

Discussed: Glacier View Ranch, infidels, Giraffe Society, The Cynic's Sanctuary, lynching, devouring, the human brain, Tuskegee Institute, activism, the Kingdom of God, creation, Roger Sperry, growth, you



The Other Sanctuary Doctrine

By Chris Blake

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. . . .¹

It was 1980, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church was in upheaval. Appearing on the apocalyptic stage alongside Daniel and Revelation were Desmond, David, Walter, and revelations. Ford, Davenport, and Rea—"FDR"—brought their new deals, and the resulting furor led thousands to depart Adventism.

One of the most controversial stances was Desmond Ford's questioning of the doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment, challenging whether there are two literal rooms in heaven, a holy place and a most holy place, where Jesus now ministers for us.² For years after the eruption many applicants for positions in church employment were asked, as evidence of their orthodoxy, whether they believed in a literal sanctuary in heaven.

A friend of mine, interviewing for a youth pastor assignment, was asked, "Do

you believe there are two rooms in the heavenly sanctuary?"

"In my Father's house are many rooms," he replied.

The interviewers laughed. "Fair enough," they concluded. He got the job.

Others weren't so fortunate. In August 1980, 111 chief Adventist scholars and administrators convened at Glacier View Ranch in Colorado to decide whether Ford's dissonant views were legitimate, and determined that the traditional Adventist doctrine of the sanctuary should remain.

Scores of pastors, including Ford, eventually lost their ministerial credentials.

This sanctuary doctrine has distinguished Seventh-day Adventism from almost every belief system on earth. However, the basis for this doctrine appeared well before 1980 or 1844. Scripture devotes thousands of words to the sanctuary, beginning with Exodus 25:8: "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" (RSV).

Over the next six chapters we read intricate descriptions of God's designs for the sanctuary, or tabernacle, in the wilderness, including astonishingly precise measurements and materials for the ark ("Then you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be its length" [25:17]), the table ("You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold" [25:28]), the lampstand ("The base and the shaft of the lampstand shall be made of hammered work, its cups, its capitals, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it" [25:31]), the curtains, veil, altar, court of the tabernacle, oil for the lamp, garments for the priesthood, ordination ritual, sin offering, burnt offering, sacrifice of ordination, altar of burnt offering, altar of incense, offerings for the tabernacle, bronze laver, anointing oil, incense, and appointment of the workers.

The sanctuary has been a big deal to God for a long, long time. The heavenly sanctuary fulfills one transaction. But another sanctuary would accomplish an equally important enterprise.

Searching for Sanctuary

A Google mouse hunt for "sanctuary" today produces an astonishing yield. Following the Sanctuary Records Group (with artists Lynyrd Skynyrd and The Tubes), I encounter sanctuary sites for tigers, farm animals, elephants, donkeys ("over 11,000 rescued in the UK and Ireland"), koalas, fish, seals, bats, seabirds, and (to amen choruses from porcine-pure Adventists) potbellied pigs-replete with recipes for "compassionate cuisine."

I also find through Google a different brood: Stalking Victims' Sanctuary, Borderline Personality Disorder Sanctuary, and The Cynic's Sanctuary, which boasts in its hall of fame Aesop, Voltaire, Mark Twain, Dorothy Parker, and Jesus of Nazareth.

Then I chance upon *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, and my search ends.³ The book's photos fill me with horror. Almost 150 photos depict an incomprehensibly gruesome legacy. In a

righteous, festive atmosphere, crowds pose next to their quarry as though they just landed a prized catfish. Adding to the stark, shocking truth, many of the photos were transformed into postcards complete with a "Place Stamp Here" print on the reverse side, suitable for handling by the United States Postal Service.

In his online review of the book, Joe Lockard laments, "At least the German civilians forcibly escorted through the death scenes of extermination camps in 1945 had the decency to weep and protest unconvincingly that they did not know. Americans photographed these horrors of tortured, mutilated and burned bodies as an advertisement for white supremacism and popular 'justice.'"⁴

Between 1882 and 1950, the Tuskegee Institute reports, 3,436 lynchings took place throughout the United States, with likely a greater number unrecorded.⁵ When these lashing storms of mindless rage, fear, and pride blew humanity apart, no harbors of justice and mercy appeared. Without sanctuary, the "good old days" weren't good for anybody.

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Something wonderful happened. Jesus arrived, bringing with him a new interpretation to the sanctuary. He announces, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Paul picks up this thought in 1 Corinthians 3:16: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (Apparently the Corinthians did not.) He continues, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (6:19, 20).

Paul reinforces this doctrine in his next letter to the Corinthians: "For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people'" (2 Cor. 6:16).

Hebrews 8 describes the new covenant of God, one enacted on "better promises" (v. 6). God declares, "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (v. 10). The succeeding two chapters outline the



eternal heavenly sacrifice of Christ (vs. 11–14), and the superiority and finality of Christ's sacrifice and the new covenant, concluding with "I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds" (10:16).

In the light of this new sanctuary doctrine we can see Jesus' desires for us more clearly. The Sermon on the Mount, for example, is a sanctuary sermon: Create a safe space in your minds and bodies for God and for his creation, including your enemies.

The typically termed "Lord's prayer" is a sanctuary prayer. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Is heaven a safe place? God wills his kingdom on earth to be a safe place.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is a sanctuary promise, as Jesus plainly states at the Last Supper: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:16, 17). "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

The mystery of the ages is a sanctuary mystery. It is "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26, 27).

A sanctuary is a holy place—a safe haven. We are each of us called to be a sanctuary, a refuge for God and his creation. Breathing, laughing, singing, running, walking, talking sanctuaries.

What makes us safe? The same thing that makes the heavenly sanctuary safe, the same attribute that makes Jesus safe: grace. The kingdom of God is within us when we lead gracious lives—forgiving, accepting, and sharing lives based on the better promises of graceful love.

Applications for Adventists

My thirty-year-old musician friend doesn't go to church much anymore. We sit over curry and rice at The Oven while I ask him what would make church more attractive.

He reflects a moment. "Instead of 'Where have you been?' I'd like people to say 'Glad to see you.' And there ought to be more choices in the middle. I mean,

you're either a Pathfinder leader or . . ."

"An infidel?" I suggest.

He breaks into raucous laughter. "Right. Is there anything between Pathfinder leader and infidel?"

I assume a thoughtful expression. "A conference president, perhaps. . . ."

Without human sanctuaries, the remnant becomes an exclusive club instead of an inclusive gathering.

To many people, Adventist institutions have mouthed mercy and goodness, fairness and love while treating their employees as disposable information carriers—easily ignored, crushed, or discarded. The stories are legion. Countless former members have bolted because they felt belittled and betrayed.

Will Campbell could have been describing Adventist institutional blindness (or hypermetropia: farsightedness) when he quipped, "Jesus talked about a cup of cold water. But right off, we have to be about installing a global sprinkler system."

In our haste to spread the gospel "into all the world" we neglect our own family. As Dag Hammarskjöld concluded, "It is more noble to give yourself completely to one individual than to labor diligently for the salvation of the masses."

Without human sanctuaries, those who cry out to "finish the work" ironically may be doing just that.

Adventist schools and churches become converted into safe houses when they care more about kindness and acceptance than they do about behavioral purity and being right. When the bullies, gossips, and truth squads are allowed to attack virtually unchecked, education becomes grotesquely and fearfully stunted.

Long ago when I taught at an Adventist junior academy, I had a standard opening for my homeroom each first day of school.

"Class, you may drink alcohol, smoke tobacco, cheat, wear inappropriate clothing, and curse a blue streak, and I will not be angry. Disappointed, yes. I expect better of you. And you will be disciplined according to school policy. But you are basically hurting yourself.

"However, if you are mean to another student—oh, *watch out*. Nothing else will bring my wrath quicker. This classroom will be a sanctuary for each of you. When you cross that threshold, you can leave your outside troubles behind, whatever they are. This is a safe place, and we will treat each other *always* with respect and dignity. You can know that I will do my very best to ensure it."

What does it mean for the Church to be a safe

place? It means our church sanctuaries are actually sanctuaries, and the human sanctuaries that comprise the Church are free to wonder and probe without fear, generous in interpreting others' aims, open to consider different views, steadfast in defending and nurturing freedom, secure in the knowledge of agape love. So it is in heaven and shall be on the New Earth.

Without human sanctuaries, we grow afraid to risk true learning; our truncated education makes us wise as doves and gentle as serpents.

The African-American female quintet Sweet Honey in the Rock sings "Would You Harbor Me?" about diverse peoples—Koreans, Jews, heretics, AIDS sufferers—particularly those who are on society's edges.

Adventists have created harbors for people groups. For example, the Association of Adventist Women was developed to provide a sanctuary for Adventist women. Adventist Peace Fellowship nurtures an asylum for believers in the historic Adventist stance of noncombatancy.⁶ At Faith and Science Conferences theologians and scientists enjoy a safe forum for discussing creation issues.

Without human sanctuaries, truth and freedom cannot flourish.

The Giraffe Society, based at Andrews University, is a grassroots service network that pledges in its mission statement to "risk standing up and sticking our necks out against any form of negligence or mistreatment of Seventh-day Adventist youth or young adults, including inadequate financial support, guarded self-interest, and worst of all, non-involvement." Even in board meetings and nomination committees, giraffes provide healthy sanctuaries for youth and young adults.

In March 2003, two weeks before the invasion of Iraq, the Union College Humanities Division sponsored a "learn-in," titled "Between Iraq and a Hard Place," where students, faculty, and staff could listen civilly to others' opinions. One-fourth of the student body (230) voluntarily showed up to give and hear 52 speeches on topics ranging from "Is a just war plausible?" to "What are the alternatives?"

Without human sanctuaries, the young may be devoured.

Finally, as is the case in the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries, within each human sanctuary comes a ministry of intercession. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9). Peacemaking, like love, is an active venture. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has

come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:17–20). If Adventists do not enter this world with dependable, discerning, courageous, liberating action, it doesn't matter if we are "declared righteous."

First Service at La Sierra University Church concludes its Friday night worship service each week by encouraging attendees to sign up at the tables in the foyer for Christian activism. Helping people obtain financial assistance, proper housing, and adequate health care moves pro-life beyond pre-birth.⁷ To care for the environment, to speak out against racism and the moneyed interests of tobacco, to guard the rights and lift the hopes of the downtrodden is to be a temple for the living God.

Without human sanctuaries, reconciliation and peace are rarely achieved, and spiritual pronouncements seldom meet practical concerns.

Place to Place

Through the transforming power of God's gracious love our bodies become incarnational tabernacles with two compartments. We move from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place, from our metaphorical heart to our metaphysical mind, from propositional truth to relational healing, from desire to application. We move from "the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man" to the true tabernacle that the Lord set up within man, from outer space where "Christ ministers on our behalf" to inner space where we minister on Christ's behalf.

As trustworthy sanctuaries for God and his creation, we become gilded inside with pure gold, our acacia wood overlaid with gold, with the lampstand's cups, capitals, and flowers hammered into one piece (integrity). He has engraved his laws of love upon the holy ark of our brains.

Nobel laureate Roger Sperry observes that in the brain "there are forces within forces within forces, as in



Selected Happenings

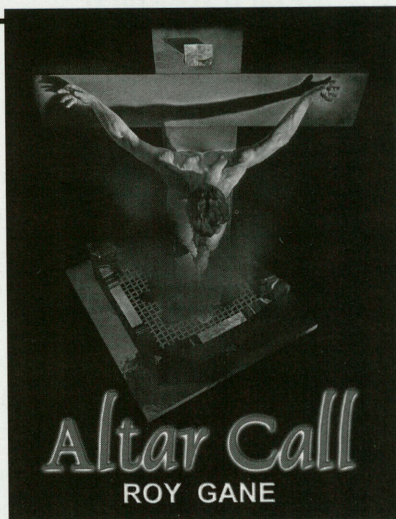
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Sanctuary Doctrine

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no other cubic half foot in the universe that we know." Dr. Paul Brand adds, "I have been inside a human brain on maybe a half-dozen occasions. Each time I have felt humble and inadequate, a trespasser entering where no man was meant to. Who am I to invade the holy place where a person resides?"⁸

Without this sanctuary doctrine the seed of the heavenly sanctuary encounters no soil, finds no purchase, germinates no growth.⁹ Unless the Seventh-day Adventist Church prioritizes and practices this doctrine, the remaining doctrines never materialize. Without sanctuaries here forming bridges, creating safe space, and making intercession we are forever wandering, incessantly seeking shelter, eternally expecting and fearing the physical, emotional, and spiritual lynchings that will inevitably descend.

Jesus, Prince of Peace, brings the most radical spiritual assertion. The sanctuary—the Kingdom of God—is within you. Is among you. Is you.

Notes and References

1. Fundamental Belief 23, in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1988), 312.
2. See Heb. 9.
3. James Allen, et al., *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Twin Palms, 2000). Two weeks after I accessed this site it was shut down, likely because of perceived abuses in distribution of the material—a sad commentary on our times, as well.
4. Joe Lockard, "Bad Subjects: *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*," <eserver.org/bs/reviews/2000-4-7-7.53PM.html>, Aug. 15, 2004.
5. Twin Palms Twelvetees Press, "Without Sanctuary," <www.twinpalms.com/Pages/forthcoming/lynch.html>, Aug. 15, 2004.
6. In God's eyes, the Temple would have been desecrated by David's violence (see 1 Chron. 22:8–10).
7. As the late U.S. senator Paul Wellstone frequently pointed out, those are "family values."
8. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *In His Image* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984), 129.
9. The question of which sanctuary is more important may be compared to the classic conundrum: Which is more important, getting married or staying married?

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