I Rest My Case

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teaching on the Holy Spirit works to prevent the error of spiritless religion on one hand (Clouzet pointed out that it’s easier to ignore an “it”) and spiritualism/emotionalism on the other (again, if it’s an “it,” then we use “it” whenever we want a “spirit-filled” experience).

I also saw a slightly more subtle point: Biblical teaching serves to shield Seventh-day Adventists from one compromise of our sanctuary doctrine that tends to discount the ministry of Jesus as our High Priest as He pleads our cases before the Father. Such a view makes Jesus’ primary “mediation” one of helping us “see God.” This is all well and good, but in the presentations I have heard, the Holy Spirit is mysteriously absent. Perhaps He is the one who opens our eyes, day by day, to the loving character of the Father. And while “He” reveals the Father’s character to us, Jesus pleads our case before God.

I want to hear more from Ron Clouzet. Responsible, biblical, articulate teaching doesn’t have to be boring. It can be just as passion-filled and emotion-stirring as the brain candy that is pouring out of the Christian market today. In fact, more so!

Jennifer Schirzer
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Ron Clouzet has written a comprehensive and insightful article on the personality of the Holy Spirit and of His place in the Godhead. Such an article is timely when some are tempted to depersonalize the Holy Spirit. When faced by the mystery of the triune God, it is at times easy to take a humanistic detour that leads us away from Scripture.

The author reminds us that early Adventism struggled with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Those who insist that our safety lies in getting back to historic Adventism should pause for reflection. Our ideas on the Holy Spirit, on Christ, and on the atonement have grown through the years. And Clouzet reminds us that someone responsible for this growth is none other than Ellen White herself. He refers to the appearance of The Desire of Ages in 1898, which was a watershed in our history.

Writing in 1892, Ellen White wrote, “Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed” (Review and Herald, July 26, 1892).

We worship one God manifested in a triune personality.

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Scripture consistently upholds the seriousness of sin and the certainty of the judgment. But it also reveals that the Lamb of God, our Substitute, has been accepted in our place. As we receive Christ, we are covered with the robe of His righteousness. God says to the great accuser, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan” (Zech. 3:2). We are acquitted, pardoned, and cleansed.

coming to judge the earth” (96:11-13, NRSV). But simply beyond my comprehension were the passages in which David longed for his own case to come up in judgment. Numerous times he prayed, “Judge me, O Lord” (7:8; 26:1; 35:24; 43:1). He seemed to be saying, in effect, “Hurry up, Lord! Send the judgment. Let my name come up. I can’t wait!”

Is the judgment good news for you in the way it seems to have been for David? Perhaps a practical test of whether or not it is good news in your life is to ask yourself: Have I ever prayed David’s prayer? This morning, did I pray, “Judge me, O Lord; please let my name come up in judgment”?

How could David pray such a prayer? With his record of heinous sins—adultery, murder, lying, to name a few. Did he not understand the sinfulness of sin, the seriousness of the judgment?

He understood. Note his prayer of deepest repentance after the affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband: “I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment” (51:3, 4, NRSV).

David certainly comprehended the heinousness of his sin and the reality of the judgment. But he also understood the message of righteousness by faith. He recognized that, sinful though he was, his sins could be cleansed by the blood of the Substitute. He prayed: “Purge me with hyssop [the agent used to apply the blood of the sacrifice], and I shall be clean” (vs. 7). In joy he could cry out, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (32:1).

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Assurance of Vindication

When we belong to Christ, the tables are turned in the judgment. No longer do we stand there an accused defendant. As Christ has paid the full price for our acquittal, we become the plaintiff, calling for vindication against the false charges of Satan. Now, with David, we can long for and welcome the judgment. We can pray, “Judge [‘vindicate,’ RSV] me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness” (Ps. 35:24).

The outcome of this judgment is certain. It is “in favor of the saints of the Most High” (Dan. 7:22, NIV). Not only is Christ our Substitute, but He also is our Advocate, our Lawyer, who never has lost a case that has been committed to Him. Eloquently and persuasively, He pleads our case in the heavenly assize. Note that the word plead here and in Ellen White’s descriptions of the investigative judgment, is a legal term and does not refer to “begging” the Father for mercy, as some have construed it. The Father does not need to be begged! He has placed Christ there to be our Representative. He is on our side. Those illustrations that picture the repentant sinner standing by himself in the midst of the heavenly tribunal miss the point. “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). For those in Christ, the heavenly courtroom is a friendly place.

Our Lawyer stands beside them with His arm around them, as it were; He “does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying, ‘I know them by name. I have graven them upon the palms of My hands.’”

Christ is both our Substitute and Advocate and the star witness in our behalf! As the Faithful and True Witness (Rev. 3:14), He brings evidence that vindicates us before the heavenly jury and silences the false accusations of the adversary.

To top it all off, as if that were not enough good news, consider that in this heavenly court, Christ also is our Judge. This Judge has never made a mistake, and He is on our side. He is not a stern, harsh magistrate seeking to damn all He can, but a loving, gracious God, seeking to save all He can. In order to exonerate us, He tenderly urges us to accept the provisions of the court.

“Therefore I will judge you, O
Vindication in the judgment and assurance in the judgment is good news—almost too good to be true. I hardly dared to believe it, even as a theology major in college, as a seminary student, and as a young pastor. Finally the sublime promise jumped out at me from Scripture: “Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.”

salvation, for those in Christ the investigative judgment is a reason for singing. Since 1844, God’s saints can proclaim, “Finally it’s here!”

Since the death of Abel, the blood of the martyrs has been crying out, “Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?” (Rev. 6:10, NRSV).

At last the time has come. Yom Kippur is here. The final judgment has begun—the process of investigation, followed by the millennial review and the final execution of the sentence. At last, Satan is to be silenced. The truth will be seen that vindicates God’s people. Truly the first angel’s message, “the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev. 14:7, NRSV) is part of the “eternal gospel [good news]” (vs. 6, NRSV).

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For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live” (Eze. 18:30-32, NRSV).
“Light flashed from the oracles of God in relation to the law and the gospel, in relation to the fact that Christ is our righteousness, which seemed to souls who were hungry for truth, as light too precious to be received.”

I felt like the young pastor at that Kansas camp meeting who “saw that it was his privilege to be justified by faith; he had peace with God, and with tears confessed what relief and blessing had come to his soul.”

Since that experiential introduction to gospel assurance when I was a young pastor, the beauty of righteousness by faith has grown ever more precious. I must confess that sometimes it still seems almost too good to be true. I catch myself unconsciously falling back into old habit patterns of trying to be good enough to deserve salvation, and have to discover anew the joyous truth of “laying the glory of man in the dust” and trust wholly in Christ's righteousness.

How precious is the doctrine of Christian assurance! With joy and confidence, I rest my case on the atoning blood and intercessory merits of Christ.

REFERENCES
1 Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references in this article are from the King James Version.
2 Selected Messages, Book 2, pp. 32, 33.
3 The Great Controversy, p. 484.
5 Our High Calling, p. 361.
7 Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 356.
8 Ibid.