

Questions on Doctrine: What Should Be the Enduring Theological Legacy?¹

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Introduction

First of all, I want to express my appreciation for all of the sterling scholarship that has more recently been devoted to the controverted history of *Questions on Doctrine*.² It has illuminated much about the background of the book and its troubling legacy. We are indebted to Julius Nam, A. Leroy Moore, George Knight, Paul McGraw, and others for the detailed facts and analyses that they have produced. But this paper is not primarily about the background, the exchanges between Barnhouse and Martin and their Seventh-day Adventist³ partners in dialogue, the publication of the book, or the allegations which were hurled back and forth between M. L. Andreasen and the General Conference participants and administrators. This paper is about the controverted aspects of QOD's atonement theology and its contested, but "creative" legacy.

The summer of 2007 has been an interesting time of reflection for me as I have just completed the rough drafts of my forthcoming biography of Ellet Joseph Waggoner. The writing of that work has provided some interesting historical/theological perspective on issues which are still roiling around in the wake of the SDA church's passage through the stormy waters stirred up by QOD. There is no doubt in my mind that there is a direct line of descent from the theology of Jones and Waggoner to the theology of M. L. Andreasen, Herbert Douglass, Dennis Priebe and Larry Kirkpatrick. Their "Final Generation Vindication," "Last Generation Theology" (or "LGT"—Kirkpatrick) has been undergirded by their (a) "post-fall" Christology, (b) strong emphasis on a certain variety of total victory over acts of known sin that will lead to some sort of sinless perfection, and (c) a down-grading of emphases on evangelical Protestantism's traditional accent on the primacy of justification by faith alone (Larry Kirkpatrick is explicit, but in all charity, others who advocate similar ideas might be more practical than theological in their expositions of justification).

Despite the fact that there have been fractures in this perfectionistic⁴ SDA theological tradition between such groups as the self-identified "Historics" and the "1888 Study Committee"

¹This paper was presented to the *Questions on Doctrine* 50th Anniversary Conference, October 24-27, 2007 at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI (the oral presentation was to be 28 minutes)

²Henceforth referred to as QOD.

³Henceforth referred to as SDA.

⁴This term is used "descriptively," not "pejoratively" (negatively). There are many valuable aspects of this theology which I heartily resonate with and I do believe that some theological resolution is possible. When I read the writings of Herbert Douglass and Larry Kirkpatrick, I sense that we are closer than we often might want to admit. I hope this paper can help reduce this divide and make each partner more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their respective emphases.

does not take away from the fact that they continue to tout the basic emphases of M. L. Andreasen, A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. The sum total of the work of these two groups and many of their fellow-travelers has been to solidify and promulgate the core convictions that all so-called “Final” or “Last Generation” vindication” perfectionists theologians seem to hold in common.⁵

Now coming out of the perceptible convictions and directions of the primary QOD authors (L. E. Froom, R. A. Anderson, and W. E. Read), there is a less direct, though clearly discernable line to a Reformationist/Arminian Adventist theological tradition. Over the last fifty years, this group is mainly represented by Adventist academic theologians (and numerous pastors) who have been serving in the church’s seminaries, under-graduate religion departments, major editorial offices, and the leadership of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference. I realize that this represents a fairly broad stroke with my historical/theological brush. But I do feel that both lines of descent were more clearly precipitated by the QOD event.

So here we have two identifiable theological traditions, or paradigms of moderately conservative, “Present Truth” (the distinctive doctrinal “pillars” or “landmarks”) Adventism. These two traditions have developed two, essentially distinctive versions of Soteriology, Christology and Eschatology in the SDA Church. But we need to get more specific about the issues that were and still are up for grabs in the exchanges between these two groups. While there are many areas of agreement between the two, there are definite differences.

What has become quite evident is that there are really only two deeply contested QOD-related issues among these conservative SDA thought-leaders. A brief review of Andreasen’s reactions to QOD will set the direct theological context for this paper’s more focused reflections.

M. L. Andreasen’s Atonement Theology

For Andreasen, the atonement involved *three* closely related, essential phases: The first consisted of Christ’s sinlessly perfect life of obedience to the will of God

⁵The major bone of contention between these two groups has been the agitation and fervent promulgation of the problematic emphasis on “universal legal justification” by the “1888 Study Committee” and its key fellow-traveler, Jack Sequeira. I would simply suggest that this whole agitation is an unfortunate “strife about words” that has been a theological non-starter for both groups. I simply urge the “1888 Study Committee” and Sequeira to follow the counsel given to them by the General Conference ADCOM appointed “Primacy of the Gospel Committee”’s final report (functioned from 1995 until 2000) that they cease and desist their fruitless agitation over this peculiar version of justification by faith. The “Primacy of the Gospel Committee” found their biblical support for this doctrine to be lacking. Furthermore, the case for it in both the writings of E. J. Waggoner and Ellen White, is slim at best, and most likely non-existent. It takes a lot of fancy twisting and turning to come up with anything that comes close to an implicit teaching of “universal legal justification” and the weight of evidence suggests that it was explicitly non-existent. Now to the “historics,” I urge that you move on from this fruitless debate and more carefully reflect on how the Bible and Ellen White relate sanctifying and justifying faith. I am thus appealing to both groups to carefully ponder the directions that I am outlining in this paper.

(especially the decalogue); the second was His death on the cross where “Christ finished His work as victim and sacrifice.”⁶ So far so good. There are really no lingering debates over these two issues. Thus, while these first two phases were certainly foundational to Andreasen’s full-orbed teaching on the atonement, it was his third phase which provided the core of his distinctive theology and proved to be the major mid-twentieth century source of all the subsequent controversies. Andreasen had laid it out in clear and unmistakable language:

In the third phase Christ demonstrates that man can do what He did, with the same help He had. This phase includes His session at the right hand of God, His high priestly ministry, and the final exhibition of His saints in their last struggle with Satan, and their glorious victory

This third phase is now in progress in the sanctuary above and in the church below. Christ broke the power of sin in His lifework on earth. He destroyed sin and Satan by His death. He is now eliminating and destroying sin in His saints on earth. This is a part of the cleansing of the true sanctuary.⁷

The key theological principle which undergirded this “high priestly/most holy place” phase of the atonement was Andreasen’s Christology. He firmly held that Christ had taken a sinful human nature, just like Adam’s after the fall (in other words, a sinful nature with some sort of tendencies, propensities or inclinations to sin). Thus with Christ as an example, especially for His last generation followers, the final atonement could be effected from the heavenly sanctuary through the sinlessly perfected characters of the embattled, last day saints on earth. This final atonement theology was most clearly set forth in the chapter entitled “The Last Generation” in his well-known book *The Sanctuary Service* (1937, 1947).⁸

It is in this pivotal chapter that Andreasen forthrightly stated that Satan was not definitively defeated at the cross. The ultimate defeat of Satan would only be finally effected through the sinlessly perfected histories of the “Last Generation” of “sealed” saints.

Now Andreasen was quick to claim that such a final victory would be achieved only through the grace which would be imparted from the Great Exemplar Who is ministering in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. In other words, this faithful “Remnant” would develop sinless characters that would replicate the sinlessly perfect life which Christ had wrought out in the very same fallen, sinful nature in which the final generation will have to overcome. Thus Christ, through the remnant’s victory, must defeat Satan, in order to fully and finally vindicate God’s demand for perfect obedience; and this end-time vindication of God will

⁶M. L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1948), pp. 53.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 59, 60.

⁸*The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1947).

finally enable Christ to come.⁹

What is to be made of this understanding of the Atonement in relationship to the answers given by the Adventist QOD respondents?

Where Are We Now?

When all of the dust has seemingly settled, we can clearly affirm the following. Once more, let's be clear that neither the authors of QOD nor Andreasen really disagreed about Atonement Phases One and Two. There were, however, two disagreements over his Phase Three:

The first disagreement had more to do with terminology than substance: The term "completed atonement" that QOD used was fully consistent with Andreasen's position in the following sense: The atoning work of Christ on the cross was completed in the sense that full *provision* had been made to save all. But it was not complete in the following sense: "That completed act of atonement on the cross is valueless to any soul unless, and until, it is *applied* by Christ our High Priest to, and appropriated by, the individual recipient."¹⁰ Thus it is very clear that L. E. Froom, R. A. Anderson and W. E. Read were not doing away with a most holy place phase of atonement. They consistently used the language of "atonement *provided*" at the cross and "atonement *applied*" in Christ's heavenly ministry during the day of atonement antitypes in the most holy place.

The second disagreement over Phase three was, however, much more substantive: the QOD respondents were not enthused about M. L. Andreasen's vision of the "final generation" being the perfected agents through which Christ would effect the final atonement. While it appears that they did not directly attack Andreasen's final generation atonement, they did disagree with the Christology which undergirded it.

Therefore, it is safe to say that the two most controversial legacies of QOD are that it sparked new discussions of (1) what Adventists mean by the expressions "final atonement" and (2) the "fallen, sinful human nature of Christ."

⁹Ibid., pp. 299-301.

¹⁰L. E. Froom, "The Priestly Application of the Atoning Act," *Ministry*, February 1957, p. 10; compare QOD, pp. 349-355.

Personal Interpretive Perspectives

The above conclusions call for some interpretive perspective. While space does not permit a detailed critique of these touchy, much debated issues, I want to lay my interpretive cards on the table before I proceed to what I feel is the real core issue that undergirds the whole Andreasen inspired agenda and the Adventist Reformation/Arminian response to it.

“Final Atonement:” For those still partial to Andreasen’s last generation version of “final atonement” (through the sinless perfection of the remnant), I would like to raise the following questions:¹¹ Where in Scripture or in the writings of Ellen White do we find this type of theology explicitly laid out? Do Scripture and Ellen White clearly teach that God has made the ultimate success of Christ’s atoning work dependent upon the perfecting experience of the “remnant”? Is there not solid Bible and Ellen White evidence for the claim that Christ has fully vindicated God’s demand for perfect obedience by His own life and work? Furthermore, would it not be more appropriate to suggest that Christ vindicates His Father in the most holy place, pre-Advent Judgment phase of the “great controversy” by demonstrating that the Trinity has been completely consistent with its nature of infinite love in the disposition of the cases of every redeemed human being?

“The Humanity of Christ”:¹² In the final analysis, the most controversial legacy of QOD flows from this issue. Without the “post-fall” Christology which undergirded Andreasen’s vision (version?) of the perfecting of the final generation, the whole project of final generation vindication is called into serious question. And here is the most important legacy of QOD.

While there is hardly anyone today who would fully agree with the particular version of “pre-fall” Christology which the QOD authors put forth (that Christ did not take a “fallen, sinful

¹¹The following publications lay out the “pros” and “cons” of this theology. On the “pro” side, see Herbert Douglass, *God at Risk: The Cost of Freedom in the Great Controversy* (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, Inc., 2004); and Larry Kirkpatrick, *Cleanse and Close: Last Generation Theology in 14 Points* (Highland, CA: GCO Press, 2005). On the “con” side, see Eric C. Webster, *Crosscurrents in Adventist Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984; Republished by Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, MI, in 1992), pp. 396–428; and Woodrow W. Whidden, “The Vindication of God and the Harvest Principle,” *Ministry* October 1994 (Vol. 67, Number 10), pp. 44-47.

¹²For an excellent review of the Adventist debate over the humanity of Christ and a classic defense of the traditional “post-fall” view, see J. R. Zurcher, *Touched with Our Feelings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1999). For a defense of the “Alternative” or the “pre-fall” position, see *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1988), pp. 45-52; Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1997); Roy Adams, *The Nature of Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1994); and Stephen Wallace, “Our Sinless Yet Sympathetic Saviour,” A series of nineteen audio CD presentations (Harrisburg, PA: American Cassette Ministries, nd), but originally recorded in the late 1980s).

nature,” but only had it “imputed” to Him),¹³ they did spark further reflection which has spawned two (not just one) clearly articulated interpretations of what is meant when such expressions as “fallen,” “sinful” (used by Ellen White) and “likeness of sinful flesh” (Paul in Romans 8:3) are applied to the human nature of Christ.

These positions are (1) the classic “post-fall” position of Andreasen and (2) the “alternative Christology” which was pioneered by the late Edward (“Ted”) Heppenstall and propounded by his successors at the SDA Theological Seminary (and others) to this very day. The “Alternative Christology” acknowledges Ellen White’s “post-fall” statements, but suggests that these refer not to any “infection” of sin in Christ’s humanity, but only to the way that sin “affected” Him. It is the essence of the “Alternative Christology” that I find more appealing, both in terms of the Biblical and Ellen White textual evidence and its theological implications.

Now these are certainly key pressing questions that have been quite resistant to any definitive resolution. So the logical question seems to be: Where do we go from here in this apparent stalemate?

How Then Shall We Proceed?

The answer that I am suggesting goes like this: I want to propose that we are all wrestling with a deeper, more foundational, or fundamental issue!!

Maybe it could be put in the form of a couple of additional questions: What is the role of graced human response, such as moral growth, Christian service and missionary witness in the great plan of salvation? Maybe the question could be re-phrased a bit differently: Just how dependent is God on the graced, sanctified successes of His professed followers for His ultimate vindication?

What I am getting at with these questions is that I want to more directly address the issue of what the real final generation perfection consists of. If we can get this cleared up, then I sense that there is a good chance the “final generation” vindication thesis will take care of itself.

¹³I must confess that as I reflect further on this issue, the QOD “imputed” sinful nature position is more attractive. This is not to say that it will replace the “alternative” position that I and many others have advocated in the wake of Heppenstall’s work; but it does further supplement the “alternative Christology” in the following sense: If it is true that we will be without our sinful natures in heaven, then it must mean that we will have been ultimately saved from its ontological presence. And if we need to be saved from it in the process of glorifying grace, then Jesus must have had it reckoned, accounted or imputed to Himself, in the same sense that our acts of sin were reckoned, accounted or imputed to Him. In other words, the atoning work of Christ includes the offering of a sacrifice for our sinfulness of nature. Thus the death of Christ will ultimately redeem sinners not only from their “cultivated tendencies to sin” but also their “inherited tendencies to sin.” Does this make sense? Would enjoy any feedback.

The Core Thesis of the Heart of the Issue

My core thesis goes like this: The key theological contribution of QOD was to propel Seventh-day Adventism onto a track which demanded further clarification of its Christology and its theology of Atonement and Soteriology. Furthermore, this track of clarification should continue to unfold in such a way that we would be led to re-affirm the experience of justifying grace as the foundation for all experience of salvation (especially the experience of sanctification, perfection and glorification).

And it is in this nexus of salvation issues where *the heart of the issue* resides: all righteousness produced by converted Christians this side of glorification (in co-operation with the Holy Spirit) must be forensically justified by the merits of Christ, Who, is constantly interceding as their High Priestly “Substitute and Surety.”

Having laid down my thesis, I am obligated to lay out its practical implications and to invite a response from the two Adventist groups that seem to be the most vitally concerned parties in this long-running controversy--- the final generation perfectionists and the forensic justification only advocates. Hopefully they will receive my invitation as a graced challenge.

Preliminary Questions to the Final Generation Perfectionists

Please ponder the following questions and reflections: I urge that these interpreters of Ellen White and the Bible come forth and be very specific in what they mean when they say that there must be some final generation of saints who are obligated to vindicate God before He can gain a final victory over the Devil in the Great Controversy. I know that you affirm that Jesus is still sustaining these beleaguered saints with sanctifying grace to keep them from acts of sin. But does your position mean to suggest that there will be a time before glorification (at the second Coming) when they will no longer need the forensic merits of Jesus’s intercession to make up for the “remnants” of their sinfulness (and let’s be very careful how we define the word “sinfulness”)? Will there be a moment when the tried and true saints of the “one hundred and forty-four thousand” multitude will be reduced to looking to what Jesus has placed within their hearts, but not to Jesus’ ministry for any lingering “deficiencies”? Just for clarity’s sake, permit me to re-phrase the question: Does your position mean that they are not to look to what Jesus is right then and there doing for them to continue to declare them righteous for His own sake—though their loyalty in forsaking known sin is beyond question? That is my challenge to the perfectionistic wing of Adventism.

Preliminary Questions to the Forensic Justification Advocates

Do you mean to suggest or imply that forensic justification by faith alone is abstracted or isolated from regeneration by faith? Can a person be justified by a faith that is pure mental assent alone? Do you really want to forsake Luther and Calvin (especially Calvin’s very finely tuned soteriology) in their profoundly relational views of forensic justification? Are you aware that for these two Magisterial giants, justification was a legal, or forensic accomplishment that is only one of three important acts that are done by Christ and the Spirit when we are mystically united

to Christ by faith?

Is it not true that they held that when believers receive Christ they receive Him as the (1) One who forgives past sins, (2) declares penitent sinners as right then and there perfect for Christ's sake and that (3) He continues to provide them the benefits of the on-going regenerative work of the Holy Spirit which proceeds to sow the very character and love of Christ into the fabric of their characters? Do you really want to forsake these precious insights of both Luther and Calvin (which Hans LaRondelle has elegantly and comprehensively described as "effective forensic justification").¹⁴

Do you want to continue to work under the false assumptions of the Lutheran "Formula of Concord" (1580) which, long after the deaths of Luther and Calvin, decided to "restrict the gospel to a purely forensic justification doctrine" that was most likely created to "stress the contrast between Luther and Calvin (but especially Luther) and the 'Decree on Justification' of [the Council of] Trent (1547)."¹⁵

I strongly urge that there is a third and more satisfying alternative!

The "Effective Forensic Justification" Alternative

I would like to lay down a simple thesis and a challenge: the true sixteenth century Protestant Reformation and the true eighteenth century Wesleyan/Arminian doctrine of justification are best distilled in this pregnant expression-- "effective forensic justification." Furthermore, when it is applied in all of its powerful implications, it will call for serious reconsideration of the emphases of both the perfectionistic "final generation" followers of Andreasen and the proclaimers of an abstracted, sterile view of forensic justification. The latter group includes many so-called Gospel-oriented Seventh-day Adventists who have worked in the wake of Desmond Ford and his tragic appropriation of the Post-Reformation Scholastic Protestantism of Melanchthon (the leading Lutheran scholastic) and the Calvinistic-Reformed Scholastic thinkers such as Theodore Beza of Geneva, Vermigli, Zanchi, and Ursinus.¹⁶

¹⁴This terminology has been invoked or coined by LaRondelle in his outstanding, even "classic" presentation made to the conferees of the Lutheran World Federation during the bi-lateral "conversations between Lutherans and Seventh-day Adventists in the years 1994-1998." LaRondelle's paper is entitled "The Seventh-day Adventist View of the Relationship of Justification-Sanctification-the Final Judgment" and has been published in *Lutherans and Adventists in Conversation: Report and Papers Presented 1994 - 1998* (Silver Spring, MD USA: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Geneva, Switzerland: The Lutheran World Federation, 2000), p. 123 ff. This little known publication merits wider distribution. Copies are available from the Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁶See the excellent review of Protestant Scholasticism in Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought: From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century*, Revised Edition,

I simply want to earnestly urge both groups, who are intent on being genuine Seventh-day Adventists, to give up their sincere, but mis-guided theologies. There is a much better alternative—and that is the more relational soteriology of the Bible and Ellen G. White.

I will reach out further to the forensic accented Gospel Adventists later in this paper. But I want to first reach out to the perfectionistic “final Generation” wing of Adventism with some more elaborated questions and challenges.

The Appeal and Challenge to the Perfectionistic Advocates

The key issues that perfectionistic Adventists (who have drawn inspiration from M. L. Andreasen¹⁷ and his admirers) need to confront are as follows:

How does anyone co-ordinate a clear doctrine of justification by faith alone with the traditional perfectionistic emphasis? When any clear doctrine of justification by faith alone is taught, which goes beyond forgiveness for the sins of the past, pre-conversion life, these earnest advocates of full salvation from sin immediately begin to sniff the foul odors of antinomianism. And here lies the central problem that all parties need to squarely face: how does one avoid the extremes of “despair” and antinomianism.

I would not want to ultimately settle this issue on the basis of Ellen White, but since she is so often cited by the perfectionistic partisans of Andreasen (who himself used her liberally to justify¹⁸ his theology), I would like to present some cautions and positive insights that she has left for our edification—theologically and practically.

Key Forensic Justification Evidence

Essentially, there are four key pieces of evidence in her writings which raise caution signs and offer hopeful insights for the persons who advocate the strong perfection emphases.

The First set of evidential statements is explicit: *Selected Message*, Book One, pp. 176 ff. Here Ellen White directly warns against teachings by persons who “will take passages in the Testimonies that speak of the close of probation, of the shaking among God’s people” and “talk of a coming out from this people of a purer and holier people that will arise.” Ellen White plainly rejects such emphases by saying that all such teaching “pleases the enemy.”¹⁹

Vol III (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), Chapters IX (pp. 248-265) and X (pp. 266-288) and Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, Third Edition (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp. 119-131.

¹⁷The so-called Historics and the 1888 Study Committee constituents have all been most defensive for him.

¹⁸Maybe “sanctify” is a better word than “justify” in this context!

¹⁹*Selected Messages*, Book One, p. 179. It is not totally clear what “Brother K” (now clearly identified as Adventist evangelist E. R. Jones) was teaching, but it sure sounds quite similar to the teachings of the Final or Last Generation Theology that has been around since the

The Second set involves the group of powerful statements which lay out the theme that the closer the believer comes to Jesus the clearer will be their spiritual perceptions and the more sinful they will appear in their own eyes (the best being *Acts of the Apostles*, 560 ff., *Sanctified Life*, p. 50 and *The Signs of the Times*, March 23, 1888).²⁰ This powerfully perceptive concept just screams out for an understanding of objective justification to cover the defects of these earnest, but still imperfect followers of Christ!

The Third set includes her wonderful array of statements which clearly and positively teach that converted Christians are “reckoned,” or “accounted” as righteous and such a reckoning also includes their post-conversion character development which needs the constant reckoning of Christ to legally declare them to be something which in actual fact (at least in some sense of the word sinful) they are not (and here some of the best are *Selected Message*, Book One, pp. 367 and 389 ff. [the latter is a section entitled “Justified by Faith”]).

The Fourth, and final exhibit includes those statements which I have called her “mitigating” or safety net statements: the key one is that Jesus is constantly making up for our “unavoidable deficiencies” (key reference here is *Selected Messages*, Book Three, pp. 195-197; see my *Ellen White on Salvation* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, Publishing Association, 1995], pp. 99 ff.).²¹

Perfectionistic Reservations Regarding Forensic Justification

Yet when these themes are highlighted and given particular emphasis, the perfectionistic advocates start to get very nervous and begin to cry “‘New Theology,’ ‘Fordism,’ cheap grace, presumption, and you are making of non-effect the holy law of God.” I would like to forthrightly address these earnest and sincere concerns. Let’s try to think about this situation as clearly as we can.

Suggested Resolution of the Perfectionistic Reservations

First of all, let’s once more remind ourselves that the key point of the sanctified life which is in question in this long-running disagreement is the period of dynamic growth in grace that comes in the blessed aftermath of conversion and the initial experience of justifying grace. This latter experience, which will always be an indispensable accompaniment of conversion, includes Christ’s covering, or forgiveness for the sins of the past, non-Christian life of sin. Secondly, let’s also realistically acknowledge the truth that the experience of conversion does not bestow instantaneous, sinless sanctification on any believer. Why this is true we need not worry about at this juncture.

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and that formed the heart of Andreasen’s atonement theology.

²⁰See Appendix C below for fuller quotations of these statements.

²¹See Appendix D below for the text of these statements and many more that speak in a similar vein.

What simply needs to be admitted is that this fact is absolutely true—conversion or initial regeneration does not bestow instantaneous sanctification or character sinlessness on the newly minted believer. In fact, such sanctification will only be instantaneously bestowed sometime in the future (and let’s not fuss about whether it is at the close of probation or at glorification at this juncture). Let’s just admit that it will be the normal experience of the true believers to always be in some sense—imperfect!

Now I immediately want to hasten to say that such imperfection will not include willful, pre-meditated thoughts and actions of sin or the habit of excusing any type of sin. These imperfections will mainly consist of the “unavoidable deficiencies” of constantly growing Christians who are also deepening in their attitudes of penitence as they come nearer and still nearer to Jesus.

So what are we to make of this situation? How can such ones have the assurance, in their less than absolute perfection, that they will not be cast off and forsaken by the judgments of a Holy God?

Now I think that all will admit, if we are truly honest with ourselves and with God, that we have often been and are presently in need of the justifying merits of Christ. Permit me to ask you this question, but please do not answer in the affirmative: “Would any of you want a public record of your conscious thoughts, motives, actions and words for the last forty-eight hours to be read out to the world? The only reason I raise this question is to simply point out the need that we all have, at least from time to time, to be forgiven for some recent sins. Does anyone here want to say that such is not available to the penitent sinner? I hope not.

If we are all on the same page thus far, then let’s now proceed to apply this in a very practical way: what is the difference between a concept that there is constantly available justifying grace for penitent saints (who have messed up) when they consciously repent of and confess their known sins and believers who are constantly living in a state of imperfection and who are in constant need of Jesus to moment by moment reckon them to be his faithful children, despite their “unavoidable deficiencies”?

Most certainly many perfectionistic Adventists are comfortable with the first option, but not the second. But I press the issue: Is the second option any more open to abusive presumption than the first option? I think that if we will all be honest with ourselves, to one another, and to God, we will be able to emit an humble “No!” to this question. Both options can be abused by attitudes of presumption on the grace of Christ.

What will obviously be the case of those who experience that peace that comes from the knowledge that Jesus is moment by moment making up for their immature failures is that they will quite consistently be coming to consciousness of sins that will effect specific penitence and confession for specific sins. And thus their daily meat and drink will be Spirit induced sorrow for sin and the deepest and most heart-felt renunciation of those sinful acts and attitudes that lead to the crucifying “again for themselves the Son of God,” and putting “Him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:6 NJKV). But does anyone here want to argue that the grace of Christ will be able to give us perfect insight into all of our motives so that we can be totally sinless in all of our actions, thoughts, and reasons for doing what we do? If you do, I would guess that you have a quite superficial view of your personal depravity and the infinite demands of Christ’s just and righteous requirements.

What I think we all need to militate against is an attitude of presumption and its deadly kissing cousin—an attitude of excuse for any sin. But justification by faith which covers the known sins of the penitent can be just as presumptuously abused as the idea that justification which also provides a legal bridge that will sustain the unwittingly failing and imperfect believer in their pilgrimage to perfection and glorification at the last trump. Everything turns on the sanctified attitude of the justified true believer!!

Thus I would conclude that this fuller, richer view of justifying grace will engender a more assured, joyous, humble version of the genuine experience of sanctification. And far from engendering presumptuous attitudes, it will be the only avenue to a healthy, growing consciousness of the enormity of sin, the infinity of the Divine mercy for pardon and the power of the grace that brings real victory over besetting sins (“cultivated” and “inherited”). I do not want to sacrifice one bit of the high and holy optimism found in the biblical and EGW vision for character perfection—this side of the close of probation, the other side of the close of probation, and up to and beyond the experience of glorification.

Yes, “higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for his children.” But high as it might be, there is still a difference between what Ellen White calls “our sphere” and “God’s sphere” when it comes to genuine Gospel holiness in both the period before glorification and in eternity after the coming of the Lord. But do we really want to say that we will be meritoriously saved by perfect insight into our sinful motives and perfect performance of God’s latest revelations of duty?

Without the constant intercession of Jesus for our “unavoidable deficiencies,” I fear that the alternatives will only be (a) deadly despair for the utterly conscientious, sincere saints or (b) presumption for those who think they are much better than they really are. The former drift to despair is the normal experience of the sensitive, highly ethical person who does not know the comprehensiveness of justifying grace. Their temptation is to commit spiritual suicide (and sometimes literal suicide). The latter is the consistent experience of those who possess a superficial understanding of sin and the infinity of God’s righteous demands. Their tragic lot is Pharisaism and its pernicious fruit of a subtle legalism that always has to lower the bar of God’s just demands so that there can be some superficial and outward manifestation of law conformity. For the Pharisee, if the basket in basketball was seven feet high, they can possibly convince themselves that they are very good players. But we all know that such is not the case. The basket is still ten feet tall and that means that we are all in desperate need of sports grace to make up for the numerous “unavoidable deficiencies” of our smallness and poor shooting hands.

Some Help From “Father” Wesley and His Holiness Children

The Adventist struggles with how to incorporate these insights into a balanced soteriology are nothing new to the dilemmas of the longer Holiness tradition. Wesley had to struggle with the very same challenges, even for his perfected holiness champions. A few observations will prove helpful, drawing on the Wesleyan experience and some insightful critiques which it has received. After all, Wesley is the father of almost all modern Evangelical holiness emphases, including the emphases that have emanated from the very sanctification emphasizing Ellen G. White who was deeply influenced by Wesley and the American Wesleyan Tradition.

Wesley did preach a doctrine of instantaneous sanctification. Yet, even Wesley taught

that there was the need for some qualification of the absoluteness of such perfection. He never used the word “sinless perfection” and developed an interesting doctrine called “second or final justification” to make up for what he termed the “sins improper” of the perfected saints of his movement. In other words, he made an interesting distinction between an “improper sin” and a “proper sin.” For Wesley this was essentially the difference between sins of willful premeditation and sins of ignorance and so forth. Thus the perfected ones were those who had come to the place where they no longer featured sins of willful premeditation.

Now in some respects, this is a practical, Biblical distinction (see Hebrews 10: 26) which many Christians have used to make a helpful point—sins of willful presumption are much more deadening in their spiritual effects on the transgressor than are sins of ignorance, the actions which are unintentionally blundered into. Yet Wesley’s distinctions have come in for some just criticism.

First of all, we know that his doctrine of instantaneous perfection did engender much fanaticism in the wake of his own personal ministry and in subsequent eras of the Wesleyan tradition. So it is little wonder that the vast majority of modern, contemporary Wesleyan/Holiness scholars have laid aside the gist of Wesley’s sinless, instantaneous work of perfecting grace. And experience has taught us that there are some very trenchant reasons why such a view is inherently open to fanaticism. This subtly deceptive dynamic involves an unhealthy pre-occupation with one’s moral development. The most trenchant critique of this latter concept has been given by twentieth century Methodist scholar, R. Newton Flew.²²

Regarding the pitfalls of the idea which defines perfection as mainly the absence of known sins, Flew suggests that if freedom from known transgression is the main objective of sanctification, then perfection will depend on our “own insight into” our motives, previous moral development, and “knowledge” of ourselves. All this is very shaky ground for claiming perfection, and Flew’s comments are powerfully insightful:

“Many otherwise good people are unconscious of their own selfishness. The quarrelsome man genuinely thinks that everyone is unreasonable but himself. The revengeful man believes that he is animated only by proper self-respect.

“These considerations which hold good even of the commoner vices, the more flagrant sins, are true of the subtler and more deadly sins of the spirit. Pride in all its forms, vanity, egotism, spiritual complacency, a self-centered religion, the pharisaism which is goodness, and yet is false goodness—all these forms of moral evil are most likely to appear in those whose lives are disciplined and virtuous.”²³ Words well worth pondering by every SDA advocate of final

²²Ironically enough, R. Newton Flew is the father of the famed militant English atheistic philosopher Anthony Flew. Although Anthony Flew has recently admitted to a limited form of belief in a transcendent entity that could be called “God” (under the deep influence of the arguments of contemporary Christian philosophers and the design movement), he is not a professing Christian. At most, he could best be characterized as a reduced philosophical deist.

²³R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 333.

generation perfection.

The Appeal and Challenge to the Forensic Justification Gospel Advocates

For the Gospel Adventists who advocate some version of Protestant “Scholasticism’s” abstracted forensic justification, I ask you this question: How do you fit regeneration and its inevitable fruits of sanctifying grace through the gift of the Spirit into your soteriology without falling over into some sort of “once saved, always saved” cheap grace antinomianism? How do you explain Paul’s statement that “the doers of the law shall be justified” (Romans 2:13)? Why are you so optimistic about legal factors, but so suspicious of the warm, relational workings of the mighty transforming power of Christ through the “office work” of the Holy Spirit? Have you not in fact come to the very borders of a practical antinomianism in your rush to almost totally focus on the issue of assurance?

Why can’t you affirm that the experience of graced transformation is just as essential to a genuine experience of conversion as forgiveness and new legal standing in the grace of Jesus who is both our “Substitute and Surety”? I would urge that there is a wonderful Gospel blessing in growing in grace. It, among other blessings, grants us the grace of clearer discernment of the enormity of sin and the infinity of the mercy of God. And here is where the blessed experience of sanctifying and perfecting grace helps the growing believer to avoid the boomerang effect of blindness to the enormity of sin. The most familiar biblical metaphor is the one of hardening or being calloused to the awfulness of sin and being jaded regarding the true riches that we have in God’s blessed mercy.

Genuine Christian Perfection

Now when the implications of the absolute necessity of “effective forensic justification” come home to us in all of their balance and blessedness, can we not then affirm that this is the kind of “perfect saint” that God is longing for? Furthermore, a lost world is waiting to behold such a winsome witness to the power of the Gospel? What follows is an Ellen White and Bible inspired verbal vision of what the “final generation” should look like: Humble before God due to their sinfulness, responsive to the offers of God’s mercy, showing this mercy in their own dealings with others, fully embracing the possibilities of deeply satisfying victories over known sin, never manifesting any excuse for sin, and equipped for the most enriching lives of loving service and uplift. Is there not a balanced vision in these concepts that will take us all the way to glorification?

Now permit me to close with some reflections on the status of the sealed saints at and after the time of the close of probation. The sinless perfection advocates might have a point, but what will that matter? All we can really do is to take care of the present providential moments of today. Ellen White has plenty to say about the terrors of the “Time of Trouble,” but she also has some good counsel that we are not to create, or make a time of trouble before it happens. I am suggesting that if we are responsive to the leadings of God’s grace each step of the way and have learned to step off the back porch, when the time comes to go “sky-diving” or “bungy-jumping” for the Lord there will be grace sufficient to land us on the far shore. But all of this will be the glorious fruit of constantly looking to Jesus in responsive habits of trusting faith. But does God really need this spiritual bungy-jumping to get Himself off the hook of the charges of the Devil

in the finale of the Great Controversy? I think not. But I sure want to be responsively ready if the perfectionists are right. I just think Jesus will be there making up for my “unavoidable deficiencies.” Let’s just not presume on it, but keep leaning on Him daily for both justifying and sanctifying grace.

Appendix A

Julius Nam Blog Q&A

Nam: You're participating in the upcoming 50th anniversary conference on "Questions on Doctrine" in October at Andrews University. What do you see as the significance of this conference? What do you expect to come out of this conference?

Whidden: QOD was a most controversial and important publication in the history of SDA theological development. The authors of this book are certainly worthy of criticism on a number of counts. But I think we all need to pause, catch our collective theological breath, and seek answers to the following question: after you get through castigating them for their mistakes in dealing with the fundamentalistic evangelicals and M. L. Andreasen, what is it that we can say they got right? Here is what I would say: they got it very right when it comes to the atonement and its implications for Andreasen's final generation perfectionism. Andreasen was simply wrong and the QOD authors had the better part of the argument on the Atonement, from both the Bible and Ellen White perspectives. The other key issue raised by QOD was the humanity of Christ. Now the QOD authors did not get this doctrine totally right and were not totally forthcoming with their fundamentalistic inquisitors regarding what their Seventh-day Adventist predecessors and Ellen White taught on the subject (though what the predecessors and EGW taught were not necessarily identical). Yet, the QOD authors were headed in the right direction! In my estimation, Andreasen was also wrong on this issue (both in his theology and his spirit of bitter opposition to the QOD authors). And once again, what undergirded his defective views on the humanity of Christ was a defective view of the nature of sin. And here lies the great divide between what you call a "big chunk of mainstream conservative" Adventists (especially the majority of Scholars in our institutions of higher learning the world over, the Adventist Theological Society, and the BRI) and the so-called conservative "historics" and "1888 Study Committee" Seventh-day Adventists. If we can reach a consensus on these two issues, then the controversies spawned by the publication of QOD will not have been in vain. Now as to what I am expecting to come out of the conference? Most of all I am very desirous that all of us who are presenters, respondents, and panelists (and interested attenders) will just breathe the sweet spirit of Jesus and eschew a spirit of pharisaism. I pray that we will be forthright, but kind in the advocacy of our varying viewpoints. Let's seek every ground of agreement that we can find, freely acknowledge our basic presuppositions and pray that we will be humble enough to yield a dearly held position if the weight of Biblical and Ellen White testimony and theological consistency demand such a yielding. More than anything else, I feel that if we can get our spirits under the control of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth as it is in Jesus can shine forth. I just pray that we will not have a repeat of the spirit of Minneapolis and the terrible spirit of bitterness against the authors of QOD.

Appendix B

Defining Too “Minutely the Fine Points of Distinction Between Justification and Sanctification”

This is the Ellen White statement that Many perfectionists like to site in support of their attempts to practically conflate justification and sanctification: “Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification” (MS 21, Feb. 27, 1891: 1888 Materials, p. 897). Does anyone who cites this Ellen White statement which says that we must be careful not to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification” really want to say that we cannot make some of the large and abundantly clear distinctions that she made? Does anyone want to say that such a statement gives anyone the right to say that justification and sanctification must be so conflated that the people of God in the last day must develop a perfect, personal righteousness that is as radical, complete and as meritorious as that of Christ? Is it not better to stick with such clear statements as RH, Sept. 3, 1901, which plainly says that “Righteousness without a blemish can be obtained only through the imputed righteousness of Christ” when she is referring to “Perfect Obedience to His law” and such perfection is further defined with the sentence in the same statement that “God will not accept a willfully imperfect service.” The very powerful implication is that the key issue in perfection is coming to the place where willfully imperfect service is no long an option.

Appendix C

Ellen White's Statements Warning About Claims to "Have Fully Attained"

From *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560, 561: "Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there shall be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.

"None of the apostles and prophets ever claimed to be without sin. Men who have lived the nearest to God, men who would sacrifice life itself rather than knowingly commit one wrong act, men whom God has honored with divine light and power, have confessed the sinfulness of their nature. They have put no confidence in the flesh, have claimed no righteousness of their own, but have trusted wholly in the righteousness of Christ.

"So will it be with all who behold Christ. The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin, and humbling of the heart before Him. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone and shall make the apostle's confession our own: 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.' 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' Romans 7:18; Galatians 6:14."

From *The Sanctified Life*, pp. 7: There is in the religious world a theory of sanctification which is false in itself and dangerous in its influence. In many cases those who profess sanctification do not possess the genuine article. Their sanctification consists in talk and will worship. Those who are really seeking to perfect Christian character will never indulge the thought that they are sinless. Their lives may be irreproachable, they may be living representatives of the truth which they have accepted; but the more they discipline their minds to dwell upon the character of Christ, and the nearer they approach to His divine image, the more clearly will they discern its spotless perfection, and the more deeply will they feel their own defects."

The Signs of the Times, March 23, 1888 (Bound 2, Volume 14, No. 12), p. 199: "We cannot say, 'I am sinless,' till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto his glorious body. But if we constantly seek to follow Jesus, the blessed hope is ours of standing before the throne of God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; complete in Christ, robed in his righteousness and perfection."

Appendix D

Ellen G. White Mitigating Statements

ELLEN WHITE MITIGATING STATEMENTS

COMPILED BY WOODROW WHIDDEN

Nov. 18, 1891, Letter 17a, *Selected Messages*, Book 3, pp. 195, 196: "Jesus loves His children, even if they err. They belong to Jesus and we are to treat them as the purchase of the blood of Jesus Christ. Any unreasonable course pursued toward them is written in the books as against Jesus Christ. He keeps His eye upon them, and when they do their best, calling upon God for His help, be assured the service will be accepted, although imperfect.

"Jesus is perfect. Christ's righteousness is imputed unto them, and He will say, 'Take away the filthy garments from him and clothe him with change of raiment.' Jesus makes up for our unavoidable deficiencies (emphasis supplied by Woodrow Whidden). Where Christians are faithful to each other, true and loyal to the Captain of the Lord's host, never betraying trusts into the enemy's hands, they will be transformed into Christ's character. Jesus will abide in their hearts by faith."

The Youth's Instructor, May 14, 1884: "Young friends, Jesus can renew his image in your soul, but it must be by your consent and co-operation... Through him, you may be 'partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' The grace and perfection of Christ make up for our deficiencies; his character and righteousness are imputed to his believing, obedient children." (cf. *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 196 and *Faith and Works*, p. 50)

The Review and Herald, Aug. 21, 1888 (cf. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 135: "... The knowledge of the law would condemn the sinner, and crush hope from his breast, if he did not see Jesus as his substitute and surety, ready to pardon his transgression, and to forgive his sin. When, through faith in Jesus Christ, man does according to the very best of his ability, and seeks to keep the way of the Lord, by obedience to the ten commandments, the perfection of Christ is imputed to cover the transgression of the repentant and obedient soul...")

Jan. 18, 1889, Letter 22 to R. A. Underwood, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 242: "... But the Lord defines Bible religion as a principle in the soul, not merely the performance of virtuous acts, although virtuous acts are the natural fruits of this principle in the soul. It is the spirit in which the acts are performed rather than the performance that counts with God.

"Thank God it is not too late for wrongs to be righted. Christ looks at the spirit, and when He sees us carrying our burden with faith, his perfect holiness atones for our short comings. When we do our best, He becomes our righteousness. It takes every ray of light that

God sends to us to make us the light of the world." cf. *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 180 and *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 368.

July 23, 1889, Letter 4 to Elders M. and H. Miller, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 402: "Many feel that their faults of character make it impossible for them to meet the standard that Christ has erected; but all that such ones have to do is to humble themselves at every step under the mighty hand of God; Christ does not estimate the man by the amount of work he does, but by the spirit in which the work is performed. When he sees men lifting the burdens, trying to carry them in the lowliness of mind, with distrust of self and with reliance upon Him, He adds to their work His perfection and sufficiency, and it is accepted of the Father. We are accepted in the Beloved. The sinner's defects are covered by the perfection and fullness of the Lord our Righteousness. Those who with sincere will, with contrite Heart, are putting forth humble efforts to live up to the requirements of God, are looked upon by the Father with pitying, tender love; He regards such as obedient children, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed unto them." (also found in *In Heavenly Places*, p. 23 and *Mind, Character, and Personality*, Vol. 2, p. 787.

Compare the previous statement with that taken from *Faith and Works*, p. 50, for a similar statement, which was stenographically recorded on Sept. 17, 1885: "When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit. But He will not accept those who claim to have faith in Him and yet are disloyal to His Father's commandment.")

MS 21, Feb. 27, 1891, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, pp. 898, 899): "The sinner may err, but he is not cast off without mercy. His only hope, however, is repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ... ..imputing to us His own righteousness. His sacrifice satisfies fully the demands of justice.

"Justification is the opposite of condemnation..."

The Review and Herald, Sept. 1, 1891: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' How careful is the Lord Jesus to give no occasion for a soul to despair... If through manifold temptations we are surprised or deceived into sin, he does not turn from us, and leave us to perish. No, no, that is not like our Saviour. Christ prays for us. He was tempted in all points like as we are; and having been tempted, he knows how to succor those who are tempted... His atoning sacrifice we may plead for our pardon, our justification, and our sanctification. The Lamb slain is our only hope..."

MS 24, 1892. *That I May Know Him*, p. 136: "We should remember that our own ways are not faultless. We make mistakes again and again . . . No one is perfect but Jesus. Think of Him and be charmed away from yourself, and from every disagreeable thing, for by beholding our defects faith is wakened. God and His promises are lost from sight."

Letter 33, July 22, 1895; *Seventh-day Adventists Bible Commentary*, Vol 7, p. 948: "How careful is the Lord Jesus to give no occasion for a soul to despair . . . If through manifold temptations we

are surprised or deceived into sin, He does not turn from us and leave us to perish. No, no, that is not our Saviour."

The Signs of the Times, Oct. 3, 1895: "...we who believe in him as a personal Saviour shall, because of his merits, be accounted as pure from the contaminating influence of sin. Through the imputed righteousness of Christ, we are accounted guiltless.... Those who claim Christ as their substitute and surety, hanging their helpless souls upon Christ, can endure as seeing him who is invisible..."

"When you are betrayed into sin, do not despair. Do not delay and mourn in hopeless unbelief, but take your case at once to Jesus...."

"... We may lay our hand of faith upon the promise of God, that he will pardon the guilty, and impute to us the purity of Christ. Through the faith that works by love the soul is purified, and the human agent can discern God; for he is a partaker of the divine nature... (two paras later):

"Christ alone can save from sin; for he can make over to us his righteousness, and place it to our account..."

The Signs of the Times, April 30, 1896: "... Even those who are striving in sincerity to keep the law of God, are not always free from sin. Through some deceptive temptation, they are deceived, and fall into error. But when their sin comes home to their conscience, they see themselves condemned in the light of the holy precepts of God's law; but they do not war against the law which condemns them; they repent of their sin, and seek pardon through the merit of Christ, who died for their sins in order that they might be justified by faith in his blood. They do not avoid confession and repentance when the neglected law of God is brought to their attention, by exclaiming, as do the self-righteous pretenders to holiness, 'I am sanctified, I am holy, and I can not sin.'... It is evident that where a claim to sinlessness is made, there the law of God has not been written in the heart; for the commandments of God are exceeding broad, and are discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart...."

"... Sanctification is conformity to the will of God, and the will of God is expressed in his holy law..."

"Paul continues, 'I was alive without the law once [supposing himself to be righteous]; but when the commandment came [home to his conscience], sin revived, and [the law(?) died].' This is what many would be glad to have us believe; but it is a fatal falsehood, and we can not believe it in the light of God's word; for Paul declares: 'Sin revived, and I died....'"

The Review and Herald, May 12, 1896: "Christ was crucified for our sins, and was raised from the rent sepulcher for our justification;... He has carried the sins of the whole world, and has not made one mortal man a sin-bearer for others. No man can bear the weight of his own sins... The disciple of Christ will be fitted by his grace for every trial and test as he strives for perfection of character... (the disciple says) He is my advocate, and clothes me with the perfection of his own righteousness. This is all I require to enable me to bear shame and reproach for his dear name's sake..."

"... Those who know not what it is to have an experience in the things of God, who know not what it is to be justified by faith, who have not the witness of the Spirit that they are accepted

of Jesus Christ, are in need of being born again... (two paras later):

"... If one who daily communes with God errs from the path, if he turns a moment from looking steadfastly unto Jesus, it is not because he sins wilfully; for when he sees his mistake, he turns again, and fastens his eyes upon Jesus, and the fact that he has erred, does not make him less dear to the heart of God. He knows that he has communion with the Saviour; and when reproved for his mistake in some matter of judgment, he does not walk sullenly, and complain of God, but turns the mistake into a victory..."