is talking about. As we saw before, he says on the very next page (p. 54) that Paul is speaking here of the second death, while on the previous page (p. 52) he says Paul is talking about the first death. It is ridiculous to view the physical death of a human being as evidence that all mankind sinned “in Adam,” unless we wish to say animals die for the same reason. Certainly it is true that both men and animals physically die *as a result of* Adam’s sin, but to say they die because they themselves sinned “in Adam” is quite a different matter.

4. Elder Sequeira states that subsequent verses in Romans 5 make it clear that Adam’s sin, not our personal sins, have brought judgment and condemnation to all humanity (p. 53). But to read these verses as stating that Adam made sin inevitable for all—or that Christ made

salvation certain for everyone—is to read much more into them than they actually say. This interpretation rests largely on *supplied* words in the King James Version. These words make it appear that the condemnation and salvation we receive through Adam and Jesus, respectively, have already occurred. The whole race was damned by Adam, according to this view, and thus the whole race has been pardoned by Christ. Thus verse 18 reads, in the KJV, “Therefore as by the offense of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life.” Note that the words in italics were *supplied* by the translators. A literal Greek rendition of this verse, in fact, does not indicate the past tense. Notice that the following verse states clearly, “by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (verse 19). This does not sound as if Calvary has already made everyone righteous.

This verse actually disproves the notion that Adam and Christ have respectively damned and saved all men whether they like it or not. Both sin and righteousness involve a conscious choice. Because the apostle states elsewhere that “all have sinned” (see Romans 3:23), he declares in Romans 5:19, that “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” since all responsible humans have chosen to follow Adam’s example. He then announces the good news: “By the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous.” This shows clearly that the making righteous promised here is not something Christ has already done for everyone, but something He has power to do for those who avail themselves of the free gift.

5. The author’s fifth and final point on Romans 5 is one we have addressed already—that, if we are saved because of our following Christ’s example, we are contradicting Paul’s teaching that salvation is not by works (p. 53). And we have already shown from both Scripture and Ellen

White that the reproduction of Christ's obedience in Christian lives—and believers' confidence in that obedience as the condition and means of salvation—is not at all the righteousness by works that Paul condemns.

Like many who hold a similar position, Sequeira refuses to say whether babies (or others) who die before accepting Christ will suffer the second death because of being born "in Adam." He writes: "Every baby is born subjectively under the reign of sin, condemnation, and death because of Adam's fall" (p. 61). "Thus the life we receive at birth is . . . a life that is condemned by the law. This means that the just demands of the law leave us facing nothing but eternal death (see John 3:36; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Revelation 20:14–15)" (p. 63). Again Sequeira quotes texts which fail to support his position. None of these verses teach the ghastly doctrine that mere birth consigns anyone to the second death. Those Adventists who truly believe this concept should be as consistent about it as other Christians, and proceed to develop their own form of infant baptism.

In summary, the theme of Romans 5 is simply this: Adam led the world into sin, and Christ has offered to lead us out of it. However, while salvation is offered to the whole world, it is accomplished for believers only. Ellen White makes this clear in the following statement:

"Learn from the Word of God how to form characters fitted for the country you are seeking. Know that Christ is to be set forth among you, and that all that was lost in Adam the cross of Christ fully restores to every *believing* soul."¹²⁵

Of course, other Bible passages are designated by Jack Sequeira and others as "universal texts"—verses which supposedly teach that the entire world was saved at Calvary. We need to look at each of them:

1. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Isaiah 44:22.

The context of this verse is clear, like others we have seen, that this blotting out is not an unconditional act of God. Two verses in the previous chapter make this obvious: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou *mayest* be justified." Isaiah 43:25-26. Notice that it says, "that thou *mayest* be justified." Putting God in our remembrance is a condition of justification, as is the forsaking of sin. See Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; Romans 2:13. When Isaiah 44:22 speaks of our sins having been blotted out, and then pleads for us to return to the Lord, it is simply reminding us that for the surrendered believer, returning to God must be continuous. It does not in any way teach that our sins are forgiven before we give them up and return to God.

In her commentary on this verse, Ellen White is clear that the promise of redemption here contained applies only to the penitent:

"The messages borne by Isaiah *to those who chose to turn from their evil ways* were full of comfort and encouragement. Hear the word of the Lord through His prophet: 'Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee'. Isaiah 44:21-22."¹²⁶

"To *all who seek Him with true repentance* God gives the assurance, 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee'. Isaiah 44:22."¹²⁷

2. “The true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John 1:9. The key word here is “lighteth,” meaning “enlightens.” No one in the present discussion argues with this. The light of God’s truth shines on everyone—even those in heathen lands.¹²⁸ But only those who, in faith, act on this enlightenment will be saved. *Enlightening* all men is by no means the same as *saving* all men.

3. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29.

This verse does not tell us *when* the Lamb of God will take away the sin of the world. We must go elsewhere to find this. Either the sin of the world will be taken away by choice from believers (see 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 John 3:2-3), or it will be destroyed with those who cling to it. See Revelation 21: 8. Never does the Bible teach that sin is involuntarily removed from anyone—at Calvary or anywhere else. Such an act would abolish free choice (see Joshua 24:15), which God will never do.

Ellen White is clear that the cross has not yet vanquished all evil, but that it will eventually do so:

“The cross of Calvary challenges, and will finally vanquish, every earthly and hellish power. In the cross all influence centers, and from it all influence goes forth.”¹²⁹

4. “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” John 3:17.

The key word here is “might,” which is obviously a conditional word. If I tell a friend that I *might* come visit him, in no way does this mean a visit is inevitable. The sacrifice of Jesus has made possible the salvation of every human being. However, to say that the world *might* be saved through Him is not the same as saying that the

world *will* be saved through Him, at Calvary or any other time.

5. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” John 12:32.

Drawing all men is not the same as *saving* all men. Ellen White makes this clear in her recounting of the Saviour’s confrontation with His enemies in the temple:

“Many of those who had anxiously awaited the result of the questioning of Jesus were finally to become His disciples, first drawn toward Him by His words on that eventful day.”¹³⁰

She speaks of how, at the end of the great controversy, “the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare, ‘Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.’ Revelation 15:3.”¹³¹

In the final analysis, all men and women will be drawn to Jesus at one time or another. However, only those who respond to this drawing with total surrender will be saved.

Verse 31 of John 12 speaks of the prince of this world being cast out. Later in this discussion we will address the implications of that statement.

6. “For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” John 12:47. This is a statement identical to John 3:17, since the word “judge” is the same as “condemn” in the Greek. In no way does this verse teach that Christ has saved, or will save, the entire world—only that the events of Calvary give Him the power to do so, provided we are willing.

7. “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.” Romans 11:32.

Mercy and salvation are not necessarily identical. Salvation always involves mercy, but mercy does not always involve salvation. God was merciful to Satan and his

angels by casting them out of heaven instead of destroying them. We will demonstrate shortly how every human being has been subject to God's mercy. However, this is not the same as universal salvation, at the cross or ever.

8. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Daniel 9:24. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Romans 5:10. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:19. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Colossians 1:20.

In each of these verses, the cross is clearly described as the means of our reconciliation with God, but nowhere do these passages say that this reconciliation was complete *at* Calvary. For example, Romans 5:10 does not say we were reconciled *at* the death of Jesus, but rather, *by* His death. The theme here is instrumental, not chronological. The same holds true for the passage in Colossians, as the context indicates, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister." Colossians 1:21–23. This is obviously talking about Christian believers who have given up their

past lives of sin, not a corporate event for all mankind, both wicked and righteous. The cross certainly has not kept the impenitent wicked from continuing in their evil deeds. It is true that the passage from Romans says we were reconciled “when we were enemies.” Only enemies of God need to be reconciled to God, and it is God who has taken the initial steps to make this happen. However, this is still an individual matter, for no enemy can be reconciled to an opponent unless both parties desire it. In the case of God and man, God has always sought reconciliation. It is man’s refusal to be reconciled with Him which has held up the great controversy.

This point is further clarified in 2 Corinthians 5, where Paul makes it clear that the reconciliation God seeks was not finished at Calvary. We read that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” 2 Corinthians 5:19. The word *reconciling* implies that the process is continuing and has not been finished, a point made even plainer in verse 20 by Paul’s insistence that the church invite the world to “be reconciled to God.” Notice that Paul does not invite the world to accept an already-finished reconciliation, but invites them as individuals to be reconciled to God. God does not need to be reconciled to man, for He has always sought man since sin entered the world. See Genesis 3:9. The only reconciliation the cross needs to accomplish is on man’s side of the equation.

Using the language of Daniel 9:24, Ellen White makes it clear that the reconciliation here described applies only to believers:

“Christ has made reconciliation for sin, and has borne all in ignominy, reproach, and punishment; and yet while bearing sin, He has brought in everlasting righteousness, so that the *believer* is spotless before God.”¹³²

Notice that she does not say the whole world is spotless before God because of Calvary—only those who believe.

Hebrews 2:17 declares:

“Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

Jesus’ work as High Priest began *after* the cross:

“No longer [after Calvary] need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Saviour was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens.”¹³³

In other words, the work of making reconciliation for sin is a part of Jesus’ High Priestly ministry, and was not finished at the cross.

Inspiration tells us how and when Paul was reconciled to God.

“He [Paul] was slain by the law, and then through repentance for his past transgression, and faith in Christ, he was reconciled to God and received pardon.”¹³⁴

The following passages likewise maintain that being reconciled to God is an individual matter, through faith, free will, and obedience:

“You have seen that all who come to Me, confessing their sins, I freely receive. Him that cometh to Me. I will in no wise cast out. *All who will, may be reconciled to God*, and receive everlasting life.”¹³⁵

“It is the work of conversion and sanctification to reconcile men to God by bringing them into accord with the principles of His law.”¹³⁶

“Christ is ready to do large things for us, to restore our natures by making us partakers of His divine nature. He waits to link our hearts with His heart of infinite love, in order that we may be fully reconciled to God.”¹³⁷

“Satan hates those who have taken hold of the strength of Christ, but those who have made a full surrender are reconciled to God.”¹³⁸

“The apparently dry branch, by being connected with the living vine, becomes a part of it. Fiber by fiber, and vein by vein, it adheres to the vine til it derives its life and nourishment from the parent stock. The graft buds, blossoms, and produces fruit. The soul, dead in trespasses and sins, must experience a similar process in order to be reconciled to God.”¹³⁹

“He [the sinner] must accept the provisions of the gospel; he must be reconciled to God through obedience to His law and faith in Jesus Christ.”¹⁴⁰

The following statements clarify the point we saw in the Bible verses we studied—that the role of Christ’s blood in reconciling us to God is instrumental, not chronological:

“It is by the law of God that the sinner is convicted. He sees his own sinfulness in contrast with the perfect righteousness which it enjoins, and this leads him to humility and repentance. He becomes reconciled to God through the blood of Christ.”¹⁴¹

“Let him [the sinner] look to the cross of Calvary, beholding there how mercy and truth have met together, how righteousness and peace have kissed each other. There, through the divine sacrifice, man may be reconciled to God.”¹⁴²

“By the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and His work of mediation in our behalf, we may become reconciled to God. The blood of Christ will prove efficacious to wash away the crimson stain of sin.”¹⁴³

“He who would lift himself up in His presence must first prostrate himself at the foot of the cross of Calvary. Then can men be reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, and be clothed with Christ’s righteousness.”¹⁴⁴

Two very decisive statements should settle once and for all the question of whether the whole world—believers and unbelievers alike—was reconciled to God when Jesus died:

“To him who accepts Christ as his righteousness, as his only hope, pardon is pronounced; for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. The justice, truth, and holiness of Christ, which are approved by the law of God, form a channel through which mercy may be communicated to the repenting, believing sinner.

*“Those who do not believe in Christ are not reconciled to God; but those who have faith in Him are hid with Christ in God.”*¹⁴⁵

“Many choose to follow their own way instead of God’s way. *They are not reconciled to God, neither can be, until self is crucified and Christ lives in the heart by faith.*”¹⁴⁶

9. “If one died for all, then were all dead; and. . . he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves.” 2 Corinthians 5:14–15.

Is this saying that all have “legally” died with Christ and therefore have received salvation? The passage does not say that. This verse does not tell us *when* all died, but Ephesians 2:1–2 tells us this: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in

time past ye walked according to the course of this world.” In other words, the reason Christ died for all is because all have died *through their choice to sin*. Human beings participate in Christ’s death only when they die to self and experience baptism. See Romans 6:3–7.

10. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” Titus 2:11.

Certainly the grace of God has *appeared* for the purpose of saving all men. Again, this does not say all men have been or will be saved—either corporately or individually, objectively or subjectively.

11. “Trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” 1 Timothy 4:10.

The Bible often gives the Lord titles and speaks of His powers in terms of what He is capable of doing, but which He may not necessarily choose to do, or is not allowed to do. The psalmist speaks of God with these words: “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.” Psalm 46:9. Notice that this is in the present tense. However, have all wars ceased to the end of the earth simply because God has the power to do this? For the same reason, though God is able to save all who come to Him (see Hebrews 7:25), all men have not been saved, nor will they be.

The following statements further clarify this point:

“Christ was strong to save the whole world. He wanted all. He could not endure the thought that one should be lost. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, that He could not save every one whom Satan’s power had laid low in death.”¹⁴⁷

“The Lord Jesus came to our world full of mercy, life, and light, ready to save those who should come unto Him. *But He can save no one against his will*. God does not force the conscience.”¹⁴⁸

“For fallen angels there has been no atonement; but for fallen man a full and ample offering has been made, to save to the uttermost all who shall come unto God by Him.”¹⁴⁹

“There is no excuse for sin or for indolence. Jesus has led the way, and He wishes us to follow in His steps. He has suffered, He has sacrificed as none of us can, that He might bring salvation within our reach.”¹⁵⁰

“The angelic host have come to that cross, and God Himself has bowed in acceptance of the sacrifice. It answers the demand of Heaven, and man can be saved through Jesus Christ, *if we only have faith in Him.*”¹⁵¹

12. “Who gave himself a ransom for all.” 1 Timothy 2:6. “That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Hebrews 2:9. “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2:2.

No one in the present discussion denies that Jesus died for all men, but none of these verses, nor any others, say that when Jesus died for all men He saved all men. The Scriptures simply do not support such a concept.

Again, the inspired pen tells us:

“Christ’s offering was exceedingly abundant to reach every soul that God had created. It could not be restricted so as not to exceed the number who would accept the great Gift. *All men are not saved*; yet the plan of redemption is not a waste because it does not accomplish all that its liberality has provided for. There must be enough and to spare.”¹⁵²

Despite the insistence of Jack Sequeira and others, no evidence can be found either in Scripture or the Spirit of Prophecy for any distinction between justification and

justification by faith. Ellen White is clear that “Pardon and justification are one and the same thing.”¹⁵³ She also speaks of the only conditions under which justification—the pardon of our sins—can occur:

“Sinners can be justified by God *only* when He pardons their sins, remits the punishment they deserve, and treats them as though they were really just and had not sinned, receiving them into divine favor and treating them as if they were righteous.”¹⁵⁴

And what are the conditions for this pardon God offers—the only circumstances under which justification takes place?

“When through repentance and faith we accept Christ as our Saviour, the Lord pardons our sins, and remits the penalty prescribed for the transgression of the law.”¹⁵⁵

“Christ pardons none but the penitent, but whom He pardons He first makes penitent. The provision made is complete, and the eternal righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of every believing soul.”¹⁵⁶

Notice we have the word *provision* again to describe the availability of justification.

No hint can be found in these statements of two justifications, one at the cross and the other here and now, as Sequeira teaches (p. 101).

Both Scripture and Ellen White describe the conditions for being elected, or predestined, to be saved:

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” 1 Peter 1:2.

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” 2 Peter 1:10.

This last verse, occurring in the context of Peter's ladder which we discussed earlier, speaks of our election being made sure through diligence and obedience. Commenting on this verse, Ellen White states very plainly:

“This is the *only* election regarding which the Bible speaks. Fallen in sin, we may become partakers of the divine nature and attain to a knowledge far in advance of any scientific learning.”¹⁵⁷

Sequeira and his defenders are in direct disagreement with God when they insist that because of Calvary, “all are elected to ‘full and complete salvation.’”¹⁵⁸

The prophet states elsewhere:

“God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement, will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. . . .

“Every soul is elected who will work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. He is elected who will put on the armor, and fight the good fight of faith. He is elected who will watch unto prayer, who will search the Scriptures, and flee from temptation. He is elected who will have faith continually, and who will be obedient to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”¹⁵⁹

“Wonderful possibilities are provided for every one who has faith in Christ. No walls are built to keep any living soul from salvation. The predestination, or election, of which God speaks, includes all who will accept Christ as a personal Saviour, who will return to their loyalty, to perfect obedience to all God's commandments.”¹⁶⁰

Some of Sequeira's apologists have used the following Ellen White statement to support the idea that everyone was saved at the cross:

“With His own blood He (Christ) has signed the emancipation papers of the race.”¹⁶¹

A total of seven Ellen White statements use this language.¹⁶² Most of these use words identical to those quoted above. However, two of these statements make it clear just what Ellen White means by this terminology:

“God sent His messenger from heaven, even His only begotten Son, to proclaim to all the inhabitants of the world: I have found a ransom. I have made a way of escape for all the perishing. I have your emancipation papers provided for you, sealed by the Lord of heaven and earth. You *may* have freedom *upon the condition* of faith in Him who is *able to save* unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. . . . It is not because the mercy, the grace, the love of the Father and the Son are not ample, and have not been freely bestowed, that they (sinners) do not rejoice in pardoning love, but it is because of their unbelief, because of their choice of the world, that they are not comforted with the grace of God. It is their love of disobedience, their pleasure in sin, their enjoyment of rebellion, that have blunted their perceptions until they fail to discern the things which make for their peace.”¹⁶³

“The emancipation papers of our race were signed by the blood of the Son of God, and a way was opened for the message of hope and mercy to be carried to the ends of the earth. Now, *whoever will* may reach forth and take hold of God's hand, and make peace with Him, and they shall make peace.”¹⁶⁴

Notice that the first statement says we *may* have freedom (emancipation) *on condition* of faith in Him who is *able* to save . It does not sound as if the emancipation papers signed by Christ have freed and saved everyone—whether they like it or not. Rather, this emancipation is *provided* if we meet God’s conditions, which the above statement says are not met because disobedience and worldly pleasure are preferred.

The second statement is equally clear. Emancipation is provided for *whoever will* reach out and take the hand of God, which is what faith and obedience are all about. This is not an emancipation already accomplished which must now be resisted, but an emancipation provided which must now be either obtained or spurned. How different the above Ellen White statement is from the following by one of Sequeira’s defenders:

“God’s grace awaits the unborn. It waits to take the newborn by the hand and if that newborn does not resist God’s grace, He will hold on with a grasp so firmly that no one will be able to pluck that babe out of His hand! ”¹⁶⁵

Ellen White says it is necessary for us to take God’s hand, which preserves the sacred right of choice. By contrast, the above statement says God already has our hand in His grasp at birth, making it necessary for us to fight Him off if we do not want Him—something very hard for an infant to do. This changes the Saviour’s invitation, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” (Revelation 3: 20), to “Behold, I am already in your house, and if you want Me out, you will have to throw Me bodily out the door.” What a perversion of the Biblical right of choice which is so basic to the great controversy!

The claim is made by some that Ellen White’s emancipation statements compare what Jesus did on Calvary to Abraham Lincoln’s signing of the Emancipation Proclamation during the American Civil War. The assumption is

made that just as Lincoln's signature gave instant legal freedom to all slaves in the South, even before the slaves experienced practical freedom, the same was done by Jesus on the cross. This not only distorts the theology of Inspiration, it represents a gross misunderstanding of Civil War history. No slave in the Confederacy was legally free merely because Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This document was not a legal measure, but a military one. Lincoln had no legal or executive authority in the Southern states since they had seceded from the Union. Only as the Union armies retook the South could this Proclamation be enforced. Thus, not only are Ellen White's emancipation statements relative to salvation clearly conditional, but also to imply that her use of this language recalls some instant legal emancipation signed by Lincoln, would force her to base a teaching on an event that never happened.

At the same time, we need to understand that Christ has, in fact, accomplished something for every human being. We mentioned a text earlier which speaks of the prince of this world being cast out. See John 12: 31. We also find the following statements from Ellen White:

“He (Christ) took in His grasp the world over which Satan claimed to preside as his lawful territory, and by His wonderful work in giving His life, He restored the whole race of men to favor with God.” ¹⁶⁶

“God claims the whole earth as His vineyard. Though now in the hands of the usurper, it belongs to God. By redemption no less than by creation it is His. For the world Christ's sacrifice was made. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.’ John 3:16. It is through that one gift that every other is imparted to men. Daily the whole world receives blessing from God. Every drop of rain, every ray of light shed on our unthankful race, every

leaf and flower and fruit, testifies to God's long forbearance and His great love." 167

"Man sold himself to Satan, but Jesus bought back the race." 168

"Christ died for every man. He has ransomed every man by giving His life on the cross." 169

Another statement is even stronger:

"The deceiver presented himself as an angel of light, but Christ withstood his temptations. He redeemed Adam's disgraceful fall, and saved the world." 170

In what way did Christ save the world? By justifying, sanctifying, and glorifying us all whether we like it or not? Or is something else involved here?

Ellen White describes what happened to the world when Adam and Eve sinned:

"At his creation, Adam was placed in dominion over the earth. But by yielding to temptation, he was brought under the power of Satan. 'Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' 2 Peter 2:19. When man became Satan's captive, the dominion which he held, passed to his conqueror. Thus Satan became 'the god of this world.' 2 Corinthians 4:4. He had usurped that dominion over the earth which had been originally given to Adam. But Christ, by His sacrifice paying the penalty of sin, would not only redeem man, but recover the dominion which he had forfeited." 171

Thus, when Satan overcame Adam, he replaced Adam as the prince of this world. That is why, in the story of Job, Satan had the right to present himself in heaven as the representative of Earth. See Job 1. However, the

death of Jesus changed all that. Thus Ellen White observes:

“Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ’s brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.”¹⁷²

Because of Christ, the human family has a second probation in which to prove its loyalty to God:

“Adam and his companion were assured that notwithstanding their great sin, they were not to be abandoned to the control of Satan. The Son of God had offered to atone, with His own life, for their transgression. A period of probation would be granted them, and through repentance, and faith in Christ they might again become the children of God.”¹⁷³

“Christ bore the sins of the world in man’s behalf that the sinner might have another trial, with all the divine opportunities and advantages which God has provided in man’s behalf.”¹⁷⁴

“This was the position of the human race after man divorced himself from God by transgression. Then he was no longer entitled to a breath of air, a ray of sunshine, or a particle of food. And the reason why man was not annihilated was because God so loved him that He made the

gift of His dear Son that He should suffer the penalty of his transgression. Christ proposed to become man's surety and substitute, that man, through matchless grace, should have another trial—a second probation—having the experience of Adam and Eve as a warning not to transgress God's law as they did." ¹⁷⁵

Therefore, had Christ not intervened in Eden at the moment of Adam's sin, thus becoming "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8), Adam and Eve's partaking of the forbidden fruit would have at once produced the divine sentence, that "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die [dying thou shalt die—margin]." Genesis 2:17. We have seen why our first parents were not condemned to eternal death at that moment—because Jesus offered to take their punishment, together with the punishment of all their descendants who should choose to follow their example in sin. Every man or woman who has ever lived thus owes their physical existence to the sacrifice of Jesus. Little wonder that Ellen White speaks of the cross as reflected in every water spring and stamped on every loaf of bread. ¹⁷⁶

This, at the bottom line, is what Christ has done for every human being. Not only has He provided sufficient power for all to be saved, He has granted physical life—and thus the chance for eternal life—to a race which rightfully should never have existed. While the cross of Christ does benefit every man and woman, salvation is still available only to those who meet God's conditions: "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 5:9. *See also:* Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; John 3:36; Romans 1:16; 2:13; James 2:24.

The following Ellen White statement makes a clear distinction between God's gift of physical life and being reconciled to God:

“Every ray of sunshine, every morsel of food, or drop of water, is a gift of redeeming love, and pleads with the sinner to be reconciled to God.”¹⁷⁷

In contrast with Sequeira’s doctrine that all have been justified, sanctified and glorified by the event on the cross (pp. 30, 36), the Bible declares, “For by one offering he [Christ] hath perfected for ever *them that are sanctified.*” Hebrews 10:14.

An Ellen White statement we quoted earlier confirms the apostle’s words:

“The predestination, or election, of which God speaks, includes *all who will accept Christ as a personal Saviour, who will return to their loyalty, to perfect obedience to all God’s commandments.*”¹⁷⁸

“The whole world was gathered into the embrace of Christ. He died on the cross to destroy him who had the power of death and to take away the sin of every *believing soul.*”¹⁷⁹

But another statement makes it clear just how the whole world was gathered into Christ’s embrace:

“After the fall Christ became Adam’s instructor. He acted in God’s stead toward humanity, saving the race from immediate death. He took upon him the office of mediator. Adam and Eve were given a probation in which to return to their allegiance, and in this plan all their posterity were embraced.”¹⁸⁰

In other words, Adam’s descendants were gathered into Christ’s embrace in order to give them a second probation, not to justify, sanctify, and glorify them against their will.

Some have alleged that the only way sinful man could be granted physical life, or a second probation, is through

a universal justification accomplished for all. Yet Satan and his angels are alive too; have they been justified? While Satan and his angels have not been given a second probation, their continued existence poses a serious problem for the belief that some form of justification is necessary in order for sinners to stay alive. No human analogy, judicial or otherwise, is fully adequate to explain the plan of salvation. The law has indeed been satisfied on behalf of all at Calvary, but Calvary did not accomplish salvation; it only made it possible. A second trial, or probation, is just that—a second trial. It is not the same as acquittal.

The concept that all humanity was corporately condemned “in Adam”, and corporately justified “in Christ”, is the basis for one of Sequeira’s best-known themes—the “in Christ” motif (pp. 33–35). The notion of corporate oneness has attracted many to his theology who have long sought to direct the church’s attention to the concept of corporate repentance—the identification even by godly persons with the sins of an apostate people, as was done by Moses and Daniel. See Exodus 32:32; Daniel 9:5–19. However, to twist the idea of corporate solidarity into some form of universal salvation is to go beyond the words of Scripture. The Bible is very clear about what it means to be “in Christ”:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17.

The word “if” implies conditionality, as we noted before, clearly indicating that not all are “in Christ,” as Mr. Sequeira claims (p. 34), and that certain conditions must be met if one is to be found “in Christ.” Listen again to the words of Paul:

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him,

not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Philippians 3:8-9.

In other words, Paul gave up everything in order to be found "in Christ." He was not there automatically.

The following verses make it plain that to be "in Christ" and to have Christ dwelling in us are one and the same thing: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5.

"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." John 6:56.

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." John 14:17-21.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. . . . If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John 15:4, 7.

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." John 17:23.

"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." 1 John 2:5.

“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” 1 John 3:24.

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” 1 John 4:15–16.

The following Ellen White statements are clear that being “in Christ” is a choice of faith and outlook, not something automatic for everyone as a result of the cross:

“The cities of refuge appointed for God’s ancient people were a symbol of the refuge provided in Christ. The same merciful Saviour who appointed these temporal cities of refuge, has by the shedding of His own blood provided for the transgressors of God’s law a sure retreat, into which they may flee for safety from the second death. No power can take out of His hands the souls that go to Him for pardon. ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.’ Romans 8:1. . . .

“The sinner is exposed to eternal death, until he finds a hidingplace in Christ; and as loitering and carelessness might rob the fugitive of his only chance for life, so delays and indifference may prove the ruin of the soul.”¹⁸¹

“Those professed Christians who are constantly complaining, who seem to think happiness and a cheerful countenance a sin, have not the genuine attributes of religion. Those who look upon nature’s beautiful scenery as they would upon a dead picture; who choose to look upon dead leaves rather than to gather the beautiful flowers; who take a mournful pleasure in all that is melancholy in the language spoken to them by the natural world; who see no beauty in valleys clothed in living green, and grand

mountain heights clothed with verdure; who close their senses to the joyful voice that speaks to them in nature—these are not in Christ.”¹⁸²

Clearly, the “in Christ” motif—as taught in the New Testament—includes only those who have accepted God’s transforming grace.

In the following passage Paul is especially clear that “in Christ” is an expression applying to believers only:

“Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.” Romans 16:7.

In other words, these brethren were in Christ before Paul was, which means they were Christians before he was. The New Testament never uses this phrase in any other fashion.

Brother Sequeira tries to illustrate his concept of the whole world being “in Christ” with the statement in Hebrews 7:9–10 which talks about Levi paying tithe to Melchizedek in the loins of Abraham (pp. 33–34). However, this is stretching a Biblical metaphor far beyond what it means in context. In this passage Paul was simply saying that the priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Levi, and uses Melchizedek as a type of Christ—because Melchizedek, like Christ, was not a descendant of Levi. Verses 13–14. Obviously, Paul is seeking to prove to his Jewish readers that Christ was worthy to be their High Priest even though He was not a Levite. Paul’s statement that Levi, whose descendants were commanded to take tithes from their brethren (verse 5), was in the loins of Abraham while the latter paid tithe to Melchizedek, is simply a metaphorical way of saying that Melchizedek was superior to Levi. To say that Levi was in Abraham’s loins is not a statement of corporate solidarity, but of Levitical inferiority. The Bible is clear that this is just a metaphorical statement. The verse

says, “And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.” Verses 9–10. The fact that the verse says “as I may so say” makes it clear that this is a figure of speech. Most modern translations use similar language, which reminds us of the modern expression that a certain event happened “before so-and-so was a twinkle in his mommy’s eye.” Paul is simply making the point that Levi and his priestly descendants were not as great as their ancestor Abraham—yet Abraham, who was greater than they, paid tithe to the non-Levitical, priest-king Melchizedek, thus making Melchizedek a fitting type of Christ, who has replaced the Levitical priesthood. Levi’s comparative insignificance is the point here, not corporate oneness. To stretch this passage into some grand concept of corporate solidarity—however valid this principle may be in some respects—reminds us of those who use the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (see Luke 16:19–31) to prove what happens to people when they die. Figures of speech—like parables—are not meant to be taken literally.

It is an absolute perversion of Bible truth and of God’s justice to teach that anyone is damned or saved apart from individual choice. The entire great controversy is predicated on the divine summons to choose whom we will serve. See Joshua 24:15. History offers the sobering awareness that when Christians believe their spiritual status has been decided apart from their personal choice, they lose respect for the right of choice as exercised by others. Augustine’s doctrine of original sin led the medieval church to conclude that physical force was at times necessary to compel people to be Christians, the result of which included the racks and torture chambers of the Inquisition. John Calvin and the Puritans displayed a similar intolerance, as do their modern-day spiritual descendants, the American Religious Right.

Many do not seem to realize that the doctrine of universal justification at Calvary is indistinguishable from the doctrine of a finished atonement at Calvary. It is this doctrine which, during the past fifteen years, has led thousands of Adventists to discard their belief in total victory over sin, the investigative judgment, and the doctrinal authority of Ellen G. White. Consider the following statements from individuals who have reasoned thus:

“Christ now, I realized, was primarily my atonement for sin, and secondarily He was my Example. . . . I was under no illusion now. I knew I could not equal Christ. Christ had done all the equalling necessary.”¹⁸³

“Hebrews knows nothing of an ‘extended’ atonement which drags on for 1,800 years after the cross. . . . Every translation of these verses makes it plain that *the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement by the Jewish high priest found its fulfillment in the cross of Christ*, for on Calvary Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”¹⁸⁴

“The finality of the Christ event in salvation history is inseparable from the finality of the apostolic witness and interpretation. A subsequent, supplementary, and doctrinally authoritative revelation is not necessary. It is neither anticipated nor allowed by the New Testament. The finality of the New Testament revelation is a necessary corollary of the finished work of Christ.”¹⁸⁵

A recent book by the present writer demonstrates how Jack Sequeira’s theology has moved precisely in this direction, and how the words of George Santayana still ring true: “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”¹⁸⁶

Chapter Three

Easy to Be Saved, Hard to Be Lost?

CLOSELY related to the “in Christ” motif, as taught by Jack Sequeira and his associates, is the concept that it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost—a theme promoted for some time by members of the 1888 Message Study Committee. Thus, Sequeira writes: “I believe that the only reason anyone will be lost is because he or she willfully and persistently rejects God’s gift of salvation in Christ” (p. 8). He goes even further in a collection of handouts which frequently accompanies his seminars. On the cover he declares: “All persons are in Christ, or saved, until they reject the Holy Spirit and are lost.”¹⁸⁷

Thus, Sequeira not only teaches that it is easier to be saved than to be lost but he also teaches that because all have been saved at Calvary, they must make decided efforts to be lost, or their “legal” salvation (pp. 34, 101) will become eternal.

I believe our study has conclusively demonstrated from the inspired evidence that the entire world has not been saved, nor is the whole world “in Christ.” We looked earlier at an Ellen White statement which says we “need not remain a moment longer unsaved.”¹⁸⁸ If all humanity is saved until they seek to be lost, the question of remaining *unsaved* would not be the issue at all; the issue instead would be whether we *remain* saved or try to escape our “saved” condition. The “saved until we are lost” theology turns this Ellen White statement completely upside down, as we have seen this theology do with other inspired statements. The notion that everyone is saved until

they make the effort to be lost has enormous appeal; it carries a charm offered by only a few of contemporary Adventism's novelties. However, Bible-believing, Seventh-day Adventists dare not permit allurements or captivation to obstruct the process of distinguishing truth from error in the light of God's written counsel.

Aside from the question of whether or not all are saved until they seek to be lost, we need to examine the assumption that it is easier to be saved than it is to be lost. Those who promote this concept are fond of referring to Jesus' statement in Matthew 11:28–30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In what way is the yoke of Christ easy and His burden light? A number of Ellen White's statements offer an explanation:

"The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God."¹⁸⁹

"We are to bear the yoke of Christ that we may be placed in complete union with Him. 'Take my yoke upon you,' He says. Obey My requirements. But these requirements may be in direct opposition to the will and purposes of the human agent. What then is to be done? Hear what God says: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.' The yoke and the cross are symbols representing the same thing—the giving up of the will to God. Wearing the yoke unites finite man in companionship with the dearly beloved Son of God. Lifting the cross cuts away self from the soul, and places man where he learns how to bear Christ's burdens.

We cannot follow Christ without wearing His yoke, without lifting the cross and bearing it after Him. If our will is not in accord with the divine requirements, we are to deny our inclinations, give up our darling desires, and step in Christ's footsteps." ¹⁹⁰

"There are many whose hearts are aching under a load of care because they seek to reach the world's standard. They have chosen its service, accepted its perplexities, adopted its customs. Thus their character is marred, and their life made a weariness. In order to gratify ambition and worldly desires, they wound the conscience, and bring upon themselves an additional burden of remorse. The continual worry is wearing out the life forces. Our Lord desires them to lay aside this yoke of bondage. He invites them to accept His yoke; He says, 'my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' " ¹⁹¹

" 'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.' John 15:9-10. This is the yoke of Christ that He invites us to wear—the yoke of obedience. What is the result? 'Learn of me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' " ¹⁹²

"He [Christ] was seeking to lighten the self-imposed burdens of worldly anxiety and care by inviting the people to come to Him and find rest and peace, to exchange their self-made, cumbrous, galling yoke for His yoke, which was easy; and their worldly burdens, which were heavy, for His burdens, which were light. His voice has been coming down along the line to our time with the gracious words of invitation, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and

are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Matthew 11:28-30." ¹⁹³

"Instead of toiling to prepare set rules and regulations, you might better be praying and submitting your own will and ways to Christ. He is not pleased when you make hard the things He has made easy. He says, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' The Lord Jesus loves His heritage; and if men will not think it their special prerogative to prescribe rules for their fellow laborers, but will bring Christ's rules into their life and copy His lessons, then each will be an example, and not a judge." ¹⁹⁴

"Cooperating with Jesus Christ makes His yoke easy for you, and your daily burdens will be lightened by communion with Him. Let no earthly ties, however dear, obstruct the course of duty which He has made plain, but let no human agents frame duties for you." ¹⁹⁵

"Men frame for their own necks, yokes which seem light and easy, but which will prove heavy and galling. Christ sees this, and He says, 'Take My yoke upon you.' The yoke you desire to place on your neck will become intolerably heavy. Take My yoke; it is easy. Learn from Me the lessons that you so much need to learn. When you submit to My yoke, when you give up the struggle that is so unprofitable, you will find rest." ¹⁹⁶

"The submissive, self-sacrificing child of God understands by experience what it is to have the peace of Christ. True followers of Christ know that they must take His yoke, share His trials, carry His burdens. But they do not

feel like complaining: for the meekness and lowliness of Christ makes the yoke easy and the burden light.”¹⁹⁷

Four points come through in the above statements:

1. The yoke Christ speaks of is the yoke of obedience to all His requirements.

2. Though the ways of the world may initially seem easier than the way of Christ, the pain, the dishonor, and the injury to the conscience caused by sin exact a far heavier toll than the sanctified conquest of sin.

3. The yoke of obedience to God’s requirements is easier than the yoke of man-made requirements, such as those of the Pharisees.

4. It is the meekness and humility of Christ which causes us to patiently bear the Saviour’s burdens, and to consider His yoke of sacrifice easy and His burden light.

Jesus, of course, made another statement contrasting the way to eternal life with the road to eternal death: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matthew 7:13–14.

The balance we saw in Ellen White’s comments on Matthew 11:28–30 is reflected in her discussion of Matthew 7:13–14:

“The path which I have set before you, He said, is narrow; the gate is difficult of entrance; for the golden rule excludes all pride and self-seeking. There is, indeed, a wider road; but its end is destruction. If you would climb the path of spiritual life, you must constantly ascend; for it is an upward way. You must go with the few; for the multitude will choose the downward path.

“In the road to death the whole race may go, with all their worldliness, all their selfishness, all their pride, dishonesty, and moral debasement. There is room for every

man's opinions and doctrines, space to follow his inclinations, to do whatever his self-love may dictate. In order to go in the path that leads to destruction, there is no need of searching for the way; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad, and the feet naturally turn into the path that ends in death.

“But the way to life is narrow and the entrance strait. If you cling to any besetting sin you will find the way too narrow for you to enter. Your own ways, your own will, your evil habits and practices, must be given up if you would keep the way of the Lord. He who would serve Christ cannot follow the world's opinions or meet the world's standard. Heaven's path is too narrow for rank and riches to ride in state, too narrow for the play of self-centered ambition, too steep and rugged for lovers of ease to climb. Toil, patience, self-sacrifice, reproach, poverty, the contradiction of sinners against Himself, was the portion of Christ, and it must be our portion, if we ever enter the Paradise of God.

“Yet do not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrow and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God's love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves. It is true that Satan's path is made to appear attractive, but it is all a deception; in the way of evil there are bitter remorse and cankering care. We may think it pleasant to follow pride and worldly ambition, but the end is pain and sorrow. Selfish plans may present flattering promises and hold out the hope of enjoyment, but we shall find that our happiness is poisoned and our life embittered by hopes that center in self. In the downward road the gateway may be bright with flowers, but thorns are in the path. The light of hope which

shines from its entrance fades into the darkness of despair, and the soul who follows that path descends into the shadows of unending night.”¹⁹⁸

Jesus clarifies His statement in Matthew 7 even further in Luke 13:23-24:

“Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

Commenting on these words of Jesus, Ellen White states:

“We are to strive, to agonize, to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. It will take something more than mere seeking to enter in at the strait gate; for the gate to death is wide, and the road broad, and easy of access, and many there be that go in thereat. If we would enter in at the strait gate, we must be partakers of the sufferings of Christ.”¹⁹⁹

“When we read that many will seek to enter in and shall not be able, then we want to understand what we shall do in order to succeed. This to us is a mournful statement, that there are those who will fail to enter in at the strait gate because they only seek to enter in, and do not *strive*.”²⁰⁰ (Emphasis in original.)

“Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians; but they made no earnest effort, therefore they will be weighed in the balances and found wanting.”²⁰¹

At the bottom line, the question of whether salvation is easy or hard boils down to the contrast between the converted and the unconverted perspective. The one choosing the way of God over the way of the world finds the joy of peace with God and service to others far more

satisfying than the self-service and self-indulgence of his former life. Despite the unending daily struggle against temptation, the converted Christian knows in his heart of hearts that the joy of sanctified obedience is far more enduring and far less complicated than the fleeting pleasures of sin. Yet we must ever bear in mind that *one must experience conversion in order to fully appreciate this fact.* Apart from the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the unrenewed heart cannot recognize the superior quality and satisfaction resulting from service to Christ. The unconverted person holds a completely different view of ease and difficulty, success and failure. We must therefore be most careful in preaching to multitudes—the vast majority of whom are not converted—that it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost. Especially is this theme a hazardous one in our modern culture of easy credit, microwave ovens, Extra-Strength Tylenol, and a myriad of other scientific and technological wonders. Despite the peculiar stresses of our contemporary society, the increase of knowledge has made life in the developed world easier and more comfortable than at any other time in history. Especially are the younger generations accustomed to instant fulfillment and quick gratification. It is therefore not surprising that Ellen White's writings, with their special focus on the end-time church, contain serious warnings against the notion that salvation is an easy matter:

“The easy position so pleasing to the carnal heart is, that Christ has done all, that personal striving is unnecessary, and would be an evidence of unbelief. But the Bible tells us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.”²⁰²

“It is no easy matter to gain the priceless treasure of eternal life. No one can do this and drift with the current of the world. He must come out from the world and be separate and touch not the unclean. No one can act like a worldling

without being carried down by the current of the world. No one will make any upward progress without persevering effort. He who would overcome must hold fast to Christ. He must not look back, but keep the eye ever upward, gaining one grace after another. Individual vigilance is the price of safety.”²⁰³

Recently I attended a series of meetings in which a well-known Adventist speaker declared, “All ladder-climbing is Baal worship.” God’s prophet disagrees:

“The gaining of eternal life is no easy thing. By living faith we are to keep on reaching forward, ascending the ladder round by round . . . and yet we must understand that not one holy thought, not one unselfish act, can be originated in self.”²⁰⁴

“Character is not obtained by having others fight the battle of life for us. It must be sought, worked for, fought for; and it requires a purpose, a will, a determination. To form a character which God will approve, requires persevering effort. It will take a continual resisting of the powers of darkness to . . . have our names retained in the book of life.”²⁰⁵

“To follow Christ is not freedom from conflict. It is not child’s play. It is not spiritual idleness. All the enjoyment in Christ’s service means sacred obligations in meeting oft stern conflicts. To follow Christ means stern battles, active labor, warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Our enjoyment is the victories gained for Christ in earnest, hard, warfare.”²⁰⁶

Many who preach the “easy to be saved, hard to be lost” motif are fond of quoting the following Ellen White statement:

“The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God’s dear Son.”²⁰⁷

But the context of this statement makes it clear that while the absence of resistance on our part may insure that we are drawn to Christ, this drawing does not automatically result in repentance. Repentance must still be our choice:

“You who in heart long for something better than this world can give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul. *Ask Him to give you repentance, to reveal Christ to you in His infinite love, in His perfect purity.*”²⁰⁸

Later in this chapter we find this solemn warning:

“Beware of procrastination. Do not put off the work of forsaking your sins and seeking purity of heart through Jesus. Here is where thousands upon thousands have erred to their eternal loss. I will not here dwell upon the shortness and uncertainty of life; but there is a terrible danger—a danger not sufficiently understood—in delaying to yield to the pleading voice of God’s Holy Spirit, in choosing to live in sin; for such this delay really is. Sin, however small it may be esteemed, can be indulged in only at the peril of infinite loss. What we do not overcome, will overcome us, and work out our destruction. . . .

“Every act of transgression, every neglect or rejection of the grace of Christ, is reacting upon yourself; it is hardening the heart, depraving the will, benumbing the understanding, and not only making you less inclined to yield, but less capable of yielding, to the tender pleading of God’s Holy Spirit.”²⁰⁹

Another passage, quoted at the beginning, clarifies that the drawing power of Christ is distinct from repentance and justification:

“Calling and justification are not one and the same thing. Calling is the drawing of the sinner to Christ, and it is a work wrought by the Holy Spirit upon the heart, convicting of sin, and inviting to repentance.”²¹⁰

If the mere lack of resistance to God’s grace were sufficient to secure our salvation, neglecting or putting off the choice for Christ would be no problem. The magnetic love of God would succeed in pulling us effortlessly through the pearly gates in spite of our indecision. How could this be true when the apostle Paul asks, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” Hebrews 2:3. Little wonder that Ellen White declares elsewhere:

“It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light.”²¹¹

“Man cannot be towed to heaven; he cannot go as a passive passenger. He must himself use the oars, and work as a laborer together with God. . . . It is only by earnest effort, by using the oars with all your might, that you can stem the current.”²¹²

“It is not possible for us to drift into heaven. No sluggard can enter there. If we do not strive to gain an entrance into the kingdom, if we do not seek earnestly to learn what constitutes its laws, we are not fitted for a part in it.”²¹³

The talents of a master musician or figure-skating champion are not developed without great effort, but those who do these things love the effort. The grueling hours of practice and concentration, the early mornings

and late nights, the physical discipline, the social sacrifices—all are willingly endured in deference to the chosen, consuming passion of their lives. The sanctified life is much the same. Yes, it takes effort, but it is effort performed with joy. Perhaps the best Biblical illustration of this point is found in Revelation 19:7–8—even the R.S.V. acknowledges that Christ’s righteousness imparts righteous deeds:

“Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous *deeds* of the saints.”

Not only is the fine linen worn by God’s people here equated with righteous deeds but also their preparation is compared to that of a bride making herself ready for a wedding. I have yet to observe a bride getting ready for a wedding without a considerable amount of work and preparation being required, and the effort would not stop there. Regardless of how happily married a man and woman may be, it will take effort and sacrifice to make the marriage work. Yet, despite the exhaustion of wedding preparations, and the inevitable trials and frustrations of the marriage to follow, those who genuinely love each other will radiate profound joy through it all. Such will be the experience of God’s people as they prepare for translation.

Before we leave the marriage analogy, we should remember the illustration offered at the beginning of this book. Not many young women I know would be impressed if I, as a single young man, were to approach one of them with the news that she and I are “legally” married already, and that unless she resists this fact by going to the local courthouse and filing for divorce, our life together will be inevitable. I doubt any young woman I know would respond with a heart overflowing with love upon hearing

such “glad tidings” from any man! If I am interested in someone, she has the option of developing a relationship with me if she so desires. If she lacks this desire, there will be no relationship (legal or otherwise), however much I might wish for one. By the same token, the events of Calvary have given all mankind the option of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, God could no more save us without our consent than I could marry a woman without her consent. The sacred right of choice is fundamental to God’s government, and even more fundamental to the plan of redemption.

Chapter Four

Assurance

FEW questions are as emotionally charged in contemporary Adventism as the question of assurance. In many ways this is understandable, since the human heart craves security. Insurance companies know this, which is why they are among the wealthiest organizations in our society.

However, as the victims of illness and natural disaster often learn, those who promise security do not always deliver. Moreover, the purveyors of spiritual security are frequently less reliable than their temporal counterparts. However appealing full assurance of salvation may be, we must bypass our emotions and test every theory by the written counsel of God.

Jack Sequeira recounts in writing, a story he often includes in his preaching, of an encounter he had with an African “Christian” who claimed he was saved despite the beer on his breath (p. 155). Unfortunately, as we have already noted, Sequeira fails to perceive the helplessness of his own theology against this kind of self-indulgent religion. When he makes the utterly incredible statement that “there is a world of difference between sinning under law and sinning under grace” (p. 165), that “stumbling under grace, falling into sin, does not deprive us of justification” (p. 166), how can he argue that an occasional beer or extramarital fling could not perhaps be included among the stumbles and sins committed “under grace”? This is especially a problem for Jack Sequeira since he consistently stops short of saying that the sanctification of God’s people will ever be perfect in this life—a point we will address shortly. It makes no sense on the one hand to deny

that “salvation depends to some degree on his or her [the Christian’s] behavior” (p. 91), and then to speak of a necessary sanctified response (p. 32). Let us remember that for Sequeira, the behavior here described as being without saving value includes not only the works of legalism, but the work of Christ in the believer (pp. 25, 32–33, 170). Put simply, Jack Sequeira teaches that sanctification saves no one. Add to this his refusal to affirm the completeness of the believer’s sanctification here on earth, and you have all the ingredients of a religion where believers inevitably gravitate toward accommodation of their favorite sins.

It is truly difficult to harmonize this notion of “sinning under grace” with Paul’s impassioned protest, “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.” Romans 6:15. King David was certainly under no illusion that his sin failed to deprive him of salvation. Why else would he have prayed, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” Psalm 51:12? Ellen White is equally clear regarding the conditions for retaining justification:

“There is no safety nor repose nor justification in transgression of the law. Man cannot hope to stand innocent before God, and at peace with Him through the merits of Christ, while he continues in sin. He must cease to transgress, and become loyal and true.”²¹⁴

“In order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.”²¹⁵

“It is by continual surrender of the will, by continual obedience, that the blessing of justification is retained.”²¹⁶

We are astounded at Sequeira’s words: “Stumbling under grace, falling into sin, does not deprive us of justification. Neither does it bring condemnation” (p. 166). El-

len White explicitly contradicts this in the following statements:

“When man transgresses he is under the condemnation of the law, and it becomes to him a yoke of bondage. Whatever his profession may be he is not justified.”²¹⁷

“Every transgression brings the soul into condemnation, and provokes the divine displeasure.”²¹⁸

Ellen White is clear that assurance is impossible until we are obedient:

“We cannot have the assurance and perfect confiding trust in Christ as our Saviour until we acknowledge Him as our King and are obedient to His commandments.”²¹⁹

“His [the believer’s] life, cleansed from vanity and selfishness, is filled with the love of God. His daily obedience to the law of God obtains for him a character that assures him eternal life in the kingdom of God.”²²⁰

“Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan’s temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus.”²²¹

“Through the imputed righteousness of Christ, the sinner may feel that he is pardoned, and may know that the law no more condemns him, because he is in harmony with all its precepts.”²²²

Another of Ellen White’s assurance statements helps us better understand what it means not to be under the law, but under grace:

“This is the witness which it is the privilege of all to have—the joy of Christ in the soul through appropriating the word of God . . . and bringing the requirements of Christ into the practical life. There is full assurance of hope in believing every word of Christ, believing in Him, being united to Him by living faith. When this is his experience, the human being is no longer under the law, for the law no longer condemns his course of action.”²²³

Elsewhere we read:

“The commandment-keeping people of God are to walk in the sunlight of Christ’s righteousness, their countenances expressing cheerfulness and thanksgiving, joyful in the assurance, ‘Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.’ Revelation 22:14.”²²⁴

May I ask, Are we in contemporary Adventism joyful in this assurance? Or are we seeking assurance based on some legal fiction which usurps our sanctified responsibility?

According to the written counsel of God, any sinful choice will definitely deprive us of justification, and separate the soul from God. God declared through Isaiah, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” Isaiah 59:2. Ellen White agrees:

“The Lord’s hand is not shortened that He cannot save, nor His ear heavy that He cannot hear, but it is our sins that have separated us from God.”²²⁵

“Just as soon as we separate ourselves from God by sin, which is the transgression of His law, Satan takes control of our minds.”²²⁶

“When we give way to impatience, we drive the Spirit of God out of the heart, and give place to the attributes of Satan.”²²⁷

“Harshness, roughness in words or manner, evil-speaking, passionate words, cannot exist in the soul that is looking unto Jesus. He who abides in Christ is in an atmosphere that forbids evil, and gives not the slightest excuse for anything of this kind.”²²⁸

“Every selfish desire, every degree of discontent, every act of overreaching, every selfish gratification works to the strengthening and developing of a character which will destroy the Christlikeness of the human agent, and close the gates of the city of God against him.”²²⁹

“Impatience brings the enemy of God and man into your family, and drives out the angels of God. If you are abiding in Christ, and Christ in you, you cannot speak angry words.”²³⁰

Of course, God, who is not willing that any should perish (see 2 Peter 3:9), will do all within His power to bring us back to a spirit of repentance. God is not like the military drill instructor who vows to use “every means necessary, fair and unfair,” to wash his cadets out of the training program. On the contrary, God wants us in heaven even more than we want to get there. However, the fact remains that Scripture promises no assurance which transcends the practical choices of our daily lives. Neither the Bible nor Ellen White makes any distinction between choosing Christ and choosing obedience. The attempt to make this distinction forms the basis of many assurance theories in popular Christianity—indeed, in contemporary Adventism. People want an assurance in which the choice for Christ overshadows the occasional

lustful glance, the momentary loss of temper, the frequent lapse into gossipy whispering, but the prophet declares:

“However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act.”²³¹

Every action that we take is our responsibility, and in every decision relative to the counsel of God, a decision is thereby made either for or against God. However, the opportunity for repentance will always exist for the heart not sufficiently hardened against it, for the Lord desperately seeks our repentance.

Ellen White says,

“The angels never leave the tempted one a prey to the enemy who would destroy the souls of men if permitted to do so. As long as there is hope, until they resist the Holy Spirit to their eternal ruin, men are guarded by heavenly intelligences.”²³²

When probation closes, God will have granted sufficient light and grace to either fully convert or fully harden every heart.

The Bible does teach that we can know that we have eternal life. See 1 John 5:13. Yet, having eternal life, as described in the writings of John the apostle, refers to the new birth experience, not a finished salvation. As the apostle concludes the very chapter where the above verse is found, this point is clarified: “We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” 1 John 5:20. We have already seen the Biblical evidence which shows that to be in Christ is identical to having Christ in us. Jesus made a similar statement in the gospel of John: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3. Ellen White says the same thing:

“It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.”²³³

To say that one has eternal life, as explained in these passages, is not the same as saying that one’s salvation is done and completed. When Scripture speaks of salvation and being saved, we find very different language. In the words of Jesus, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” Matthew 24:13.

Over a year ago I first attended a series of meetings given by the author of *Beyond Belief* in which he spoke of his years as a missionary in Africa, and how young people from the evangelical churches were supposedly better able than Adventists to face persecution because they, unlike the Adventists, possessed full assurance of salvation. I advise Brother Sequeira to read *The Great Controversy* again. Speaking of the saints who endure the time of Jacob’s trouble, we read:

“Though God’s people will be surrounded by enemies who are bent upon their destruction, yet the anguish which they suffer is not a dread of persecution for the truth’s sake; they fear that every sin has not been repented of, and that through some fault in themselves they will fail to realize the fulfillment of the Saviour’s promise: I ‘will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world.’ Revelation 3:10. If they [the saints] could have the assurance of pardon they would not shrink from torture or death; but should they prove unworthy, and lose their lives because of their own defects of character, then God’s holy name would be reproached.”²³⁴

This statement makes it plain that the saints, after probation’s close, still have fear that they have not been wholly loyal to God. At the beginning we noted Sequeira’s statement that “what Satan and the world did to Christ

on the cross, they will do to us. This is the ‘offense of the cross’ that all true believers must endure” (p. 70). If so, we had best recall the utter absence of certainty with which Jesus confronted His final test. This is how the great time of trouble will test the faith of God’s last generation, thus making all the more splendid their ultimate triumph. The contemporary Adventist obsession with assurance, borrowed largely from Protestant evangelicals, represents a gross betrayal of the spirit of Adventism and a detraction from the future glory she will offer her Lord.

Perfection and the Final Conflict

WHILE Mr. Sequeira affirms the need for God's people to reflect the image of Jesus (pp. 71, 173), we have noted already that he stops short of affirming the truth of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that this reflection will be perfect. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Peter 2:21-22; 2 Peter 3:11-14; 1 John 3:3, 7; Revelation 3:21; 14:5.²³⁵ In fact, Sequeira states quite clearly that "sanctification is not perfection" (p. 109). This contradicts the following inspired statements:

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

"What is sanctification? It is to give one's self wholly and without reserve—soul, body, and spirit—to God; to deal justly; to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; to know and to do the will of God without regard to self or self-interest; to be heavenly-minded, pure, unselfish, holy, and without spot or stain."²³⁶

"Sanctification consists in the cheerful performance of daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God."²³⁷

Jack Sequeira speaks of the belief that "Christ became a man to prove that men and women can keep God's law" (p. 41), and states that "the problem with this answer is that we cannot explicitly substantiate it from

Scripture” (p. 41). Yes, we can. What other meaning can we get out of the following verses?

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:3–4.

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” 1 Peter 2:21–22.

“And in their [the saints’] mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God.” Revelation 14:5.

Brother Sequeira speaks of the “heresy of perfectionism,” both in his book (p. 41) and in a recent letter to the *Adventist Review*.²³⁸ Because he fails to define this much-abused term, he leaves himself wide open to the perception that he embraces the unscriptural teaching that sinless living is impossible before Jesus comes.

In reality, Sequeira’s rejection of imparted righteousness as a part of the grounds of salvation makes sense only if he accepts the New Theology contention that “because of my remaining depravity, imparted righteousness can never meet the infinite standard of the law of God.”²³⁹ There is no reason not to trust imparted righteousness for salvation if it is capable of producing perfect obedience in this life. Only if this is deemed impossible does it make sense to trust to forensic righteousness as the exclusive means whereby the demands of the law are met in the judgment.

Jack Sequeira promotes the utterly strange concept that the church will fully reflect Jesus’ character *corporately*, but not individually, giving further evidence that his captivation with the “corporate” concept goes far beyond the teachings of Inspiration. He writes:

“No individual member can fully display Christ completely for the simple reason that no individual member is the total body of Christ. Only through the church as a whole, living in perfect coordination and conformity to the direction of the Holy Spirit, can the life of Christ be fully displayed” (pp. 152, 153).

So the unbeliever who encounters a church member who abuses his children, or deals dishonestly in business can console himself that while the Christian he happened to meet was not perfect, the church as a corporate body is. The big problem with this theory is that, as one contemporary gospel song says, you and I are the only Jesus some people will ever see. Our friends and neighbors cannot possibly observe the church as a whole, but they can certainly see us as individuals. Both Scripture and Ellen White are clear that the perfection God requires of His people is indeed an individual matter:

“Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. . . . Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” 1 John 3:3, 7.

“All are personally exposed to the temptations that Christ overcame, but strength is provided for them in the all-powerful name of the great Conqueror. And all must, for themselves, individually overcome.”²⁴⁰

Following this notion of corporate perfection even further, Sequeira makes an even more extreme statement declaring that “Christ will never take us to heaven as individuals, but only as members of His church” (p. 115). Ellen White disagrees decisively:

“The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups. The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another. Though

all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”²⁴¹

Elder Sequeira stated at a recent series of meetings, “It is possible for Christians to reflect Christ as a body, but never as a requirement for salvation.”²⁴² This idea is equally wrong. The reflection of Christ’s character is a requirement for salvation. We have seen that the Bible defines salvation as being *saved from sin*. See Matthew 1:21. We have already seen that sanctification is part of the means of this salvation (see 2 Thessalonians 2:13), and that this sanctification will be perfect in this life. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 John 3:3. No wonder Ellen White states the following:

“Christ came to this earth and lived a life of perfect obedience, that men and women, through His grace, might also live lives of perfect obedience. *This is necessary to their salvation.*”²⁴³

In his final chapter, Jack Sequeira repeats another popular, but confusing, theory in contemporary Adventism—the notion that salvation by faith versus salvation by works will be the great issue in the final conflict (pp.182, 185). Nowhere does Inspiration use this terminology to define the issues of the last days. Ellen White repeatedly insists that the central issue in the great controversy is over whether God’s law can in fact be obeyed.²⁴⁴ The only reason Satan uses legalism to tempt a certain class is because he knows the end result will be disobedience to God’s law. We can be sure that Satan, who thoroughly despises the law of Jehovah, receives no great thrill watching people pay attention to its precepts. The legalistic attention to law-keeping serves Satan’s pur-

pose only because the end result is law-breaking. Ellen White points this out as the basic reason why the devil tempted the Jews along these lines.²⁴⁵ The bottom line of the great controversy has been, and always will be, obedience to the divine law. Thus Ellen White defines the issues in the final conflict:

“The warfare against God’s law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion.”²⁴⁶

“There are only two classes in the world today, and only two classes will be recognized in the judgment—those who violate God’s law and those who obey it.”²⁴⁷

Where does she say the dividing line will be drawn? Between faith and works? No, but between *obedience* and *disobedience*. While some will claim that legalism is the basis of all disobedience (though Inspiration never says this), the language Ellen White uses when discussing legalism is very different from the language she uses when discussing laxness and carelessness. She speaks of how the Papacy appeals to “two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world—those who would be saved by their merits, and those who would be saved in their sins.”²⁴⁸

Notice the different wording she uses in describing the two groups. Ellen White is equally clear that the latter group will be by far the dominant one among God’s professed people at the end of time. Describing those who will be shaken out of the church at that time, we read of

“those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs,”²⁴⁹ the “careless and indifferent,”²⁵⁰ those “not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth,”²⁵¹ those “who have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, . . . uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit.”²⁵² Notice she does not speak in this context of those who “have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa,”²⁵³ or who are trying to earn their way to heaven through excessive attention to obedience. Nowhere in the Scriptures or in the Spirit of Prophecy does it describe such persons as the principal sources of apostasy in the church at the close of time.

However, overemphasizing the danger of legalism is nothing compared to misunderstanding what legalism is. This is the basis of Sequeira’s theological problems. By teaching that salvation by sanctified obedience is the same as salvation by works (p. 25), he adds yet another contribution to the contemporary Adventist “righteousness by faith” obsession, which begins by misunderstanding the problem grace seeks to correct. Instead of recognizing that legalism is obedience wrongly motivated, we have sidestepped the motivation issue and concluded that we are simply preaching the law too much. Elder Sequeira is right to emphasize self-sacrificing *agape* love as the only acceptable motive for service (pp. 20-26, 90, 91), but he fails to realize that this very question of motive, not the exclusion of sanctified obedience from the righteousness which saves us, is the true answer to legalism. The contemporary Adventist “righteousness by faith” movement has missed the boat entirely on this issue. We have mistakenly thought that if we would only emphasize Jesus, His love, and the believer’s relationship with Him, without the intimidating clarity of law and doctrine, this would eventually develop an interest in the law and the doctrines. Sadly, just the opposite has happened. At-

tempts to bring revival through this approach have repeatedly fallen flat, since neither revival nor reformation can possibly occur when the law is not emphasized. The result instead has been widespread personal and institutional disregard for the written counsel of God. The simple fact is that Sequeira's theology renders the church helpless against apostasy, for it makes no sense to sound the call to reform, and risk dividing the church over behavior, which, even when sanctified, has no saving value (p. 170).

In short, this book is a dangerous document, a mingling of incompatible concepts—one more promotion of a passive salvation whose logical antipathy to the pillars of our faith should have caused us to uproot it from our ranks more than a decade ago. Some have described Jack Sequeira's theology as a "third force" in contemporary Adventism—an alternative to the polarized forces of historic Adventism on one side and the evangelical/liberal aberrations on the other. The supposition has developed that just as the church in Jesus' time was polarized between the conservative Pharisees and the liberal Sadducees, with the teachings of Christ offering a "third option," so the teachings of Jack Sequeira are seen as a third option in contrast with the historic Adventists (who are compared to the Pharisees) and the evangelical and liberal Adventists (who are compared with the Sadducees). This view of the present conflict carries enormous appeal to middle-class American Adventists whose culture recoils from controversy and adores any halfway, moderate alternative to the painful choices presented by sharply different convictions. It was to this segment of America that Richard Nixon appealed during his presidency, when he spoke of the "silent majority."

However, Inspiration nowhere speaks of a Pharisee-Sadducee polarity within the church during the final conflict, with true believers holding to some "third option."

Our prophet is clear: “Divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed.”²⁵⁴ And the inspired evidence clearly indicates what these two parties will look like—one characterized by self-indulgence and loose living—the other characterized by perfect, sanctified obedience. Most of all, the inspired pen is clear that if we fail to act our appointed part in the saving process, we will be lost. Thus the danger of insisting that our salvation has already been accomplished can hardly be understated. Again, in the prophet’s own words:

“We are to strive, to agonize, to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. It will take something more than mere seeking to enter in at the strait gate; for the gate to death is wide, and the road broad, and easy of access, and many there be that go in thereat. If we would enter in at the strait gate, we must be partakers of the sufferings of Christ.”²⁵⁵

“When we read that many will seek to enter in and shall not be able, then we want to understand what we shall do in order to succeed. This to us is a mournful statement, that there are those who will fail to enter in at the strait gate because they only seek to enter in, and do not *strive*. . . .”²⁵⁶ (Emphasis in original.)

“Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians; but they made no earnest effort, therefore they will be weighed in the balances and found wanting.”²⁵⁷

The choice is ours.

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