

Born “Forgiven”

(The Unpardonable Sin in the Writings of Ellen G. White)

by

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This paper explores the definition of the “unpardonable sin” in the writings of Ellen G. White. In this work, it is not our objective to make the Spirit of Prophecy the source of doctrines and beliefs. Rather we are seeking supporting statements for the authors’ Biblical interpretation of the definition of the unpardonable sin. In order to define the unpardonable sin correctly, it is the authors’ conviction that the concept must be defined in the light of the gospel. Therefore, gospel concepts will be explored in relation to the definition of the unpardonable sin. If it can be shown that these gospel concepts are presented in the Spirit of Prophecy, we shall be all the more certain that our Biblical exegesis of the unpardonable sin is sound and our conclusions are correct. If it can be shown that any of these concepts clearly contradict the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy, those concepts must be abandoned since one inspired source will not contradict another. Thus this will be primarily a study of the Spirit of Prophecy in relation to the authors’ understanding of the Biblical data on the same subject.

This will not be a comprehensive presentation of all that the Spirit of Prophecy has said about every verse of scripture used to present the subject. There are many verses of scriptures for which there are literally hundreds of references in the writings of Ellen White. An exhaustive treatise would be a formidable undertaking. Therefore the scope of this work is necessarily limited to determining if the Spirit of Prophecy supports the concepts presented and as far as possible determining if any of the concepts conflict with the teaching of the Spirit of Prophecy. Silence of the Spirit of Prophecy upon any text used or any concept presented, shall not be deemed a condemnation of the position taken or an argument for its legitimacy. It would be best viewed as a call to further study.

The Unpardonable Sin in a Nutshell

The Bible tells us that “Christ died for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3). This is the heart of the gospel. However, at the same time the Bible seems to teach that the unbeliever will die for his/her own sins. For example: “The soul that sinneth it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). If both of these texts are speaking of the same offence, we seem to have a case of “double jeopardy”. The sinner is penalized twice. He/she suffers the penalty in Christ. And he/she suffers the penalty a second time in hell. However, if we take the position that Christ died for all sins except for one, (i.e. the unpardonable sin) the dilemma is resolved. Then we see that Christ was punished for all of the sins of the world except the unpardonable sin. Those who commit that sin will be lost. They will suffer the punishment/penalty (i.e. “second death”) because they have committed the one sin for which Jesus did not die. Thus there is no “double jeopardy” and God is seen to be just and fair. He can punish the sins of the world “in Christ” and yet punish the unbeliever.

Is this what the Bible really teaches? If so, is there support for the concept in the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy?

The “In Christ” Motif

Christ was a corporate man. The entire human race was “in Christ”.

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

(This is only one reference. The expression “in Christ” appears seventy-seven times in the KJV of the New Testament.) The “in Christ” motif holds major implications for the definition of the unpardonable sin. If we died for our sins “in Christ”, (if we should reject His sacrifice) how can we die for the same sin a second time in hell? Does the “second death” involve “double jeopardy”? We will return to this question later. First we need to see that the “in Christ” motif is presented in the Spirit of Prophecy.

In the *Review and Herald* of April 5, 1906 we find the following:

By His obedience to all the commandments of God, Christ wrought out a redemption for man. This was not done by going out of Himself to another, but by taking humanity into Himself. Thus Christ gave to humanity an existence out of Himself. To bring humanity into Christ, to bring the fallen race into oneness with divinity, is the work of redemption. Christ took human nature that men might be one with Him as He is one with the Father, that God may love man as He loves His only-begotten Son, that men may be partakers of the divine nature, and be complete in Him (Ellen G. White, RH April 5, 1906, S.D.A Bible Commentary vol. 7, p. 927).

The concept is presented again in *The Desire of Ages*:

Ever since Adam's sin, the human race had been cut off from direct communion with God; the intercourse between heaven and earth had been through Christ; but now that Jesus had come "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3), the Father Himself spoke. He had before communicated with humanity through Christ; now He communicated with humanity in Christ. Satan had hoped that God's abhorrence of evil would bring an eternal separation between heaven and earth. But now it was manifest that the connection between God and man had been restored (DA116).

It is presented again in *Christ's Object Lessons*:

Christ, the heavenly merchantman seeking goodly pearls, saw in lost humanity the pearl of price. In man, defiled and ruined by sin, He saw the possibilities of redemption. Hearts that have been the battleground of the conflict with Satan, and that have been rescued by the power of love, are more precious to the Redeemer than are those who have never fallen. God looked upon humanity, not as vile and worthless; He looked upon it in Christ, saw it as it might become through redeeming love. He collected all the riches of the universe, and laid them down in order to buy the pearl (COL118).

The concept is presented yet again and again, in *Sons and Daughters of God* and *God's Amazing Grace*:

Blessed is the soul who can say . . . I am lost in Adam, but restored in Christ (SD 120).

In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous (AG181).

It is clear that Ellen White did articulate the “in Christ” motif. She saw redemption as an event which took place “in Christ”. In order to redeem mankind He took “humanity into Himself”. This was essential to the plan of salvation. If we were not there “in Him” His death would mean nothing to us. Taking humanity into Himself in order to redeem humanity is the primary purpose of the incarnation. This is why Ellen White wrote “The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us” (7BC904). Now God sees us, not as we are, with all of our weakness and failures. Instead He sees us as we might become in Christ. All are in Christ but those who believe are especially in Him.

The Fundamental Tenet

Since Christ was and is a corporate personality, and all of humanity was taken into Him, when He died we “all died” “in Him”. This is the thought that Paul presented to the Corinthian believers:

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died (2 Corinthians 5:14, NKJV).

All of humanity was there “in Christ”. Therefore His death was the death of all humanity. He could die *for* all only *because* all were there “in Him”. Of course the Spirit of Prophecy also teaches that Christ died for all.

Christ would have us realize that our interests are one. A divine Saviour died for all, that all might find in Him their divine source. In Christ Jesus we are one (HP 288). (For additional statements see the Appendix pg. i).

This quotation consolidates two important concepts, the concept that Christ died for all and the “in Christ” motif, thereby lending support to the idea that it was by virtue of the fact that all were “in Christ” that He could and did die for all. All are indebted to Christ. It is obvious that this concept rules out the Calvinist concepts of limited atonement and double predestination. However, we shall soon see that the Spirit of Prophecy also transcends Arminianism.

Arminianism a Working Definition

Traditionally most Seventh-day Adventists have considered themselves to be Arminians. In fact, if one peruses the definition of “Adventist” in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* the following entry can be found:

Seventh-day Adventists share many basic beliefs held by most Christians. They accept the authority of the Old and New Testaments. They are Arminian (emphasizing human choice and God's election) rather than Calvinist (emphasizing God's sovereignty) in their interpretation of Christ's atonement, and they argue that his death was “*provisionally and potentially* for all men,” yet efficacious only for those who avail themselves of its benefits (“Adventist.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2004.
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/print?tocId=9003814&fullArticle=true>).

A recent *Adventist Review Newsbreak* carried an article regarding the republication of the book *Questions on Doctrine* which included the following statement:

QOD [Questions on Doctrine] did not depart from defending Adventism's more distinctive doctrines, including the seventh-day Sabbath, the state of the dead, and the present ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Also defended was the Wesleyan-Arminian theology held by Methodists, Nazarenes, and others as well as by

Adventists, in contrast to the Calvinism supported by Barnhouse (<http://www.adventistreview.org/2004-1502/news.html>).

Historical as well as contemporary, mainstream Seventh-day Adventist doctrine follows

Arminian theology. What is Arminianism? We need a “working definition”.

The creed of the Arminians was set forth in the Five Articles of the Remonstrance addressed in 1610 to the State-General of Holland and West Friesland, from which fact its adherents received the name of Remonstrants (Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 9, pg. 53).

The Five Articles of Arminianism are as follows:

- (1) God has decreed to save through Jesus Christ those of the fallen and sinful race who through the grace of the Holy Spirit believe in him, but leaves in sin the incorrigible and unbelieving. (In other words predestination is said to be conditioned by God's foreknowledge of who would respond to the gospel.)
- (2) Christ died for all men (not just for the elect), but no one except the believer has remission of sin.
- (3) Man can neither of himself nor of his free will do anything truly good until he is born again of God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. (Though accused of such, Arminius and his followers were not Pelagians.)
- (4) All good deeds or movements in the regenerate must be ascribed to the grace of God but His grace is not irresistible.
- (5) Those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith have power given them through the assisting grace of the Holy Spirit to persevere in the faith. But it is possible for a believer to fall from grace.

(Arminianism, an Overview, Lewis Loflin, http://www.sullivan-county.com/id2/cal_arm.htm)

Now as we consider these “official” statements of Arminianism the question is: Does the Spirit of Prophecy present a view of the gospel which transcends Arminianism as it is summarized in the statements cited above? We shall focus especially on point number one and point number two.

- 1) “God decreed to save . . . those . . . who . . . believe”.
- 2) “No one except the believer has remission of sin”.

The Spirit of Prophecy Transcends Arminianism

There are three major schools of thought on the atonement: The Calvinist, Arminian and Universalist. Neither the Calvinist nor the Universalist schools of thought result in the “double jeopardy” dilemma. But their solutions to the problem are clearly unacceptable. While Arminianism avoids the weakness of these perspectives, it is the one perspective which embraces “double jeopardy” and ultimately presents a view of the gospel which fails to produce assurance of salvation for the believer. Perhaps more significantly, Arminianism also fails to vindicate the justice of God. If God’s plan of salvation ultimately concludes by embracing “double jeopardy” His justice is compromised and the plan will not bring about a successful denouement of the great controversy.

It is the authors’ conviction that the gospel of the Bible is neither Calvinist nor Arminian. In Romans, Paul presents a view of the gospel which embraces the truths of both systems while rejecting their errors.

Therefore as by the offence 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 (Romans 5:18).

This verse transcends Calvinism in that it includes “all men”. It also transcends Arminianism in that it declares that “all” have been “justified” while Arminianism only allows Christ to make “provision” for justification to become a reality after the sinner takes the initiative.

Does the Spirit of Prophecy present concepts which transcend the first two articles of Arminianism? If it can be shown that it does, we shall conclude the scriptural interpretations to the same effect, are worth serious consideration.

Did God decree that Christ should “save” *only* the believers?

Christ was tempted by Satan in a hundredfold severer manner than was Adam, and under circumstances in every way more trying. The deceiver presented himself as an angel of light, but Christ withstood his temptations. He redeemed Adam's disgraceful fall, and saved the world (YI 6-2-98).

He 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 (Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 7A, pg. 485).

Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. The greater the sinner's guilt, the more he needs the Saviour. His heart of divine love and sympathy is drawn out most of all for the one who is the most hopelessly entangled in the snares of the enemy. With His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race (MH89).

A ransom has been provided at infinite cost, and it is not because there is any flaw in the title which has been purchased for lost souls that they do not accept it. 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 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 (ST 06-06-95).

For every human being, Christ has paid the election price. No one need be lost. All have been redeemed (7BC944).

The Spirit of Prophecy teaches that Christ “saved the world”, not just the believers as argued by Arminianism. In the writings of Ellen White we find many strong affirmations. She says He “saved the world”. He “restored the whole race . . .to favor with God”. “He has signed the emancipation papers of the race”. He “purchased” a “title” for “lost souls”, including those who “do not accept it”. “All have been redeemed”. Clearly the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy transcend Arminianism.

It should be noted that most of these expressions, which refer to the universal aspects of what Christ has accomplished, are legal expressions. The terms “redeemed”, “title” and “emancipation” are all legal terms. Therefore we may safely conclude that there was a legal aspect of salvation accomplished for everyone, believer and unbeliever alike, at the cross. This

idea transcends the conditional or “provisional and potential” concepts of salvation which dominate the Arminian perspective of the gospel. In the quotations cited above we see clearly presented the idea that everyone has already been “saved”. The problem is some will not believe in this element of salvation, which from a legal perspective is already theirs. The unbeliever needs to appreciate that God has already saved him from the penalty of his sins.

The expression “legal justification” is used by some to refer to the legal aspect of salvation.¹ It must be freely acknowledged that the term “legal justification” does not appear in the Bible. However, the terms “millennium”, “remnant church” and “investigative judgment” do not appear in the Bible either. These are terms which we have coined in order to more easily and clearly refer to concepts which *are* presented in the Bible. Likewise, we have coined the expression “legal justification” to refer to a Biblical concept and to distinguish it from the concept of “justification by faith”. Ellen White also taught this distinction although she used different terms to express it.

The Reason for Life

Were it not for the “legal justification” or the restoration of the whole race, which was accomplished by virtue of the “Lamb” that was “slain from the foundation of the world” and ratified at the cross, none of us would be alive. The basis of this assertion is our understanding of the penalty for disobedience, which was clearly expressed to Adam. “The day you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). This concept has been blurred at times by the teaching that Adam *did* die that day. He died spiritually, or so the idea goes. However, Adam should have died body, soul and spirit on the day he ate of the forbidden fruit. Thus the penalty was *not* executed. Adam did not die. The Spirit of Prophecy presents this idea clearly.

¹ Some have come to see the term “corporate justification” as better terminology.

Adam listened to the words of the tempter, and yielding to his insinuations, fell into sin. Why was not the death penalty at once enforced in his case?--Because a ransom was found. God's only begotten Son volunteered to take the sin of man upon Himself, and to make an atonement for the fallen race. There could have been no pardon for sin had this atonement not been made (1BC1082).

Words could not be clearer. The “penalty” was not “at once enforced”. Adam continued to live only because of Christ, who immediately became his Saviour. We should further note the clear implication of this statement is that Adam received an immediate “pardon”.

The world has been committed to Christ, and through Him has come every blessing from God to the fallen race. He was the Redeemer before as after His incarnation. As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. He has given light and life to all, and according to the measure of light given, each is to be judged (DA210).

Notice “every blessing” that everyone born on this planet has ever experienced, has come through Christ our “Saviour”. The believer, as well as the unbeliever, has been redeemed and saved and blessed through Christ, although some never accept this fact or appreciate all that was included in it.

As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. Christ knew that He would have to suffer, yet He became man's substitute. As soon as Adam sinned, the Son of God presented Himself as surety for the human race, with just as much power to avert the doom pronounced upon the guilty as when He died upon the cross of Calvary (FLB75).

Our Lord has said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. . . . For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." John 6:53-55. This is true of our physical nature. To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring (DA660).

In these statements we see that the Spirit of Prophecy does teach a corporate aspect of salvation. This aspect of salvation is referred to by some as “legal justification”. We have noted that the Spirit of Prophecy does *not* use the expression “legal justification” to refer to the

corporate aspect of salvation. But it does use several legal terms to refer to what God has done for all mankind. It uses the terms “redeemed”, “title” and “emancipation”. The Spirit of Prophecy clearly teaches that everyone who has ever lived did so only because of the corporate aspect of salvation which Christ unconditionally accomplished for the whole “world”. The death “penalty” was “not enforced”. The day Adam sinned, yes even that “instant”, he should have died and we should have died in him.² But that instant, Christ stepped in and saved every human soul from the annihilation which we justly deserved in Adam. This is a fundamental truth of the gospel, whether we ever come to believe the fact or not.

Why is This Important?

The correct understanding of what happened when Adam sinned is of more than academic interest. As a result of the influence of the Arminian concept the common emphasis, in fact the overwhelming emphasis, of many is on what man must do in order to get God to do something (i.e. grant pardon or forgiveness). As a result of this misplaced emphasis what is commonly understood as “faith” is really a self-centered grasping for security. This is not at all what the Spirit of Prophecy presents as faith or believing in Jesus.

“You may say that you believe in Jesus, when you have an appreciation of the cost of salvation” (RH 7-24-88).

Faith includes trusting in God’s pardon, forgiveness and the gift of eternal life, but faith is more than “trust”. The Spirit of Prophecy says “you may say that you believe . . . when you have an

² “By rebellion and apostasy man forfeited the favor of God; not his rights, for he could have no value except as it was invested in God’s dear Son. This point must be understood. He forfeited those privileges which God in His mercy presented him as a free gift, a treasure in trust to be used to advance His cause and His glory, to benefit the beings He had made. The moment the workmanship of God refused obedience to the laws of God’s kingdom, that moment he became disloyal to the government of God and he made himself entirely unworthy of all the blessings wherewith God had favored him.

“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.” (E. G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 21)

appreciation of the cost”. Faith includes appreciating the cost of the forgiveness. We need to appreciate what God has already done for us in order to forgive us. If we don’t understand that Jesus died that we might have both “life” and “immortality” that He has done something for everyone even those who don’t “accept it”, then we tend to think salvation depends primarily upon man’s initiative. If this is our perspective we have not yet apprehended genuine faith. Genuine faith is not merely “self seeking”, even if what we are “seeking” is eternal life. It is not motivated by a fear of punishment nor a hope of reward.

It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary's cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him. (DA 480)

After presenting the goodness of God toward Israel, Joshua called upon the people, in the name of Jehovah, to choose whom they would serve. . . . Joshua desired to lead them to serve God, not by compulsion, but willingly. Love to God is the very foundation of religion. To engage in His service merely from the hope of reward or the fear of punishment would avail nothing. Open apostasy would not be more offensive to God than hypocrisy and mere formal worship.—
Manuscript 135, 1899 (Youth’s Instructor, June 13, 1901; June 20, 1901).

True faith is appreciating the great goodness of God to all mankind “the just and the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). It is understanding that God’s agape always takes the initiative, even on behalf of those who will never believe and never be eternally saved. In other words mature faith is Christ-centered not self-centered. This vital understanding is difficult to grasp if we take the position that

God has decreed to save through Jesus Christ those of the fallen and sinful race who through the grace of the Holy Spirit believe in Him, but leaves in sin the incorrigible and unbelieving.

Both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy teach that God sent Jesus to save *all* mankind whether they would accept the salvation or not. (See John 3:16 - 17, John 12:47, 1 Timothy 4:10, 1 John

4:14) All have been redeemed from the penalty of their sin. All have been justified unto probationary life. (See Romans 5:18). But only the believers be eternally saved. (See 1 John 5:11-12). Thus an accurate understanding of the plan of salvation produces genuine faith. The Arminian concept tends to produce a counterfeit faith which is very difficult to distinguish from the true and therefore all the more dangerous. This is a large part of what makes the Laodicean condition so difficult to cure.

Two Aspects of Forgiveness

What is the meaning and significance of this “legal justification”? Simply put, this means the sins of the world have been pardoned. We have already seen that the Spirit of Prophecy does transcend Arminianism with respect to the scope of salvation. Article number one of our summary of Arminianism above, says “God decreed . . . to save . . . those who believe”. The teaching of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy is that God decreed and accomplished the salvation of every human soul, the whole world. Can we equate this aspect of salvation with the forgiveness of sins? Were we in a sense “born forgiven”? If this can be shown, we shall conclude that the gospel presented in the Spirit of Prophecy also transcends article No. 2 of Arminianism. In the inspired writings we find the following important statements:

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9. God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12 (MB114).

Mere forgiveness of sin is not the sole result of the death of Jesus. He made the infinite sacrifice not only that sin might be removed, but that human nature might be restored, rebeautified, reconstructed from its ruins, and made fit for the presence of God. . . . (3SM154).

In these two quotations we see that Ellen White teaches two aspects of forgiveness. These are referred to as two phases of justification, “legal justification” and “justification by faith”.

Ellen White does not use these terms. Yet it can be seen that she struggles to convey the same thought. We sense her difficulty when she uses the term “forgiveness” to define “forgiveness”. She wrote: “God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness . . .”. In short she said “forgiveness . . . is not only forgiveness”. Although in this we sense her struggle to express the thought without the convenient theological terms (legal justification and justification by faith), the concept still comes through.

The first statement says “God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act . . .”. The second statement says: “Mere forgiveness of sin is not the sole result of the death of Jesus.” In these two statements she does *not* deny that forgiveness is a “judicial act” which took place at “the death of Jesus”. It *is* a “judicial act”, but the point she wants to make is it is not *only* that. There is still more. There is a second aspect to God’s forgiveness. It is also “reclaiming from sin”. It is cleansing from the defilement caused by sin. It is the removal of sin from the heart. The expression “judicial act” corresponds to “legal justification”. That much has been accomplished for the whole world. When God “restored the whole race of men to favor with God”, He legally justified the world. This idea is also alluded to in a quotation cited above:

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 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 (ST 06-06-95).

Notice the whole world should be rejoicing “in pardoning love”. Why? Because their sins have been “pardoned” or in other words, forgiven, as a “result of the death of Jesus”. The only reason some do not rejoice is “because of their unbelief”.

There are several more statements which convey the thought of a pardon for the whole world.

To every nation, kindred, tongue, and people the tidings of pardon through Christ are to be carried. Not with tame, lifeless utterances is the message to be given, but with clear, decided, stirring utterances (ChS23).

The Lord saw us in a sad condition, and sent to our world the only messenger that he could trust with His great treasure of pardon and grace. Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was the delegated Messenger (RH 02-15-98).

As God made Christ His messenger to the world, Christ has made all who claim Him as their Redeemer, to represent Christ in mercy, forgiveness, and pardon, to the world (16MR193).

Now while it is clear that Ellen White sees a judicial pardon that has been extended to the whole world, she also sees and takes pains to emphasize the second phase of forgiveness (i.e. the second phase of salvation), also referred to as “justification by faith”. This phase of salvation includes deliverance from the power of sin and is applicable *only* to the believer. Ellen White also presents this concept in many passages such as the following:

There are backslidden church-members and backslidden ministers who need re-converting, who need the softening, subduing influence of the baptism of the Spirit, that they may rise in newness of life and make thorough work for eternity. I have seen the irreligion and the self-sufficiency cherished, and I have heard the words spoken, "Except ye repent and be converted, ye shall never see the kingdom of heaven." There are many who will need re-baptizing, but let them never go down into the water until they are dead to sin, cured of selfishness and self-exaltation until they can come up out of the water to live a new life unto God. Faith and repentance are conditions, essential to the forgiveness of sin (BTS 4-1-06).

Here Ellen Whites clearly says that “faith and repentance are conditions, essential to the forgiveness of sins”. A superficial reading of this statement would lead one to believe that sin is in no sense “forgiven” until “faith and repentance” are manifest. But if we read that statement in context, it is clear that the servant of the Lord is not speaking of the judicial aspect of forgiveness. She is speaking of “rising in newness of life”, being “cured of selfishness”. This is the second phase of forgiveness. It is cleansing of sin from the heart. This is what is involved in “justification by faith”. Again she said:

Faith is the only condition upon which justification can be obtained, and faith includes not only belief but trust (1SM389).

Obviously in this statement the servant of the Lord is referring to “justification by faith”. Let’s now observe how she describes it.

Many have a nominal faith in Christ, but they know nothing of that vital dependence upon Him which appropriates the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. Of this nominal faith James says: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? (James 2:19, 20). Many concede that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, but at the same time they hold themselves away from Him, and fail to repent of their sins, fail to accept of Jesus as their personal Saviour. Their faith is simply the assent of the mind and judgment to the truth; but the truth is not brought into the heart, that it might sanctify the soul and transform the character (1SM389, 390).

In this statement we can see that justification can “only” come through “faith”. This statement does not negate the fact that legal justification has been accomplished for all, because once again it is clear that in this passage Ellen White is speaking of the second phase of justification not the first phase. The second phase includes “repentance”, “transformation of character” and “good works”. This is what is involved in being saved from the power of sin (i.e. sanctification). The term “sanctify” is used in the above quotation in such a way as to lend support to the idea that “justification by faith” is the process which produces “sanctification”.

(The appendix of this document contains many more statements which link “justification by faith”, the second phase of God’s forgiveness, with repentance and obedience. See page i of the appendix. The section is entitled “Justification Linked with Obedience”).

Charizomai and Aphiemi

As we saw above, there are two aspects of forgiveness: “pardon” and “reclaiming from sin”. These two aspects of forgiveness can be clearly seen in two passages of scripture.

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses (Col 2:13 KJV).

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9 KJV).

In Colossians 2:13 we learn that God already forgave us of “all trespasses”, past, present and future. When did He forgive us? He forgave us before He “quickened” us. But how did He “quicken” us? The text says we were “quickened together with Him”. In other words, when Jesus was “quickened” we were too. Thus we conclude that we were forgiven of all of our trespasses when Jesus died. And thus He raised us up or quickened us together with Christ when He resurrected Christ. Since we were there “in Christ”, we died when He died and we were raised when He was raised. But before we were raised all of our sins were “forgiven”. But if all of our sins (“trespasses”) were “forgiven” when Jesus died, why does 1 John 1:9 say they will be “forgiven” “if we confess”? If both of these texts are speaking about the same aspect of forgiveness we have an inconsistency in the teachings of scripture. But if one text is dealing with pardon and the other text is dealing with cleansing the difficulty is resolved.

When the original Greek of these two texts is examined something very encouraging jumps out. The word translated “forgiven” in Colossian 2:13 is “charizomai”. But the word translated “forgive” in 1 John 1:9 is an entirely different word, “aphiemi”. The word charizomai

has a prefix which comes from the word “charis”, which means grace. The primary meaning of the term charizomai in the New Testament is “pardon”. But the word in 1 John 1:9 (aphiemi) does not mean “pardon”. It comes from two root words “apo” and “hiemi”. Apo means “from” and hiemi means “send forth” or “send away”. Thus aphiemi has the meaning of “sending forth from” or “sending away from”. It carries the idea of two entities being separated. It is used in Matthew 13:36. “Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house”. The word “sent” is aphiemi. In 1 Corinthians 7:11 Paul says “let not the husband put away his wife”. The words “put away” are translated from aphiemi. Now we see that what 1 John 1:9 actually says is “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to ‘put away’ or ‘separate us from’ our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. We were already pardoned at the cross but we still need to be cleansed of our sins.

Pardon not Enough

The tendency of the thinking of many is toward the conclusion that forgiveness (i.e. pardon) means a person is ready for heaven. This is why some tend toward the belief that salvation comes by confession. The idea is that we keep confessing our sins, thus making certain of forgiveness and thus maintaining a “saved” status. But this idea, that pardon means eternal salvation, is not the idea presented in the Spirit of Prophecy or the Bible. The first phase of forgiveness, as wonderful as it is, only cancels out our bad deeds. It is a negative act. It does not provide righteousness. In order to enter heaven we must have righteousness. Jesus said “except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Therefore we need more than judicial forgiveness to enter heaven. We need righteousness. While we are “born forgiven” so far as the judicial pardon is concerned we still need righteousness. This is provided in the second phase of

forgiveness, “justification by faith”. In this phase of salvation the righteousness of Christ is imputed and imparted to the believer. The evidence of this experience of justification is revealed in obedience to all the commandments of God. (See TM91)

It should be noted that genuine obedience is not simply obeying the “rules”. It goes much deeper than merely “doing the right thing” and “abstaining from doing the wrong things”.

The eye of the Lord is upon all the work, all the plans, all the imaginings of every mind; He sees beneath the surface of things, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. There is not a deed of darkness, not a plan, not an imagination of the heart, not a thought of the mind, but that He reads it as an open book. Every act, every word, every motive, is faithfully chronicled in the records of the great Heart-searcher, who said, 'I know thy works' (LS15).

Here we are told that more than our “works” are written in the “book”. The common understanding is that everything we “do” is written in the books of heaven. But there is something more important than *what* we do. The greater concern is *why* we do what we do. The books of heaven record “every motive”. Why?

Every action of their lives is judged, not by the external appearance, but from the motive which dictated the action (3T507).

This is why the apostle Paul wrote “agape is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10).

Righteousness is more than “doing the right thing”. It is doing the right thing for the right reason. And the right reason is “the love [agape] of Christ compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14). In other words unless there is agape in the heart, there is no righteousness in the life.

“The sinner loves Christ, because Christ has first loved him, and love is the fulfilling of the law” (1SM374).

We need righteousness in order to enter heaven and this can only be received when “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 5:5). Righteousness is agape.

The agape of God is “shed abroad in our hearts” when we “appreciate” (i.e. have genuine faith in) the love of God which was demonstrated at the cross, in the forgiveness of our sins. When

we believe that He loves us, and that He has forgiven us at the cross, this understanding produces love in our hearts and makes the manifestation of genuine righteousness possible.

The world's Redeemer was treated as we deserve to be treated, in order that we might be treated as He deserved to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins upon His own divine soul, that we might receive His imputed righteousness. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. The world's Redeemer gave Himself for us. Who was He?--The Majesty of heaven, pouring out His blood upon the altar of justice for the sins of guilty man. We should know our relationship to Christ and His relationship to us. We are to trust God fully, and ask Him to supply the least as well as the greatest want. The Lord encourages our confidence; and the great proof of our union with Christ, and the best manifestation of our love to Him, is in yielding obedience to His claims. If you have love to Jesus Christ, which is an expression of the life of Christ in the soul, then you will do what He commands you. This is practical religion. Redeemed by the ransom money paid for your souls, you will go forth and show how much you love Jesus by obedience to His commandments. You are to bring forth fruit by doing His commandments, because you are branches of the living Vine. It is His prayer that His joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (RH 03-21-93).

Obedience Not Meritorious

True obedience, the “right doing” which is a manifestation of agape, constitutes true Christian life. However, we should now hasten to add that this aspect of righteousness, “true obedience”, is the “fruit of faith” and it is *not* meritorious. There are many statements through out Ellen White’s writings which emphasize the fact that the obedient, sanctified life is the “fruit of faith”. Nevertheless this obedience is not meritorious. Salvation is entirely of grace.

The faith that justifies always produces first true repentance, and then good works, which are the fruit of that faith. There is no saving faith that does not produce good fruit (8MR357).

Sanctification is the fruit of faith, whose renewing power transforms the soul into the image of Christ (ST 06-07-83).

Note that the first statement says “the faith that justifies” produces “the fruit of faith” which is good works. And “Sanctification is the fruit of faith”. Therefore, sanctification is the fruit of

justification by faith. In other words justification by faith is the process which produces sanctification. And thus genuine faith *always* produces good works. This is also the point of James 2:14. But now notice these works are *not* meritorious.

Let the subject be made distinct and plain that it is not possible to effect anything in our standing before God or in the gift of God to us through creature merit. Should faith and works purchase the gift of salvation for anyone, then the Creator is under obligation to the creature. Here is an opportunity for falsehood to be accepted as truth. 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. If man cannot, by any of his good works, merit salvation, then it must be wholly of grace, received by man as a sinner because he receives and believes in Jesus. It is wholly a free gift (1888 Mat. Pg. 812).

It is probably prudent to point out that Ellen White is not arguing against the concept of salvation by works in the above statement. She is refuting the concept of salvation *partly* by faith and *partly* by works. In this passage she stresses the point that salvation is *entirely* a “free gift”. Even the true believer, who does many good works, still has NO merit to present before God. This “free gift” of salvation is *not* to be received by man as a good, righteous or reformed person, not even a sanctified person. It is to be received by man as an undeserving “sinner”!

Ellen White statements continue:

Although we have no merit in ourselves, in the great goodness and love of God we are rewarded as if the merit were our own. When we have done all the good we can possibly do, we are still unprofitable servants. We have done only what was our duty. What we have accomplished has been wrought solely through the grace of Christ, and no reward is due to us from God on the ground of our merit. But through the merit of our Saviour, every promise that God has made will be fulfilled, and every man will be rewarded according to his deeds. The precious rewards of the future will be proportioned to the work of faith and labor of love in the present life (RH 6-27-93).

The glory of the gospel of grace through the imputed righteousness of Christ, provides no other way of salvation than through obedience to the law of God in the person of Jesus Christ, the divine substitute (ST 9-5-82).

Notice that the only way to salvation is through obedience to the law of God. But it is the obedience of Christ to the law of God that merits salvation, not ours. (Several additional statements on “merit” may be found in the appendix, page ii.)

Was an Atonement Completed?

The scriptures teach that Jesus made atonement for sin at the cross. Many Seventh-day Adventists would take issue with that statement due to their understanding of the “Day of Atonement” which began in 1844. The prevailing understanding is that Jesus only *began* to make atonement for sin at the cross and the atonement is in *no sense* complete until Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is completed and probation closes. For a long time this has been our understanding. However, we now wish to point out that there is an important sense in which the atonement *was* completed at the cross. This is important to see if we are to understand the gospel clearly. It is the prevailing concept that the atonement only *began* at the cross, which leads to the conclusion that nothing was *completed* at the cross. And this conclusion precludes an understanding of legal justification for all which was accomplished at Calvary. While this must be clarified, it is not intended to deny that there is a cosmic “Day of Atonement” which began in 1844. This aspect of Christ’s ministry is also essential to the plan of salvation. Just as there are three phases to the plan of salvation, past, present and future. And there are three tenses in which salvation can be spoken of, past, present and future. It logically follows that there must be three phases to the process of atonement, past, present and future. Each phase is significant and essential.

The Spirit of Prophecy clearly teaches that Christ has made atonement for sin and that atonement was completed. For example:

He [Christ] planted the cross between Heaven and earth, and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His Son, He bowed before it in recognition of its

perfection. "It is enough," He said. "The Atonement is complete."--The Review and Herald, Sept. 24, 1901 (7BC459).

You will never find a more authoritative statement than one from God the Father. He said, "The Atonement is complete." To many Seventh-day Adventists that is an astonishing pronouncement, but it should not be. The Bible clearly says the same thing:

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. And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (Romans 5:10-11, KJV).

There are many more Spirit of Prophecy quotes along these lines. We cite only a few.

Christ's death on the cross paid the ransom for every human being. All may overcome, because Christ has made an atonement for the sins of the whole world (manuscript 140, 1903, LHU235).

The atonement of Christ sealed forever the everlasting covenant of grace. It was the fulfilling of every condition upon which God suspended the free communication of grace to the human family. Every barrier was then broken down which intercepted the freest fullness of the exercise of grace, mercy, peace and love to the most guilty of Adam's race—(Manuscript 92, 1899, 7BC465).

The seal of Heaven has been affixed to Christ's atonement. His sacrifice is in every way satisfactory.--The Signs of the Times, Aug. 16, 1899 (7BC460).

(Several more statements on the atonement may be found in the Appendix on page iii.)

Beyond the appendix of this document, there are many, many more statements from the pen of inspiration on the Atonement. The term appears more than one-thousand times on the E. G. White CD ROM. The few quotations cited above should suffice to show that an Atonement for sin has been completed on behalf of all mankind, believers and unbelievers alike. And it is the means by which mercy has been granted to the entire human race. We believe in the great Day of Atonement. We should also believe that "we have now received the Atonement" (Romans 5:11). "Christ made a full atonement, giving His life as a ransom for us" (7BC925).

This aspect of atonement, which was completed at Calvary, is already effective for all mankind. It is the basis for the judicial pardon (legal justification) which has been granted to all. And it is the reason we have probationary life and all of the blessings of this life.

Why Some Will Be Lost

Clearly Christ has “made atonement” “for the sins of the world” (EV187). This begs the question, why everyone will not be eternally saved and why many will suffer for their own sin. Is “double jeopardy” the ultimate conclusion of the plan of redemption? Is there an inconsistency here in the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy?

The Spirit of Prophecy is internally consistent. The root cause for the failure of the plan of salvation to accomplish all that God desired has already been mentioned above.

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 do not rejoice in pardoning love, but it is because of their unbelief . . . (ST 06-06-95).

Here Ellen White makes it clear that the “mercy”, “grace” and “love” of the Father have been “freely bestowed”. But what type of “love” is this? The statement goes on to refer to it as “pardoning love”. Thus we see that the “pardon” has been “freely bestowed”. We were indeed in a sense “born forgiven”. Even the unbeliever’s past, present and future have been addressed by this “pardoning love”. All of their sins have been “pardoned”. The unbeliever was also “born forgiven”. Therefore, they should be rejoicing. (By the way, that is what the story of the “birthright” is really all about. We all have a “birthright” to cherish or despise.) Before we were born, Jesus already suffered and died and thereby paid the penalty for every sin that we could ever commit. He is the Lamb “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). All of our sins have been forgiven, every sin that is, except for one.

No sin can be committed by man for which satisfaction has not been met on Calvary. Thus the cross, in earnest appeals, continually proffers to the sinner a thorough expiation (ISM343).

This statement clearly teaches that all sin was punished at the cross. (For additional statements on “punishment” of all sin see Appendix page vii). But it also seems to say that *every* sin was punished at the cross, precluding the exception we have taken for the unpardonable sin.

However, when the context of this statement is examined, it is clear that the presupposition for this statement is that one does not reject the gift of salvation. (For analysis of this statement see page vi of the Appendix.)

Since everyone’s sins have been forgiven. All should be rejoicing. The only reason some do not rejoice is “because of their unbelief”. This “unbelief” is the same reason Jesus gave to explain why some will be lost when He said “he that believeth not shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16). This must also be why the Spirit of Prophecy speaks so strongly about the sin of “unbelief”.

There is no sin greater than unbelief (ML14).

The greatest sin we can cherish is the sin of unbelief (ST 10-04-99).

We may expect large things, even the deep movings of the Spirit of God, if we have faith in His promises. Our greatest sin is unbelief in God. Has He not shown us how precious we are in His sight, and with what value He regards our souls, by giving us Jesus? (TSA67)

It was sin that caused Christ to suffer an ignominious death on Calvary. But while we should understand that sin is a terrible thing, we should not listen to the voice of our adversary, who says, "You have sinned, and you have no right to claim the promises of God." You should say to the adversary, It is written, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." I am so glad that God has made a provision whereby we may know that he does pardon our transgressions! We do not believe in God as we should, and I have thought that this unbelief is our greatest sin (RH 05-19-96).

Several times the pen of inspiration identifies “unbelief” as the “greatest sin”. Some consider doubting a mark of intelligence and prudence. It is even regarded by some as the basis for learning. God regards it very differently. When the truth is spoken, it is not a mark of high intelligence to disbelieve it. This is especially the case when it comes to the truth about God’s forgiveness of sin. He wants us to believe that we are forgiven (legally justified) and we can be forgiven (justified by faith). He wants us to believe that Christ has died for our sins and His death has accomplished something. To refuse to believe this is the “greatest sin”.

The Unpardonable Sin Defined

While “unbelief” is clearly described as “the greatest sin” the question still remains: Is this the unpardonable sin? How does the pen of inspiration define the unpardonable sin? In the first reference that we shall examine, a “Brother P” is concerned that he may have committed this sin. Notice Ellen White’s response.

Brother P, you ask if you have committed the sin which has no forgiveness in this life or in the life to come. I answer: I do not see the slightest evidence that this is the case. What constitutes the sin against the Holy Ghost? It is willfully attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit (5T634).

Here we find a very clear definition. The sin against the Holy Ghost is “willfully attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit”. But sometimes a brief and simple “definition” is subject to misunderstanding. Given this definition some may believe that as long as they don’t attribute anything to Satan they cannot commit the unpardonable sin. Just how do people go about attributing the work of God to Satan? Perhaps a more important question is *why* would this be done? Do people tend to arbitrarily attribute some “works” to God and other works to Satan and thereby endanger their souls? In Matthew we have an example of this very thing.

Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. ²³ And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" ²⁴ Now when

the Pharisees heard *it* they said, "This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (Matt 12:22-24 NKJV).

Jesus healed this blind and mute person and immediately the Pharisees responded by saying the miracle was not done by the power of the Holy Spirit; it is of Beelzebub. They were deliberately attributing the work of God to the devil. The question is: Why? If we knew nothing about the Pharisees we might wonder what was going on. But such is not the case. Throughout the gospels we find plenty of evidence upon which to evaluate their motive. They do not want to accept the miracle as being of God *because* they do not want to accept the fact that Jesus is from God. Their purpose is not to reject the miracle "per se". It is painfully obvious that their real objective is to reject Christ. This is why Jesus then explained to them the concept of the unpardonable sin. The narrative continues:

But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they shall be your judges. ²⁸ But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. ³⁰ He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. ³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come. (Matt 12:25-32, NKJV)

Connecting the act of attributing the work of God to the devil to the unpardonable sin, without taking cognizance of the motive behind the act, is to miss the point. We must remember:

Every action of their lives is judged, not by the external appearance, but from the motive which dictated the action (3T507).

True comprehension of the action demands that the motive must be taken into account.

Another vitally important consideration, in seeking to understand this truth and all other truths of God's word, is that we must understand the truth in relationship to the gospel.

The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, and in connection with the wondrous, central truth of the Saviour's atonement (5BC1137).

The idea that the unpardonable sin is attributing the work of God to the devil is a truth, presented "in the word of God". "In order to be rightly understood and appreciated" this truth "must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary". It must be interpreted in the light of the gospel. The Spirit of Prophecy quotation cited above clearly presents the definition of this sin in harmony with the Mathew 12 passage which is also quoted above. Now, in order to "rightly understand and appreciate" this truth, we need to see how the Spirit of Prophecy applies it in the light of the gospel.

In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin; and by refusing the invitation of mercy, we may commit the same error (DA324).

The Pharisees sinned against the Holy Ghost. Their talent of speech was used to abuse the world's Redeemer, and the recording angel wrote their words in the books of heaven. They attributed to satanic agencies the holy power of God, manifested in the works of Christ. They could not evade His wonderful works, or attribute them to natural causes, so they said, "They are the works of the devil." In unbelief they spoke of the Son of God as a human being. The works of healing done before them, works which no man had done or could do, were a manifestation of the power of God, but they charged Christ with being in league with hell. Stubborn, sullen, ironhearted, they determined to close their eyes to all evidence, and thus they committed the unpardonable sin.--Ms 73, 1897, pp. 4, 5. ("Our Words," July 2, 1897.)

There are none so hardened as those who have slighted the invitation of mercy, and done despite to the Spirit of grace. The most common manifestation of the sin against the Holy Spirit is in persistently slighting Heaven's invitation to repent. Every step in the rejection of Christ is a step toward the rejection of salvation, and toward the sin against the Holy Spirit (DA324).

In these quotations we see a clear description of *how* the unpardonable sin is committed and how it was committed by the Pharisees and the Jewish nation. They attributed the wonderful works of Christ to satanic agencies. But the vital question is: Why? The unambiguous answer is because they were determined to reject the world's Redeemer. And "In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin" (DA324). The sin of refusing to believe the gospel, which means refusing to believe in Jesus as the Saviour, is the unpardonable sin. That is the "sin which is unto death" (1 John 5:16-17).

The Unpardonable Sin in SDA History

Another startling fact comes to light when one studies this subject in the writings of Ellen G. White. Over and over again she speaks of this sin in connection with Seventh-day Adventist church history. She speaks of it specifically in connection with the persistent resistance against the message of righteousness by faith.

Now, I tell you, God will not be trifled with. God is a jealous God, and when He manifests His power as He has manifested it, it is very nigh unto the sin of the Holy Ghost to disbelieve it. The revealings of God's power have not had any effect to move and to stir persons from their position of doubting and unbelief. God help us that we may remove ourselves out of the snares of the devil! If ever a people needed to be removed, it is those that took their position in Minneapolis at that time on the wrong side (1888 Materials, pg. 613).

These testimonies of the Spirit of God, the fruits of the Spirit of God, have no weight unless they are stamped with your ideas of the law in Galatians. I am afraid of you and I am afraid of your interpretation of any scripture which has revealed itself in such an unchristlike spirit as you have manifested and has cost me so much unnecessary labor. If you are such very cautious men and so very critical lest you shall receive something not in accordance with the Scriptures, I want your minds to look on these things in the true light. Let your caution be exercised in the line of fear lest you are committing the sin against the Holy Ghost. Have your critical minds taken this view of the subject? I say if your views on the law in Galatians, and the fruits, are of the character I have seen in Minneapolis and ever since up to this time, my prayer is that I may be as far from your understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures as it is possible for me to be (1888 Materials pg. 631).

(For additional statements, see appendix pg. iv and v.)

It is doubtful that one can find stronger words of solemn warning in all the writings of Ellen White, specifically concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost, than those relating to the resistance manifested against the “most precious message”. Not only do they reveal the danger of committing that sin, they also reveal that there were “some” who committed that sin. Some went “too far to return and to repent” (TM89). The “stand” taken at Minneapolis “proved their ruin” (1888 Materials, pg. 1125).

What was the essence of the message which came to us in 1888 at Minneapolis? Why was opposition to it such a serious matter?

The message of the gospel of His grace was to be given to the church in clear and distinct lines, that the world should no longer say that Seventh-day Adventists talk the law, the law, but do not teach or believe Christ (TM92).

I have no smooth message to bear to those who have been so long as false guideposts, pointing the wrong way. If you reject Christ's delegated messengers [A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner], you reject Christ. Neglect this great salvation, kept before you for years, despise this glorious offer of justification through the blood of Christ and sanctification through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation (TM97).

The message which began to be proclaimed at the 1888 General Conference session was “the gospel . . . in clear and distinct lines”. To believe the gospel means to believe in Christ. Seventh-day Adventists were so preoccupied with the objective of defending the law and the Sabbath, that “Many had lost sight of Jesus” (TM92). Thus the message was sent to bring us back to Jesus, that the “world” might know we “believe Christ”. Therefore, to reject the message inevitably involves a rejection of Christ. The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that Christ was rejected in the person of His messengers. (See FE472). Thus we conclude that what was really at stake

during the 1888 era was the “sin against the Holy Ghost”. In rejecting “the message of the gospel” some were committing “the sin against the Holy Spirit”, the “unpardonable sin”.

No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent. If you refuse to believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, you love darkness rather than light, you love the atmosphere that surrounded the first great apostate. You choose this atmosphere rather than the atmosphere that surrounds the Father and the Son, and God allows you to have your choice (RH 06-29-97).

In this passage, the nature of the unpardonable sin is clearly presented. It is not a momentary lapse. It is not the mistake of one minute or hour or day. It is an intelligent, persistent and unrelenting unbelief of the message of Christ presented in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Ellen White’s words some “stood for years” in this attitude, before it was “too late” (see Appendix pg. v). Did Christ die for this sin, the sin of unrelenting unbelief?

Did Jesus Die for This?

It is our conviction that it can be shown from scripture that Jesus died for everyone and for every sin, except the sin against the Holy Spirit which is the final choice to reject Christ. If Jesus had died for this sin, then no one could be lost and sin would be immortalized. Legal condemnation must precede the execution of the penalty. We were legally justified at the cross. But those who are lost will first lose that justified status. It is lost through rejection of Christ. This is the unpardonable sin which results in a second condemnation that is irreversible, the first being removed at the cross, the second each person will atone for himself. That being said we want to discover if there is evidence in the Spirit of Prophecy supporting the thought that there is a sin for which Jesus did not die? This thought seems to be supported by Hebrews 10:26 – 29.

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three

witnesses.²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb 10:26-29, NKJV)

This passage of scripture presents a clear description of the unpardonable sin. It is a “willful” sin, not an accident. It is an intelligent sin, not a sin of ignorance. It can only be committed “after” having “received the knowledge of the truth”. It involves deliberately trampling “under foot the Son of God”. It includes a rejection of the atonement, “the blood of the covenant”. And ultimately it involves disrespect or contempt for the Holy Ghost Who enables us to “discern” all of these spiritual realities. In other words it involves doing “despite unto the Spirit”. And for that sin “there no longer remains a sacrifice.” The expression “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” seems to suggest that this is a sin for which Christ did not die. It is interesting to observe that Ellen White quotes the same text in one of her solemn warnings to the brethren who were in danger of committing the unpardonable sin by deliberately rejecting the message of justification by faith.

I have no smooth message to bear to those who have been so long as false guideposts, pointing the wrong way. If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ. Neglect this great salvation, kept before you for years, despise this glorious offer of justification through the blood of Christ and sanctification through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation (TM97).

The fact that she has cited this text in the midst of a warning concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost does not prove that she believes the text means what we may say it means. For evidence that Ellen White believed there is a sin for which Jesus did not die, we must look for clearer evidence in her writings.

“No Sacrifice”

The sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, had been instructed concerning the temple services. They knew that all of the offerings made in the sanctuary were to be consumed by the fire which was “ever burning” (Lev. 6:13). Nevertheless Leviticus records their sad departure from the explicit command of God.

¹ And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. ² And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD (Lev 10:1-2).

On the surface this is a startling and perhaps even perplexing story. The punishment does not appear to fit the offence. Why did God take such sudden and drastic measures in punishing these two young men? Ellen White illuminates the problem.

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, then offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. What could have come upon the sons of Aaron, that they should thus transgress the requirement of God? The sacred fire which God Himself had kindled and preserved was at their hand. Direction had been given concerning it, and God had said: The fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt-offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace-offerings. The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out (RH 5-15-94).

This “ever burning” fire which “God Himself had kindled” was the only fire allowed in the temple services. When the sacrifices were consumed by this sacred fire, it typified the fact that Christ the Messiah would not die because of what men would do to Him. Nor would His life be taken by Satan. He would be consumed by the “fire” which comes from “God Himself”. In Pagan sacrifices man kindles the fire and consumes the sacrifice in order to appease an angry god. In God’s plan of redemption, He Himself provides the sacrifice and consumes it by His Holy Wrath against sin. Ellen White describes what happened at the cross:

He [Christ] was bearing the penalty of transgression for a sinful world. This proceeded not from Satan nor from man. It is best described in the words of the prophet, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." Christ was realizing His Father's frown. He was now suffering under divine justice (ST 12-02-97).

The "penalty of transgression" was executed by God. It did not come from "Satan nor from man". Neither Satan nor man had any part in our redemption. It was all, of God. This is another essential element of the gospel. In this light we see that when Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire" before the Lord, they were doing much more than using the wrong fire. They were in fact rejecting and perverting the gospel. They were committing the unpardonable sin. And that is why the punishment was so sudden and drastic. It may readily be inferred from the abruptness with which they were annihilated that Jesus did not die for the sin committed by Nadab and Abihu. Nevertheless, there is yet more concrete evidence in the Spirit of Prophecy on this question. Did Jesus die for the unpardonable sin?

The Spirit of Prophecy comments on the transgressions of Eli's sons seems to provide a clear answer.

The transgressions of Eli's sons were so daring, so insulting to a holy God, that no sacrifice could atone for such willful transgression. These sinful priests profaned the sacrifices which typified the Son of God. And by their blasphemous conduct they were trampling upon the blood of the atonement, from which was derived the virtue of all sacrifices (1SP402).

Here the neglect of Eli is brought plainly before every father and mother in the land. As the result of his unsanctified affection or his unwillingness to do a disagreeable duty, he reaped a harvest of iniquity in his perverse sons. Both the parent who permitted the wickedness and the children who practiced it were guilty before God, and He would accept no sacrifice or offering for their transgression (RH 05-04-86).

Clearly the Spirit of Prophecy declares that sins have been committed, for which "no sacrifice could atone". In the first quotation regarding Eli and his sons Ellen White clearly declares that what is involved here is "blasphemy". And she again alludes to the same passage in

Hebrews chapter ten with the words “trampling upon the blood of the covenant”. Therefore we draw the following conclusions:

- a) Hebrews 10:26-29 is dealing with the unpardonable sin.
- b) The unpardonable sin is the sin for which no sacrifice can be accepted.
- c) Jesus sacrifice is not applicable to the unpardonable sin.
- d) It is because there is no sacrifice that this sin will not be forgiven in this life or the life to come.
- e) All sins have been atoned for and judicially pardoned except the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.
- f) Therefore the death of the unbeliever does not involve double jeopardy.
- g) The unbeliever dies for the sin for which Jesus did not die.

Genuine Confession and Repentance

If Christ has already atoned for all possible sins, past, present and future (except for the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit) and this “atonement” has resulted in a “judicial act” of “pardon”, why do we need to confess them? We have already seen that there is no merit associated with the repentance of the sinner. Nor is there any merit in our faith in Christ. It is the faith of Christ and His only that is meritorious. What then is the significance of our repentance and why do we need to confess?

The common understanding of repentance views it as a catalyst which causes God’s “pardoning love” to become applicable to the sinner, in pardon, forgiveness and justification. In other words, God stands back passively perhaps *wanting* to forgive us but unable to act apart from the sinner’s initiative. This is *not* how Ellen White understood the process. She wrote:

It was taught by the Jews that before God's love is extended to the sinner, he must first repent. In their view, repentance is a work by which men earn the favor of Heaven. And it was this thought that led the Pharisees to exclaim in astonishment and anger. "This man receiveth sinners." According to their ideas He should

permit none to approach Him but those who had repented. But in the parable of the lost sheep, Christ teaches that salvation does not come through our seeking after God but through God's seeking after us. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way." Rom. 3:11, 12. We do not repent in order that God may love us, but He reveals to us His love in order that we may repent (COL189).

In this paragraph we get a different view of the process of salvation and the concept of repentance. Here is a view which is in harmony with the idea that "the goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4). It is God who is pursuing us and not the other way around. "He reveals to us His love in order that we may repent". How did God reveal His love?

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (Romans 5:8-9).

God fully revealed His love when Christ died. But notice when Christ died we were "justified by His blood". In other words we were granted a judicial pardon; we were forgiven. Thus we see that we do not repent in order that God may forgive us (i.e. pardon us). He already forgave us so that we might repent.

It is when we realize how far He has come to save us and understand something of the sacrifice involved in His pursuit that our hearts are melted and we receive the gift of repentance. Our confession and repentance has much more to do with cleansing than it has to do with pardon.

The more we understand of the plan of redemption, the more we want to be cleansed of all sin. We need to understand more. We need to understand in a much fuller sense, just what Christ means to us *now*, if we are to confess our sins with the spirit of genuine repentance. The Spirit of Prophecy gives us deep insight into what the plan of redemption means and why we should confess our sins and receive the gift of cleansing from all unrighteousness.

Christ as high priest within the veil so immortalized Calvary that though He liveth unto God, He dies continually to sin, and thus if any man sin, he has an advocate with the Father (1SM343).

This is a somewhat mysterious statement. It seems to open the veil into the most holy apartment of the heavenly sanctuary just enough for a tiny ray of light to shine through to us. It is “heavy”, poignant, and profound. What does it mean? Is there something transpiring in the sanctuary above which should impact the way we live and call us to receive much more fully of the spirit of confession and the gift of repentance?

Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God. Every departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him (Education, p. 263).

This statement “opens the veil” a little wider. It reveals at least to some extent why John the Revelator repeatedly refers to the “Lamb” in the heavenly sanctuary, but not just a lamb, a lamb “as though it had been slain”. It begins to open our understanding to the present reality of the cross. We are often tempted to think of the cross as represented by a vertical line marking an event on the timeline of history. These statements suggest that the cross should not be a vertical but rather a horizontal line, on the timeline of history. This horizontal line extends from the inception of sin to at least the final restoration of this world. This understanding of reality should broaden our concept of the expediency of repentance. And yet there is still more.

Jesus offers himself for the life of the world. He stands before the Father, bearing the sins which man commits. To Him every believing soul may transfer his burden. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Innocent of all sin, He bears the guilt of the sinner, that to the sinner may be imputed the merits of His righteousness (RH 08-13-01).

Christ our Saviour came to the world to seek and save that which was lost. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." During every moment of Christ's life in our world, God was repeating His gift. Christ, the sinless One, was

making an infinite sacrifice for sinners, that they might be saved. He came as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and those for whom He came looked upon Him as stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. The cup of suffering was placed in His hand, as if He were the guilty one, and He drained it to the dregs. He bore the sin of the world to the bitter end. And yet men continue to sin, and Christ continues to feel the consequences of their sin as if He Himself were the guilty one (13MR369).

These statements are beyond finite comprehension. Both of them speak of what Christ is doing in the present continuous tense. Evidently there are still “consequences” which are borne by Christ, every time we sin. He ascended to heaven as our high priest, to offer both “gifts and sacrifices” (Hebrews 8:3). He still intercedes and were it not for His intercession our sins would destroy us. Instead of allowing that to happen, He bears the consequences for us, “as if He Himself were the guilty one”. “While He liveth unto God, He dies continually to sin” (3SM343). The thought is overwhelming, but true. The agony of Calvary is in a sense “immortalized” and this is why we should confess our sins and receive the gift of repentance and cleansing from all unrighteousness.

APPENDIX

Christ Died for All

There is not a soul that is not indebted to God. Christ died for all. He died for you, reader, that you might have the graces of the Spirit, that you might become conquerors, that you might have eternal life (SW 9-22-08).

Christ suffered without the gates of Jerusalem, for Calvary was outside the city walls. This was to show that He died, not for the Hebrews alone, but for all mankind. He proclaims to a fallen world that He is their Redeemer, and urges them to accept the salvation He offers (SW Sept. 4, 1906, 7BC934).

If you are gloomy, desponding, hopeless, you are a poor representative of the Christian religion. Christ died for all. The sacrifice was complete. It is your privilege and duty to show to the world that you have an entire, all-powerful Saviour (Historical Sketches, pg. 143).

Let it be kept in mind that Jesus died for all, and that he loves others just as much as he loves you (HS 150).

Justification by Faith Linked with Obedience

The present message--justification by faith--is a message from God; it bears the divine credentials, for its fruit is unto holiness (RH 9-03-89).

Being justified by faith, he carries cheerfulness with him in his obedience in all his life (6BC1071).

Justification by faith is to many a mystery. A sinner is justified by God when he repents of his sins (OHC52).

It [the most precious message] presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God (TM91, 92).

In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect (FW100).

Fruit of Faith

True faith consists in doing just what God has enjoined, not manufacturing things He has not enjoined. Justice, truth, mercy, are the fruit of faith. We need to walk in the light of God's law; then good works will be the fruit of our faith, the proceeds of a heart renewed every day (TMK226).

But faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan's counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God's promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression (DA126).

In His divine arrangement, through His unmerited favor, the Lord has ordained that good works shall be rewarded. We are accepted through Christ's merit alone; and the acts of mercy, the deeds of charity, which we perform, are the fruits of faith; and they become a blessing to us; for men are to be rewarded according to their works. It is the fragrance of the merit of Christ that makes our good works acceptable to God, and it is grace that enables us to do the works for which He rewards us. Our works in and of themselves have no merit. . . . We deserve no thanks from God. We have only done what it was our duty to do, and our works could not have been performed in the strength of our own sinful natures (OHC122, 5BC1122).

No Merit

We stand in favor before God, not because of any merit in ourselves, but because of our faith in "the Lord our righteousness" (FW107).

Repentance is associated with faith, and is urged in the gospel as essential to salvation. Paul preached repentance. He said, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:20, 21). There is no salvation without repentance. No impenitent sinner can believe with his heart unto righteousness. Repentance is described by Paul as a godly sorrow for sin, that "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7:10). This repentance has in it nothing of the nature of merit, but it prepares the heart for the acceptance of Christ as the only Saviour, the only hope of the lost sinner (1SM365).

The provision made for the salvation of men through the imputed righteousness of Christ, does not do away with the law, or lessen in the least its holy claims; for Christ came to exalt the law and make it honorable, to reveal its exceeding breadth and changeless character. The glory of the gospel of grace through the imputed righteousness of Christ, provides no other way of salvation than through obedience to the law of God in the person of Jesus Christ, the divine substitute. In

the old dispensation believers were saved through the grace of Christ, as presented in the gospel, as we are saved today. The only means of salvation is provided under the Abrahamic covenant (ST 9-5-82).

Atonement

In the atonement made for him the believer sees such breadth and length and height and depth of efficiency--sees such completeness of salvation, purchased at such infinite cost, that his soul is filled with praise and thanksgiving (FW106).

Jesus is our atoning sacrifice. We can make no atonement for ourselves; but by faith we can accept the atonement that has been made. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." No man of earth, no angel of heaven, could have paid the penalty for sin. Jesus was the only one who could save rebellious man (BE 03-15-93).

Christ is to be preached, not controversially, but affirmatively. Take your stand without controversy. Let not your words at any time be uncertain. The Word of the living God is to be the foundation of our faith. Gather up the strongest affirmative statements regarding the atonement made by Christ for the sins of the world (EV187).

As the penitent sinner, contrite before God, discerns Christ's atonement in his behalf and accepts this atonement as his only hope in this life and the future life, his sins are pardoned. This is justification by faith (FW103).

Men may comprehend the spirituality of the law, they may realize its power as a detector of sin, but they are helpless to withstand Satan's power and deceptions, unless they accept the atonement provided for them in the remedial sacrifice of Christ, who is our Atonement--our At-one-ment--with God (HP146).

The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, and in connection with the wondrous, central truth of the Saviour's atonement (5BC1137).

Let no one take the limited, narrow position that any of the works of man can help in the least possible way to liquidate the debt of his transgression. This is a fatal deception. If you would understand it, you must cease haggling over your pet ideas, and with humble hearts survey the atonement (6BC1071).

The atonement of Christ was not made in order to induce God to love those whom He otherwise hated; and it was not made to produce a love that was not in existence; but it was made as a manifestation of the love that was already in God's heart, an exponent of the divine favor in the sight of heavenly intelligences, in the sight of worlds unfallen, and in the sight of a fallen race. . . . We are not to entertain the idea that God loves us because Christ has died for us, but that He so loved us that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for us.--The Signs of the Times, May 30, 1893 (7BC472).

As the sin bearer, and priest and representative of man before God, He entered into the life of humanity, bearing our flesh and blood. The life is in the living, vital current of blood, which blood was given for the life of the world. Christ made a full atonement, giving His life as a ransom for us (7BC925).

SDA History

I have sorrow in my heart continually on their account because they will not, cannot, be saved in their present attitude. They persistently hold to the course of wrong they in their blindness have taken, and until they shall see and confess their errors they stand in no better place before God than other ministers who have resisted the Spirit of God and done despite to the Spirit of grace. I know their position perfectly. It is kept before me in many ways, until the only relief I can get is to keep away from Battle Creek where the influence of these things is prevailing and active. May the Lord help me to move wisely.--Letter 109, 1890 (1888 Materials, pg. 741).

The conference at Minneapolis was the golden opportunity for all present to humble the heart before God and to welcome Jesus as the great Instructor, but the stand taken by some at that meeting proved their ruin. They have never seen clearly since, and they never will, for they persistently cherish the spirit that prevailed there, a wicked, criticizing, denunciatory spirit (1888 Materials, pg. 1125).

I inquire of those in responsible positions in Battle Creek, What are you doing? You have turned your back, and not your face, to the Lord. There needs to be a cleansing of the heart, the feelings, the sympathies, the words, in reference to the most momentous subjects--the Lord God, eternity, truth. What is the message to be given at this time? It is the third angel's message. But that light which is to fill the whole earth with its glory has been despised by some who claim to believe the present truth. Be careful how you treat it. Take off the shoes off your feet; for you are on holy ground. Beware how you indulge the attributes of Satan, and pour contempt upon the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. I know not but some have even now gone too far to return and to repent (TM89).

I would speak in warning to those who have stood for years resisting light and cherishing the spirit of opposition. How long will you hate and despise the

messengers of God's righteousness . . . Let me prophesy unto you: Unless you speedily humble your hearts before God, and confess your sins, which are many, you will, when it is too late, see that you have been fighting against God. Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, no longer unto reformation and pardon, you will see that these men whom you have spoken against have been as signs in the world, as witnesses for God. Then you would give the whole world if you could redeem the past, and be just such zealous men, moved by the Spirit of God to lift your voice in solemn warning to the world; and, like them, to be in principle firm as a rock. Your turning things upside down is known of the Lord. Go on a little longer as you have gone, in rejection of the light from heaven, and you are lost (TM96).

I know that the Lord has wrought by his own power in Battle Creek. Let no one attempt to deny this; for in so doing they will sin against the Holy Ghost (1888 Materials, pg. 1254).

Punishment

He who stilled the angry waves by his word, and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble, and disease flee from his touch, who raised the dead to life and opened the eyes of the blind,--offers himself upon the cross as the last sacrifice for man. He, the sin-bearer, endures judicial punishment for iniquity, and becomes sin itself for man (3SP162).

Jesus, by the law of sympathetic love, bore our sins, took our punishment, and drank the cup of the wrath of God apportioned to the transgressor. . . . He bore the cross of self-denial and self-sacrifice for us, that we might have life, eternal life. Will we bear the cross for Jesus?--Lt 110, 1896. (KH 289.)

It is because He [Christ] has borne the punishment in His own body on the cross that man has a second probation (TDG87).

In dying upon the cross, Christ did not lessen in the slightest particular the vital claims of the law of Jehovah. He endured punishment in the sinner's stead, that those who believe in Him might become the sons and daughters of God (Bible Echo 5/30/98).

Christ was under no obligation to make this great sacrifice. Voluntarily he pledged himself to bear the punishment due to the transgressor of his law. His love was his only obligation, and without a murmur he endured every pang and welcomed every indignity that was part of the plan of salvation (RH 4-4-12).

Analysis of 1SM343

In the writings of Ellen White we find another powerful statement which appears to be a double-edged sword. It does proclaim good news but at the same time it appears to spell doom for the entire theory which we have just painstakingly hammered out. Let's take a look.

No sin can be committed by man for which satisfaction has not been met on Calvary. Thus the cross, in earnest appeals, continually proffers to the sinner a thorough expiation (Selected Messages, Vol. 1, pg. 343).

On the surface the passage appears to say that there is no sin for which Jesus did not die. I think I hear the Arminians shouting: "See, I knew this could not be true!" But let's take a closer look. The mistake which we often make is taking texts out of their contexts. This is very often done with various Bible verses. It should be remembered that the Bible and the writings of Ellen White are both inspired by the same Holy Spirit. That is not to say her writings are on a par with Scripture, but the source is the same. Therefore the method of analysis must be the same. Let's back up, and get a fuller view of the context.

Let no one take the limited, narrow position that any of the works of man can help in the least possible way to liquidate the debt of his transgression. This is a fatal deception. If you would understand it, you must cease haggling over your pet ideas, and with humble hearts survey the atonement. This matter is so dimly comprehended that thousands upon thousands claiming to be sons of God are children of the wicked one, because they will depend on their own works. God always demanded good works, the law demands it, but because man placed himself in sin where his good works were valueless, Jesus' righteousness alone can avail. Christ is able to save to the uttermost because He ever liveth to make intercession for us. All that man can possibly do toward his own salvation is to accept the invitation, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). No sin can be committed by man for which satisfaction has not been met on Calvary. Thus the cross, in earnest appeals, continually proffers to the sinner a thorough expiation (Selected Messages, vol. 1, pg. 343).

Looking at the context we find that the primary concern is to refute legalism, salvation by works. Thus the point is: The full price for salvation was paid at Calvary. However, as we look

a little closer we find that this passage actually supports our conclusions regarding the unpardonable sin. The sentence immediately before the one initially cited above says: “All that man can possibly do toward his own salvation is to accept the invitation, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). Now in that context, the context which assumes that one accepts the free gift of salvation, we read “No sin can be committed by man for which satisfaction has not been met on Calvary.” In other words every sin has been paid for *IF* you do not reject the gift. The sin of rejecting the gift was not paid for at Calvary.