

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

My interest in the issue of perfectionism and my subsequent study of the Spirit of Prophecy writings came about when a young girl in the church where we attended, asked to speak to my husband and myself. In tears she said she will have to leave the church she loves because she is not good enough, she cannot live up to the standard and fears she will be lost.

My husband replied, “The mere fact that you have these feelings is an indication that God is working on your heart to save you. Jesus will never forsake you.”

“You don’t understand”, she said. “I received material and videos on the fact that we all have to be perfect, and never sin, or else we will be shaken out of the church and receive the plagues. And no matter how hard I try, I am never good enough.”

We then discovered that some well-meaning brothers and sisters had been distributing material and started private studies with the young people, telling them that the whole church must be perfect, or else Jesus cannot return, and if we individually do not become perfect, we will be responsible for the delay of His coming. Unfortunately this topic has become a prickly pear and no-one even today is willing to touch it, or at least present a more balanced view on the issue of perfection.

The topic of Christian perfection and sinlessness is so vast that it would take a lifetime to unravel it in depth. Many have struggled to understand the writings of Ellen G. White regarding Christian perfection and this study is merely a view on some of the statements that are seldom mentioned or quoted. This topic has divided churches, friends and ministries but if rightly understood, it should unite and bring us closer together. A study of Ellen White’s writings indicates that true sanctification will incorporate principles of love and self-sacrifice.

- *True sanctification comes through the working out of the principle of love. “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” 1 John 4:16..... The character will be purified, elevated, ennobled, and glorified. AA 560.1*
- *Those who would gain the blessing of sanctification must first learn the meaning of self-sacrifice..... It is the fragrance of our love for our fellow men that reveals our love for God. It is patience in service that brings rest to the soul. AA 560.2*

In Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, moral perfection is defined as follows:

Moral perfection, is the complete possession of all moral excellence, as in the Supreme Being; or the possession of such moral qualities and virtues as a thing is capable of. NWAD PERFECTION.4

This is an interesting definition, where two “spheres” of perfection are described, namely the moral excellence of God and moral qualities that a being or “thing is capable of”. This concept will become clearer in the next section.

PERFECTION OF CHARACTER

It often seems that there are conflicting statements in the writings of Ellen G. White. Some statements say we should reach Christian perfection, others say that we may never say we are without sin. But if we read her words carefully, we will see that there is a marked distinction between “**perfection**” and “**sinlessness**”.

It is very clear in Mrs. White’s writings that she defines reaching **perfection** as a **constant striving to overcome sin** from within, and evil from without:

- *We must **strive daily** against outward evil and inward sin, if we would **reach the perfection of Christian character**.*—The Review and Herald, May 30, 1882. 3SM 148.3
- *With the spirit of Christ, the model character, before us, we must ever **strive for perfection**. Every soul has a character to form for everlasting life. The Christian's life is a **constant warfare** against the slavery of passion.* 21MR 169.4
- ***We must be perfect Christians, deny ourselves all the way along, tread the narrow, thorny pathway that our Jesus trod, and then if we are **final overcomers**, heaven, sweet heaven will be cheap enough.***—Letter 5, 1851.
- *It is he who **endureth** to the end that shall be saved. It is they who **patiently continue in well-doing** that shall have eternal life and the immortal reward.* – {FLB 359.5}
- *The development of Christian character, **tending toward this state of perfection**, is a growth toward beauty.... As the heart becomes transformed by the renewing of the mind, the graces of the Spirit leave their impress on the face, and it expresses the refinement, delicacy, peace, benevolence, and pure and tender love that reign in the heart....* ML 153.5
- *None need fail of **attaining, in his sphere, to perfection of Christian character**. By the sacrifice of Christ, provision has been made for the believer to receive all things that pertain to life and godliness. God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us the example of Christ's character. In His humanity, **perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil**, the Saviour showed that **through co-operation with Divinity**, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character.* AA 531.2
- *The injunction of Christ is, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” He here shows us that we may be as **perfect in our sphere as God is in His sphere**.*—Testimonies for the Church 4:454, 455, 1880 CD 133.2

It is also clear that we are not striving and battling alone against our fallen natures and evil around us. Our contribution in this war is to submit, strive, endure and “co-operate with Divinity” through faith.

Jude 1:24 *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to **present you faultless** before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy...*

The word “**present you faultless**” in the original text has amazing applications. It suggests that God will ‘**abide, bring, continue, covenant, establish, hold up, stand by**’ you during this process. What an encouraging promise! Who will be doing this work? He will! He will not let you struggle on by yourself and then at the end, if you per chance made it, bring you before the Father and say, “This one made it.....unfortunately some others didn’t make it. Too bad.” No, Jesus is personally involved, walking every step of the way right beside us.

Strong’s defines the word ‘**Present**’ as follows:

ἵστημι

histēmi

his'-tay-mee

*A prolonged form of a primary word **σῴω staō** (of the same meaning, and used for it in certain tenses); to stand (transitively or intransitively), used in various applications (literally or figuratively): - abide, appoint, bring, continue, covenant, establish, hold up, lay, present, set (up), stanch, stand (by, forth, still, up).*

How can we interpret Christian perfection? In the quotes below this condition is described as when, through His sacrifice, our sins are “perfectly forgiven”. In other words, though we strive to live in harmony with God’s will and his laws, we will sometimes fall and make mistakes, but as we confess our sins, and exercise faith in His atoning blood, Jesus will forgive us and then we, “repentant sinners stand before God justified and accepted”, as though we had never sinned. This process will lead to Christian perfection. We have done all we can in our fallen nature, in “our sphere”, we have repented and put away our known sins, and now it is for Christ to work for us in “His sphere”. Perfection is not dependent on how perfect we are, but on our repentance and how perfectly God forgives.

- *And while we cannot claim perfection of the flesh, we may have **Christian perfection of the soul**. Through the sacrifice made in our behalf, **sins may be perfectly forgiven**. Our dependence is not in what man can do; it is in what God can do for man through Christ..... Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. **We may claim sanctification**. We may enjoy the favor of God. **We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.** 2SM 32.3*
- *We are not to serve God as if we were not human, but we are to serve Him in the nature we have, that has been redeemed by the Son of God; through the*

righteousness of Christ **we shall stand before God pardoned, and as though we had never sinned.** Manuscript 1, 1892. 3SM 140.5

- **But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves to the control of evil.** They have put away their sins, and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition, and **the divine Advocate pleads in their behalf.** He who has been most abused by their ingratitude, who knows their sin, and also their repentance, declares: “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.’ I gave My life for these souls. They are graven upon the palms of My hands.” CCh 353.2

CAN WE COME INTO HARMONY WITH GOD’S LAW?

- **John did not teach that salvation was to be earned by obedience; but that obedience was the fruit of faith and love.....** If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in the heart, our feelings, our thoughts, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God. **The sanctified heart is in harmony with the precepts of God’s law.** AA 563.1
- “This is the will of God” concerning you, “even your sanctification.” 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Is it your will also? Your sins may be as mountains before you; but if you humble your heart and confess your sins, trusting in the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, He will forgive and will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. **God demands of you entire conformity to His law.** AA 566.2
- The “new covenant” was established upon “better promises,” **the promise of forgiveness and the grace of God to change the heart and bring it into harmony with God’s law.** “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts. ... I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more**” (Jeremiah 31:33, 34). BOE 181.3
- **God’s law is the mirror presenting a complete reflection of the man as he is, and holding up before him the correct likeness.** Some will turn away and forget this picture, while others will employ abusive epithets against the law, as though this would cure their defects of character. Still others who are condemned by the law will **repent of their transgressions and, through faith in Christ’s merits, will perfect Christian character.** FW 31.4
- **Only by accepting the virtue and grace of Christ can the law be kept.** Belief in the propitiation for sin enables fallen man to love God with his whole heart, and his neighbor as himself. RH October 10, 1899, par. 2
- “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of**

the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.” FE 385.1

It is clear that we have to keep the Law, a Law of love for God and man, a Law which is a mirror and points out our transgressions, a Law that is written in our minds and hearts, and can only be kept by accepting the grace and virtue of Christ. We have seen that perfection is a constant striving to overcome our sinful natures from within and evil from without and that Jesus forgives us our faults and sins when we confess and forsake them. Every time it is stated that the Law is binding and must be kept, there is simultaneously the promise of forgiveness and restoration. This gives hope to the repentant sinner and if preached, no young person would despair in his or her walk with God.

CAN WE BE TOTALLY SINLESS?

How then do we understand some quotes from the writings of Mrs. White where they seem to indicate that we can reach absolute Christian perfection, a perfection on the same level as the perfection of Christ, and that “*we could live pure, sinless lives*”? Does keeping the Law of God mean we will be completely sinless? Will there ever be a time on earth when we will not sin and will have no need for forgiveness?

When Mrs. White uses the word ‘sinless’, it always pertains to Jesus, the angels, unfallen worlds, heaven and the state of Adam before the fall.

- *God could have proclaimed His truth through **sinless angels**, but this is not His plan. He chooses human beings, men compassed with infirmity, as instruments in the working out of His designs...The Son of God stooped to uplift the fallen. For this He left the **sinless worlds** on high, the ninety and nine that loved Him, and came to this earth to be “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities.” Isaiah 53:5. AA 472.1*
- *He, **the Sinless One**, was treated as we deserve, that we, fallen and sinful, might be treated as He deserved. CT 267.4*
- *He is a brother in our infirmities, “in all points tempted like as we are;” but as **the sinless one** His nature recoiled from evil; He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin. Steps to Christ, 93, 94. CSA 26.5*
- *But at each stage of His development **He was perfect**, with the simple, natural grace of **a sinless life**. The Sacred Record says of His childhood, “The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.” Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 140, 141. CG 204.4*
- *Satan was determined to succeed in his temptation of the **sinless Adam and Eve**. And he could reach even this holy pair more successfully through the medium of appetite than in any other way. Con 15.4*

Can we reach the same state of perfection as Jesus had in His human nature? When the Spirit of Prophecy refers to the human nature of Christ, she strongly advises that we be extremely careful how we approach this topic, because “**truth lies close to the track of presumption**” and can easily be misunderstood:

- *Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. **Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin.** He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. **He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity.** He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden. 7ABC 447.4*
- *Avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. **Truth lies close to the track of presumption.** In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. His birth was a miracle of God.... Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet **He is called “that holy thing.” It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin.** The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain, a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but **let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be.** 7ABC 448.2*
- ***We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ.....** This holy Substitute is able to save to the uttermost; for He presented to the wondering universe perfect and complete humility in His human character, and perfect obedience to all the requirements of God. 1SM 256.2*
- ***In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin.....** He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are. And yet He knew no sin. He was the Lamb “without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). Could Satan in the least particular have tempted Christ to sin, he would have bruised the Saviour's head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope. 1SM 256.1*

- **Christ was the only one who walked the earth upon whom there rested no taint of sin.** He was pure, spotless, and undefiled. That there should be One without the defilement of sin upon the earth, greatly disturbed the author of sin, and he left no means untried to overcome Christ with his wily, deceptive power. But our Saviour relied upon His heavenly Father for wisdom and strength to resist and overcome the tempter. The Spirit of His heavenly Father animated and regulated His life. He was sinless. Virtue and purity characterized His life.—*The Youth's Instructor*, February, 1873. 3SM 134.1
- With His human arm, Christ encircled the race, while with His divine arm, He grasped the throne of the Infinite, uniting finite man with the infinite God. He bridged the gulf that sin had made, and connected earth with heaven. **In His human nature He maintained the purity of His divine character.**—*The Youth's Instructor*, June 2, 1898. 7ABC 454.4
- Christ bore the guilt of the sins of the world. Our sufficiency is found only in the incarnation and death of the Son of God. He could suffer, because sustained by divinity. **He could endure, because He was without one taint of disloyalty or sin.**—*The Youth's Instructor*, August 4, 1898. 7ABC 451.4
- He was **born without a taint of sin**, but came into the world in like manner as the human family.—*Letter 97*, 1898. 7ABC 453.2
- Amid impurity, Christ maintained His purity. Satan could not stain or corrupt it. His character revealed a perfect hatred for sin. It was His holiness that stirred against Him all the passion of a profligate world; for by His perfect life He threw upon the world a perpetual reproach, and **made manifest the contrast between transgression and the pure spotless righteousness of One that knew no sin.**—*The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 5:1142*. 7ABC 454.2
- Christ is called the second Adam. In purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God, He began where the first Adam began. **Willingly He passed over the ground where Adam fell, and redeemed Adam's failure.**—*The Youth's Instructor*, June 2, 1898. 7ABC
- In the fullness of time He was to be revealed in human form. He was to take His position at the head of humanity by **taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man.** In heaven was heard the voice, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord."—*The Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1901. 7ABC 447.1
- **He vanquished Satan in the same nature over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory.** The enemy was overcome by Christ in His human nature. The power of the Saviour's Godhead was hidden. He overcame in human nature, relying upon God for power.—*The Youth's Instructor*, April 25, 1901. 7ABC 447.2

Wherein lies the danger of presumption as stated above regarding the nature and sinlessness of Christ? Could it be that we might entertain the false perception that, since Jesus assumed our human nature, and lived a perfect sinless life, we could also achieve the same?

- *He conquered Satan in the long fast of the wilderness, and when he came to him as an angel of light, offering the dominion of the world in exchange for his worship; he made **sacrifices that will never be required of man, as man can never attain to his exalted character.*** 3SP 77.2
- *Let those who feel inclined to make a high profession of holiness look into the mirror of God's law. As they see its far-reaching claims, and understand its work as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, **they will not boast of sinlessness.** "If we," says John, not separating himself from his brethren, "say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** 1 John 1:8, 10, 9. AA 562.2*
- *The apostle Paul declares, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). To those who have tried so hard to obtain by faith so-called holy flesh, I would say, You cannot obtain it. **Not a soul of you has holy flesh now. No human being on the earth has holy flesh. It is an impossibility.*** 2SM 32.1
- *God declares, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). **All have the same sinful nature.** All are liable to make mistakes. **No one is perfect.** The Lord Jesus died for the erring that they might be forgiven. It is not our work to condemn. Christ did not come to condemn, but to save.* 21Manuscript 31, 1911. HP 292.5
- ***But we shall not boast of our holiness.** As we have clearer views of Christ's spotlessness and infinite purity, we shall feel as did Daniel, when he beheld the glory of the Lord, and said, "My comeliness was turned in me into corruption."* 3SM 355.3
- ***So long as Satan reigns,** we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, **no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.**—* The Acts of the Apostles, 560, 561 (1911). LDE 267.3
- *We may create an unreal world in our own mind or picture an ideal church, where the temptations of Satan no longer prompt to evil; but **perfection exists only in our imagination.**—*The Review and Herald, August 8, 1893. LDE 268.2
- ***We cannot say, "I am sinless," till this vile body is changed** and fashioned like unto His glorious body. But if we constantly seek to follow Jesus, the blessed hope is ours of standing before the throne of God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; complete in Christ, **robed in His righteousness and perfection.**—*The Signs of the Times, March 23, 1888. 3SM 355.4

- When human beings **receive holy flesh, they will not remain on the earth**, but will be taken to heaven. **While sin is forgiven in this life, its results are not now wholly removed.** Selected Messages 2:33 (1901). LDE 268.3
- **The nearer we come to Jesus**, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and **the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves.** There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. AA 561.2
- The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in **filthy garments** should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. **Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves.** The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and **the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves.** CCh 352.1
- All are liable to err, therefore the Word of God tells us plainly how to correct and heal these mistakes. **None can say that he never makes a mistake, that he never sinned at all, but it is important to consider what disposition you make of these wrongs.** The apostle Paul made grievous mistakes, all the time thinking that he was doing God service....You also may have done wrong, thinking you were perfectly right, but when time reveals your error, then it is your duty to humble the heart and confess your sin.... TMK 239.2
- Christ came to restore to its original loveliness a world ruined by sin.... **In the new earth there will be no sin nor disease....** And the body will be restored to its original perfection. We shall wear the spotless image of our Lord.... ML 153.4
- **Those who have felt the sanctifying and transforming power of God must not fall into the dangerous error of thinking that they are sinless, that they have reached the highest state of perfection, and are beyond the reach of temptation.** The standard the Christian is to keep before him is the purity and loveliness of Christ's character. Day by day he may be putting on new beauties, and reflecting to the world more and still more of the divine image.—The Bible Echo, February 21, 1898. YRP 66.4
- **Whatever the character of your sin, confess it.** If it is against God only, confess only to Him. If you have wronged or offended others, confess also to them, and the blessing of the Lord will rest upon you. **In this way you die to self, and Christ is formed within....** TMK 239.3
- **None of the apostles and prophets ever claimed to be without sin.** Men who have lived the nearest to God, men who would sacrifice life itself rather than knowingly commit a wrong act, men whom God has honored with divine light and power, have

confessed the sinfulness of their nature. They have put no confidence in the flesh, have claimed no righteousness of their own, but have trusted wholly in the righteousness of Christ. AA 561.1

Mrs. White wrote the following to a Brother B who claimed to be sinless:

- *Some of them have even reached the almost hopeless position that they cannot sin. These, of course, have no further use for the Lord's Prayer, which teaches us to pray that our sins may be forgiven, and but very little use for the Bible, as they profess to be led by the Spirit.... FH 47.3*
What a terrible deception! They think they are complete in Christ, and know not that they are wretched, blind, miserable, poor, and naked.... FH 47.4

She also mentions that many of his followers did not preach present truth (which is the Three Angels' Messages, including the Sabbath and the health message). She wrote to him:

- *....the more one drinks into the spirit of popular sanctification, the less he prizes the present truth.*

In other words, one can become so absorbed in how to reach a state of perfection that one loses sight of our mission:

- *In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light-bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the Word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import,—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. **There is no other work of so great importance.** They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention. Ev 119.3*

She continues to say:

- *Is Bro. B. preaching the Laodicean message? That is well; but let it be borne in mind that the person who has become so sanctified that he cannot sin is the veriest Laodicean.*

God has left us enough examples in the Bible of His chosen people struggling against their fallen natures, and even until shortly before their death, they still fell into sin, as did Moses. This is the reason Satan "disputed about the body of Moses". (Jude 1:9) God in His wisdom "faithfully recorded" these events so that we can learn from their mistakes, while at the same time we do not lose hope and courage in our struggle against sin and self.

- *The pen of inspiration, true to its task, tells us of the sins that overcame Noah, Lot, Moses, Abraham, David, and Solomon, and that even Elijah's strong spirit sank under temptation during his fearful trial. Jonah's disobedience and Israel's idolatry*

*are faithfully recorded. Peter's denial of Christ, the sharp contention of Paul and Barnabas, the failings and infirmities of the prophets and apostles, are all laid bare by the Holy Ghost, who lifts the veil from the human heart. There before us lie the lives of the believers, with all their faults and follies, which are intended as a lesson to all the generations following them. **If they had been without foible they would have been more than human, and our sinful natures would despair of ever reaching such a point of excellence. But seeing where they struggled and fell, where they took heart again and conquered through the grace of God, we are encouraged, and led to press over the obstacles that degenerate nature places in our way.** 4T 12.1*

At this point it will be good to summarize what we have gained from the study so far.

We have seen that only the Godhead, and Jesus in his human form, the unfallen angels, other unfallen worlds and Adam and Eve before their fall, can be seen as sinless.

We know that God empowers us to keep His Commandments (Satan accuses God that His commandments cannot be kept), but that we will sometimes fall and fail Jesus because of our sinful natures. Our characters are bent, and we are imperceptibly shaped after the mind and character of Satan through our fallen natures. Keeping the Law does not take away sin, and does not make us sinless, it is the mirror in which we recognize our sinfulness and if we understand what Jesus went through because of our sins, we will want to make right with God.

We understand that the work of perfection is two-way: that God is working in us to help us overcome sin, and to reveal to us His perfect character, and that our work is to constantly strive against sins and character defects in ourselves, and also consciously resist and overcome evil outside of us. We also have sins that we do not even know of and God is revealing them to us so that we can deal with them. (Ps. 19:12,13)

We also realize that to say we are sinless leads to a self-serving religion, that is inclined to concentrate on self and neglects the Christian mission of leading people to the foot of the cross, realizing their utter helplessness and dependence on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

IS THERE A CONTRADICTION IN MRS. WHITE'S STATEMENTS?

What then, will there ever be a time on earth when we will be sinless? Exactly as sinless as Jesus was on earth?

People often quote two statements of Mrs. White on this issue in an effort to negate all the other clear quotes to the contrary, suggesting that we will reach a sinless state or condition on this earth before the Second Coming of Christ. When statements seem to contradict each

other, one must always argue from the clear statement to the not so clear one. Let us look at these quotes:

- *He came to this world and lived a sinless life, that in His power His people might also live **lives of sinlessness**. He desires them by practicing the principles of truth to show to the world that God's grace has power to sanctify the heart. {RH April 1, 1902, par. 8}*

By now we know that only Jesus was sinless, therefore this quote cannot mean that we will be sinless on this earth as Jesus, or the unfallen angels are sinless, but rather that we will, in His power, put away sins as Jesus reveals them to us by placing us in situations where we can see the sinfulness of our natures. "We cannot say, "I am sinless," till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body. ST March 23, 1888, par. 13

Thus, when she says, we should live a sinless life, we should stop doing known sins, and pray for God to reveal to us our character defects (hidden sins) so that we can strive to overcome them also in His power.

When she says we may never say we are sinless, that means our sinful natures will always be a handicap and we will always need forgiveness. Why else did the sinless Lamb of God have to die if we are able to reach a state on earth when we will have no need for His atonement? His righteousness will always cover us, even in heaven, as the white linen surrounded the entire earthly tabernacle, even the Most Holy.

The second quote is as follows:

- *Everyone who believes on Christ, everyone who relies on the keeping power of a risen Saviour that has suffered the penalty pronounced upon the transgressor, everyone who resists temptation and in the midst of evil copies the pattern given in the Christ life, will through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. **Everyone who by faith obeys God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression.** ST, July 23, 1902. {HP 146.5}*

Nowhere in this section of the book, In Heavenly Places, is there a hint that this condition of sinlessness can be reached on this earth of sin, bondage and misery. However, through faith in Jesus and obedience we can once again be restored to the state of Adam before his fall. Through the studies we have done we can safely say that this condition will only exist once we have been translated.

WHAT ABOUT THE SEALING TIME, WILL WE THEN BE SINLESS?

We know that in the last days there will be a time of probation after which God's people will be sealed and prepared for the shaking, and that God will "draw this covering over His people, and it will soon be drawn over all who are to have a shelter in the day of slaughter".

- *Those that overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, will be the favored ones who shall receive the seal of the living God..... **Only those who, in their attitude before God, are filling the position of those who **are repenting and confessing their sins in the great anti-typical day of atonement, will be recognized and marked as worthy of God's protection.**** Hvn 90.4*
- *Are we seeking for His fullness, **ever reaching higher and higher, trying to attain to the perfection of His character? When God's servants reach this point, they will be sealed in their foreheads.***

Mrs. White does not clearly expand on the state God's people will be in during the sealing time, but based on the available statements, though sealed, their sinful natures will only be transformed at Jesus' Coming into the same unfallen state of Adam and Eve before they fell. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1Cor.15:53 They will, however, during the time of "Jacob's trouble" be going through a deep soul-searching experience, wrestling with God like Jacob over whether their sins have all been confessed and forgiven.

The sealing is the "settling into the truth so that they cannot be moved". They are now protected with a covering, much like Moses was covered in the cleft of the rock. The world will be in turmoil, the plagues will fall and God's people will be safe.

*These errors and sins corrupt the man, and disqualify him for the society of heavenly angels. By his defiled character he has placed himself under the flag of Satan.... **These will have no shelter in the time of Jacob's trouble.** Their sins will then appear of such magnitude that they will have no confidence to pray, no heart to wrestle as did Jacob. **On the other hand, those who have been of like passion, erring and sinful in their lives, but who have repented of their sins, and in genuine sorrow confessed them, will have pardon written against their names in the heavenly records.** They will be hid 'in the day of the Lord's anger. Satan will attack this class, but like Jacob they have taken hold of the strength of God, and true to his character he is at peace with them, and sends angels to comfort and bless and sustain them in their time of peril. **The time of Jacob's trouble will test every one, and distinguish the genuine Christian from the one who is so only in name.** ST November 27, 1879, par. 6*

There is further also disagreement over whether God's saved and translated people in heaven and on the new earth will have a choice to again, like Lucifer and the angels, as well as Adam and Eve, and the whole human race, to choose against God and his government. Some say we will be 'preserved' in a sense and will not be able to sin in heaven. But Jesus created all his beings with a free will and choice and they will always have the ability to choose against God, even in heaven, but they will not want to do so ever again because they understand and love the beautiful character of God and have seen and experienced the

consequences of sin and have thus in a sense been inoculated against this evil. After Satan has been destroyed, the whole universe will be fortified against sin and this is the reason Jesus let the 'mystery of iniquity' unfold to the point where everyone will be sealed in the knowledge that Satan was evil and wrong and that Jesus is righteous and true in everything he did and permitted.

Let us not give up the struggle, "every good work will be rewarded". Seven times John speaks of "overcoming" in Revelation 2, 3 and 21 and one of the interpretations of the Greek word used there is "prevailing" - to fight, to grow firm, to persist. This supports the concept as portrayed in all of the statements given in this document, that never will there be a time when we will have "fully attained", we will constantly strive to reach a higher standard, not only on this earth, but through all eternity.

- *Our lifework here is a preparation for the life eternal. **The education begun here will not be completed in this life**; it will be going forward through all eternity—ever progressing, never completed. More and more fully will be revealed the wisdom and love of God in the plan of redemption. The Ministry of Healing, 466.*

I pray that this study will give the reader courage and hope, "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Phil.1:6