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### The Sanctuary of the Soul

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# THE SANCTUARY OF THE SOUL

*By Peter Swanson*

It all starts in the noisy marketplace! People everywhere, sharp bargaining, vendors yelling to get your attention. But there's a quietly insistent Voice that can be heard above the tumult. If you listen carefully, you will hear the invitation: Come out of the marketplace into the meeting place. Come into the Sanctuary of the Soul.<sup>1</sup>

"Listen! Wisdom is calling out in the streets and marketplaces."<sup>2</sup> "At the corners of noisy streets, she calls out. At the entrances to the city, she speaks her words."<sup>3</sup> "She calls out to the crowds along the main street, and to those in front of city hall."<sup>4</sup> "Come and listen to my counsel. I'll pour out my spirit on you and make you wise."<sup>5</sup>

"In the midst of this maddening rush, God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him."<sup>6</sup> Come out of the Market Place into the Meeting Place—come into The Outer Court of the Sanctuary of the Soul. "When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God."

"At the altar of prayer, [in the Holy Place] as the throne of grace is touched by faith, we receive from the hand of God that celestial torch which enlightens our darkness, and convinces us of our spiritual necessity."

"The citadel of the heart is the temple of the Holy Spirit." "The heart [the Most Holy Place] is the citadel of the spiritual life." "To love God with all the heart is the first great law of the universe." "A heart of faith and love is dearer to God than the most costly gift."

"With a heart all aglow with the love of Jesus, we may reveal to others [in the

Market Place] what we have seen and learned."

## **The Penitent Thief**

The Sanctuary of the Soul motif is illustrated by the unfolding understanding of the thief on the cross. The Market Place of the dying thief was a cross, surrounded by a jeering mob. Though spiked hand and foot to the instrument of torture, he feels himself drawn toward the maligned and despised Man crucified beside him.

In the Outer Court of his experience, "He calls to mind all he has heard of Jesus." "He had heard Pilate declare Him to be a just man; he had marked His Godlike deportment and His pitying forgiveness of His tormentors."

In the Holy Place of his experience, "The Holy Spirit illuminates his mind, and little by little the chain of evidence is joined together." "As his heart went out to Christ, heavenly illumination flooded his mind." "The faith of the dying thief grasps the truth of a sin-pardoning Saviour."

The Most Holy Place of his soul is where, "In his heart he acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of God." And, "the poor thief, on the brink of eternity, calls Jesus his Lord."

"Amid the moral darkness [in the Market Place] there shines with distinct brightness the faith of a dying sinner as he lays hold upon a dying Saviour."

No time now to ask for forgiveness from those he had wronged. No time to pay back what he stole. No time to break his ingrained bad habits. No time to see the fruits of the Spirit emerge. Just enough time to cling fast to that

magnificent promise and to let his light shine even as his life ebbs away.

## **Quest for Truth**

The Sanctuary of the Soul metaphor illustrates the process involved in the search for truth, and tests the veracity of what is accomplished at each stage.

In the Market Place of every day's bustling activities, the appealing Voice of the Eternal is heard, "Come here and listen to me! I'll pour out the spirit of wisdom upon you, and make you wise."<sup>7</sup> Come away from the noise and distractions into a secluded place where limitless riches will be revealed.

It is in the Outer Court that the mining for truth takes place. This is where knowledge is accumulated; it is here that extremely careful attention is given to the sacred task of rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

"The Lord would have his people search for truth as for hidden treasure. The shaft must sink deep in the mine of God's word which is rich with precious jewels of undiscovered truth." "Let the inquirer after truth put to the stretch his mental powers in diligent study of the word of God." "As Christians we are made depositories of sacred truth, and we are not to keep the truth in the outer court, but bring it into the sanctuary of the soul." "God's people have evidence piled upon evidence; they have truth powerful and convincing. Shall it be kept in the outer court, so that it does not sanctify the soul?"

Clearly, the work does not end in the Outer Court. The Lord wants more than our mere assent to the truthfulness of what is learned. He wants the

truth that He has revealed to our intellects to move beyond the Outer Court into the Holy Place of Integration. As the fragrant oil flows through the golden pipes to replenish the flame that burns in the golden lampstand, so the gentle influence of God's Spirit flows into our minds and brings conviction to the Conscience.

"Let each one closely examine himself to see whether the truth which he professes to believe has been kept in the outer court, or brought into the inner sanctuary of the soul." "When the conscience is guided by human perceptions, which are not subdued and softened by the grace of Christ, the eye of the mind sees things in a false, distorted light." "The question is, Has the man a well-instructed, good conscience, or is it biased and warped by his own preconceived opinions?" "Men may be conscientiously wrong as well as conscientiously right. Paul hunted the Christians from city to city, verily believing that he was doing service to God." "Is the conscience in harmony with the Word of God? If not, it cannot safely be followed, for it will deceive. The conscience must be enlightened by God."

The conscience may be misinformed. Ellen White's conscience did not tell her that she was in error about her faithful Sunday observance. "God overlooked the times when people didn't know any better. But now he commands everyone everywhere to turn to him and change the way they think and act."<sup>8</sup> Her conscience needed to be enlightened and recalibrated and aligned with revealed truth so that it would approve Sabbath observance instead of Sunday observance.

The correctly functioning conscience instantly recognizes the distinction between right and wrong. It insistently promotes right doing and consistently shuns wrongdoing. The spiritually revitalized conscience is "as true to duty as the needle to the pole."

In the Sanctuary-of-the-Soul model the conscience is enshrined in the Holy Place. This is where light from the golden candlestick shines on the inspired page—represented by the showbread. That radiance convicts the conscience about the integration of truth into the life.

But Outer-Court Truth is not enough. And Convicted-Conscience Truth is not enough. "You may have a conscience, and that conscience may bring conviction to you, but the question is, 'Does that conviction reach your heart?'" Has

the truth gone from the Outer Court into the Holy Place of Conscience, and then into the inner sanctum of the soul—the Most Holy Place?

"The heart is to be kept as a temple holy unto God." "When the truth is held as truth only by the conscience, when the heart is not stimulated and made receptive, only the mind is affected. But when the truth is received as truth by the heart, it has passed through the conscience and has captivated the soul with its pure principles." "The truth is no truth to the one who merely makes a profession, who is not sanctified by its power, upon whose heart its image is not stamped." "Many accept an intellectual religion, a form of godliness, when the heart is not cleansed. Let it be your daily prayer, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.'"

"The change of heart represented by the new birth can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. It alone can cleanse us from all impurity." "Then a spirit of kindness will be manifested, not by fits and starts, but continually. There will be a decided change in attitude, in deportment, in words and actions toward all with whom you are in any way connected." "When the heart is converted, everything that is out of harmony with the Word of God will drop off." "When it is in the heart to obey God, duty becomes a delight."

Those changes will be observable and obvious to people in the Market Place. "Through conformity to the will of God, we shall become so Christlike that men will see that we are partakers of the divine nature." "The light, and love, and power of the indwelling Christ shone out through them, so that men, beholding, 'marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.'"

### **No One is Excluded**

A full and accurate understanding of Bible truth is not essential in order for one to be saved. Through the gracious initiative of God, the path to salvation can be found even by one who knows not one verse of Scripture.

"Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God."

"The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn [out of the Market Place] to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus." "Though ignorant of the written law of God, [Outer Court] they have heard His voice speaking to them [Holy Place] the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts [Most Holy Place] and they have done the things that the law required." [Market Place]

A Puzzling Paradox: the pious heathen person may be information-impoorished about Bible truth and salvation, but very rich in good works, which provide convincing evidence of his conversion. "Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God."

The diligent student of Bible truth may be very rich in information about salvation, but poverty-stricken when it comes to the works of righteousness that attest to a changed life.

### **Discernment Road Blocks**

There are hindrances to an accurate understanding of truth. No matter how skillful a person may be in the exegesis and interpretation of Scripture, a disconnect from the integration of truth into the life will obscure the true meaning of the text. "God does not conceal His truth from men. By their own course of action they make it obscure to themselves."

"In order to arrive at truth we must have a sincere desire to know the truth and a willingness of heart to obey it." "He only who makes righteousness a part of his life is prepared rightly to estimate the truth." "A faultless creed and a carnal life are too often found together in professed believers."

The person whose Market-Place life is inconsistent with revealed truth loses the perspective that lived truth brings to the understanding of God's Word.

Another hindrance to an accurate understanding of truth is jarring discord among believers. In their personal relationships, in their interactions with their professional associates, and in the ways they relate with their antagonists, there is dissension. Dissonance and disunity distort relationships and dishonor God.

"Let Christians not make it possible for the enemy to point to them and say, Behold how these people, standing under the banner of Christ, hate one another." "Those who refuse to work in harmony greatly dishonor God. The enemy of souls delights to see them

working at cross purposes with one another.” “Do not make little wedges of slight differences of opinion, and drive them in to separate heart from heart, but see how you can love one another even as Christ has loved you.” “Those who are following a course of action that separates them from their brethren and brings in discord and dissension, need a thorough conversion. Our hearts must be melted and subdued by the love of Christ.”

“The most convincing evidence of the power of the gospel to the world is its effect on the lives of those who believe it.” “The fruit borne in the life testifies as to the condition of the heart and the excellence of the character.”

### Enriched Devotional Experience

The Sanctuary-of-the-Soul motif may also be a means of enlivening one’s daily devotional experience. “Let us turn aside from the dusty, heated thoroughfares of life to rest in the shadow of Christ’s love.”

In imagination let us see Him take us by the hand and lead us from the Market Place into the tabernacle of our minds. It is here in the Outer Court that we see Him pause at the altar of sacrifice that reminds us of His great sacrifice on the cross. It is here that we must place our hands on the Sacrificial Lamb and confess our sins and sinfulness and our utter need of the salvation that He offers to us as a free gift!

He points us to the laver, to the place of cleansing. And we remember how we came up out of the waters of baptism, and how His robe of righteousness was wrapped around us, and how we were declared righteous, just as if we had never sinned.

He guides us into the Holy Place where we are to eat the Bread of Heaven, and where the lamplight glows on the sacred page. And where the fragrant oil and the golden flame of the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment reinvigorates our consciences and makes plain our duties for the day. At the altar of incense our prayers of gratitude, perfumed by the merit of Christ, ascend to the Father, whose smile of acceptance assures us of our standing as joint-heirs with our Redeemer.

Jesus puts His arm around us and leads us into the Most Holy Place. In this sacred trysting place He covenants to create within us the desire to do His gracious will and to provide the power we need in order to do what is pleasing in His sight.

And in this sacred trysting place we bow before the Shekinah, and we covenant with Him to fully and joyfully employ His empowerment to do whatever He asks us to do.

Then He reminds us that it is time for us to go out into the Market Place. “There is nothing that the Saviour desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character.” “Angels are amazed as they behold the transformation of character brought about in those who yield themselves to God. They see those who were in darkness becoming lights to shine amid the moral night of this crooked and perverse generation.”

“Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions.”

“It is our privilege to have a living,

abiding Saviour. He is the source of spiritual power implanted within us, and His influence will flow forth in words and actions, refreshing all within the sphere of our influence, begetting in them desires and aspirations for strength and purity, for holiness and peace.”

Live out Thy life within me, O Jesus,  
King of Kings!  
Be Thou Thyself the answer to all my  
questionings;  
Live out Thy life within me, in all  
things have Thy way!  
I, the transparent medium, Thy glory  
to display.

The temple has been yielded, and  
purified of sin;  
Let Thy Shekinah glory now shine  
forth from within,  
And all the earth keep silence, the  
body hence-forth be  
Thy silent, gentle servant, moved  
only as by Thee.

Its members every moment held  
subject to Thy call,  
Ready to have Thee use them, or not  
be used at all;  
Held without restless longing, or  
strain, or stress, or fret,  
Or chafings at Thy dealings, or  
thoughts of vain regret.

But restful, calm and pliant, from  
bend and bias free,  
Awaiting Thy decision, when Thou  
hast need of me.  
Live out Thy within me, O Jesus, King  
of kings!  
Be Thou the glorious answer to all  
my questionings.<sup>9</sup>

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The “Sanctuary of the Soul” concept is patterned after the tabernacle in the wilderness. “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting.” (Exodus 40:34 *New International Reader’s Version*) “And The Dazzling Light Of The Lord’s Presence Filled It.” (Exodus 40:34 *Good News Translation*)

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 1:20, *Good News Translation*

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 1:21, *God’s Word Translation*

<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 1:21, *New Living Translation*

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 1:23, *Common English Bible* and *The New Living Translation*

<sup>6</sup> Choice selections from the elegant writings of Ellen White provide the inspiration for these reflections about “The Sanctuary of the Soul.” References to the sources from which these quotations were drawn are too numerous to include in this article. Her statements are enclosed in quotation marks throughout. To get a hard copy of this document, please email swansonp@andrews.edu.

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 1:23 *The New Living Bible*

<sup>8</sup> Acts 17:30 *God’s Word Translation*

<sup>9</sup> Frances Ridley Havergal



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PhD, has taught graduate courses in Pastoral Care for over twenty-five years. He has been invited to teach and present at numerous national and

international sites, and served as the chair of the Department of Christian Ministry. Prior to his emigration to the United States, he engaged in pastoral ministry for twelve years in his home country of South Africa.