

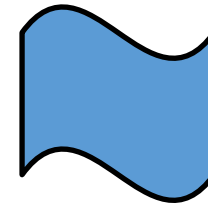
# *PRESERVING YOUR PERSONAL IDENTITY*

Authored by

F. A. Sayler

Published by

**[fitman.publications@gmail.com](mailto:fitman.publications@gmail.com)**



Available online for free downloading and reproduction  
from James White Library.

Use the following website and enter the name of the author  
in the search box.

**<https://adl.b2.adventistdigitallibrary.org/>**

“ Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved. In the resurrection every man will have his own character. ”

6BC p. 1093



*fashioned like unto His glorious body...*" Philippians 3:21.

*"There the redeemed shall 'know, even as also they are known.' The loves and sympathies which God Himself has planted in the soul shall there find truest and sweetest exercise. The pure communion with holy beings, the harmonious social life with the blessed angels and with the faithful ones of all ages who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, the sacred ties that bind together 'the whole family in heaven and earth' – these help to constitute the happiness of the redeemed.*

*The nations of the saved will know no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving. Over the scene the morning stars will sing together, and the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming, 'There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death' "* AH p. 544.

## **Your Personal Identity**

In these days when there are increasing incidents of personal identity thefts, the problem of protecting your personal identity is a major concern in our society. Those unfortunate people who have had their personal information or documents stolen have gone through a stressful, traumatic experience while trying to re-establish their identity again. In our society, our personal identity is established by secret numbers, photos and other information that is peculiar to us alone. But in reality, our identity as an individual which distinguishes us from every other person on the face of the globe doesn't lie in secret numbers, photos or personal data. Rather, we can learn much from the snowflakes about our personal identity.

Naturalists who have studied the diversity of snowflakes have testified to the fact that no two snowflakes are exactly alike. After examining thousands and thousands of them, they have discovered that each snowflake has its own peculiar design, unlike any other. Similarly, no two people born into this world are exactly alike. Everyone has his or her own personality, an individuality which is unique to that individual. This is a well known fact. But the question is 'Where is our individual identity found?' Is it in the physical features like the color of the eyes or hair? Or is it in facial and bodily contours? It may be true that no two people are exactly alike physically, yet that is not what distinguishes people from other people. What makes an individual different

from every other is his or her personality and character.

It is important to understand where our personal identity is found because of what it says in Inspiration. There is something that is carried over from this life into the next world. Note the following. *“A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world **will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly mansions**”* Christ Object Lessons, p.161.

So what happens to the personal identity of the individual when he or she dies? Is that the end of that unique individuality? Is it only a memory or written record that transcends the grave? Inspiration assures us that our character and personal identity is preserved beyond death and the grave. Ecclesiastes 12:7 calls it the “spirit” of the individual. *“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”* And in the next quotation from Inspiration, we get a clearer picture of what that “spirit” actually is.

*“**Our personal identity is preserved** in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. **The spirit, the character of man,** is returned to God, there to be preserved. In the resurrection every man will have his own character”* 6 Bible Commentary p. 1093.

From this we learn that our personal identity and individu-

out before He leaves the sanctuary.

Everyone living in these end times should be intelligent regarding the special experience that will be brought to those who have by confession and repentance sent their sins beforehand to judgment to be blotted out. We have been in the day of atonement for the dead since 1844. It will come to the living when the mark of the beast is enforced. See 7BC 976. Those who stand faithful during that test will have their sins blotted out and will be sealed with the latter rain. They will be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ and reflect His image perfectly.

TM 506 p.506 states, *“As the dew and the rain are given first to cause the seed to germinate, and then to ripen the harvest, so the Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth. The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ. The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man.”*

Their mind and heart will have become wholly like that of Adam before his fall. The promise is that *“Everyone who by faith obeys God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression”* IHP p, 146. All that remains is for Christ to come and *change our vile body, that it may be*

We will have an enhanced personal identity which retains all the lovely traits of character without any sinful or unlovely traits remaining. When all confessed and ignorant sins are blotted out, and the soul is filled with the Spirit without measure, the work of redemption will be complete. Then the purified, perfected mind can be put within the new body where it can find its fullest and truest expression and development throughout eternity.

That is what Christ's atonement in the most holy place is all about. That is what the Third Angel's Message is to accomplish. That is what Daniel 8:14 is all about. *"Instead of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 referring to the purifying of the earth, it was now plain that it pointed to the closing work of our High Priest in heaven, the finishing of the atonement, and the preparing of the people to abide the day of His coming"* 1T 58.

The special atonement of the most holy place is not to provide forgiveness and victory over every besetting sin. Those are the prerequisites to receiving the special atonement and will be accomplished through the benefits of the outer court and holy place. Those benefits have been available since sin began in Eden and will continue to be available until the judgment of the living begins. Since 1844, Christ has been carrying on a dual ministry in the most holy place. While He has been judging the dead, He has still provided forgiveness and grace for the living to enable them to overcome every defect of character so that sins may be blotted

ality is embedded in our spirit or character, and is preserved for the new body. That is an important concept to remember. And that leads to another question. How or where is the spirit and character formed in each individual? What makes the character? Proverbs 23:7 tells us, *"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."*

It is the functioning of the mind, the thinking of the mind, which produces the personality and character of every intelligent being. As it says in *Mind, Character and Personality Vol.2, p.593, "If the thoughts are wrong, the feelings will be wrong; and the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character."* This shows that the workings of the mind produce thoughts and feelings, and these thoughts and feelings, which are permanently stored in the mind, make up the character and personal identity of every individual. That is what is returned to God.

These concepts go contrary to some long-established opinions. It has commonly been taught that the "spirit" that goes back to God when an individual dies is the 'breath of life.' The usual argument has been taken from Genesis 2:7 which says, *"The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."* And then it has been reasoned that death is the reverse process of that. Then Psalm 146:4 is quoted which says, *"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."* It was felt this proves that God takes back the breath of life when man dies. Perhaps the reason for that has been a fear of the

teaching that the human mind or intelligence goes back to God is because of the erroneous teaching of consciousness after death.

Many religions teach that the spirit which goes back to God is a conscious entity which can roam around heaven and also look down on its friends and loved ones on earth. But we have many texts in Scripture that show that the dead know not anything, that death is a state of unconsciousness. And that needs to be taught in connection with Ecclesiastes 12:7. But we have erred in denying more than is necessary in order to maintain our position on the unconscious state of the dead. We do not sound very convincing to thinking people when we tell them that God takes back breath to heaven.

If we were to go through the Bible and look at the texts that use the word 'spirit' and interpret spirit to mean the breath of life, or life principle as it is sometimes called, we would be surprised at how incongruent that would be. The Bible speaks of being "troubled" in spirit, or "hardened" in spirit, or "sad" or "haughty" or "willing" in spirit. Ephesians 4:23 admonishes the believers to be renewed in the spirit of their mind. These usages of the word 'spirit' would not fit if we interpreted it to mean breath or life principle. Rather, it should be obvious that they all have reference to the mind and heart.

The problem with interpreting the word 'spirit' to mean breath is that it makes a human being just a physical organism which is made alive by the spark of life. And when that spark

*proach of thy widowhood any more." " In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve. "*

We see a soul-cleansing depicted in Malachi 3:2-3 where the Refiner sits to purify and purge the sons of Levi. In Zechariah 3:1-5 it describes this experience as taking away of the filthy garments. And Early Writings p. 280 portrays it as an atonement that is made for God's people before they enter heaven. " *Every case had been decided for life or death. While Jesus had been ministering in the sanctuary, the judgment had been going on for the righteous dead, and then for the righteous living. Christ had received His kingdom, having made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The subjects of the kingdom were made up. The marriage of the Lamb was consummated.*"

For the dead, not only are all confessed sins blotted out, but also the sins done in ignorance. " *This atonement is made for the righteous dead as well as for the righteous living. It includes all who died trusting in Christ, but who, not having received the light upon God's commandments, had sinned ignorantly in transgressing its precepts*" EW p. 254 Once that has happened for God's people, it tells us that " *Their sins had been borne away into the land of forgetfulness, and they could not bring them to remembrance* " 3SG p.134. In the next world, 'you' will still be 'you' but minus the sinful remembrances and feelings which had scarred the mind and conscience in the previous life.

their sins and overcome evil in their lives before they died will have their ignorant and confessed sins blotted out and have their names retained in the book of life. Not only will their sins be blotted out of the books of record, but they will also be blotted out of the mind and heart, so that in the resurrection, they cannot even remember them. *“ Their sins had gone beforehand to judgment, and pardon had been written. Their sins had been borne away into the land of forgetfulness, and they could not bring them to remembrance”* 3SG 135.

For the living saints, the blotting out of sins and taking away the filthy garments will be a traumatic, conscious experience. So completely will their sins be annihilated, they will not be able to recall them to mind. GC 620 describes their experience after that has happened and probation has closed.

*“ So, in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out, and they cannot bring them to remembrance. “*

Also in Isaiah 54:4 and Jeremiah 50:20 we have these assuring promises, *“ Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for **thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the re-***

goes out, the individual ceases to exist when the body disintegrates back to earth again. But what happens in the resurrection? Where is the carry over from this life to the next? Does God create an exact duplicate of the individual that has died, without anything of the original person being put into the new body? If that were true, then the person in heaven would not be the same person that walked on earth. It would be another individual that looks and acts like the original, but yet it would not be the same person.

Inspiration tells us that *“In the resurrection every man will have his own character”* 6BC 1093. And our character does not reside in the breath of life. The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 3:19 that all, both man and beast, have one breath. There is no distinctive characteristics in the breath of life that is in all living creatures. See Genesis 6:17 & Genesis 7:15 & 22.

Man was created in the image of God. He was made akin to His creator. As the Spirit of God is the divine presence and intelligence, the mind of the Godhead which is invisible, so the spirit of man is his human intelligence and mind, his character and personality which also is invisible. But the spirit in man cannot think or function without a body. That is a marked difference between man and his Creator. The Holy Spirit is not confined to a body and does not need a body to function. His presence pervades the vast universe and knows what is taking place in every part of God's dominion. That is a difficult concept for our finite

minds to comprehend.

The Bible is clear that man has a spirit which is the 'knowing' part of his being. It is comparable in some ways to the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 2:11 says, "*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the **spirit of man which is in him**? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*" Here it shows that the spirit in man is the knowing part, the intelligence, the mind that sets one individual apart from every other. This is where the character is inscribed. The functioning of the mind produces thoughts and feelings which determines the personality and individuality of every intelligent being.

Inspiration shows that human beings were created as a combination of a physical and spiritual component. Zechariah 12:1 tells us that God "*formeth the spirit of man within him.*" The two components that make up a human being are portrayed in Inspiration by several synonyms. We find such words as 'soul', 'heart', and the 'inner man' to describe the spiritual component.

Paul refers to the two aspects of a human being in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "*Though our **outward man** perish, yet the **inward man** is renewed day by day.*" Also in 1 Corinthians 6:20 it says, "*ye are bought with a price; wherefore glorify God in your **body**, and in your **spirit**, which are God's.*" Then in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 it combines the components of our being when it says, "*I pray God your whole **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

*on the character... They wound their own souls, and through their lifetime will carry the scars"* 8T 66. Jeremiah 17: tells us that "*The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars.*"

How can a mind like that ever enter the purity of heaven? Furthermore, what about the ignorant sins and faults that the followers of Christ had in their minds when they died? We have many cases of people who accepted Christ in the final days or even hours of life, like the thief on the cross. Yet Jesus assured him that he would be with Him in Paradise. Something must happen between death and the resurrection that prepares him to enter the purity and glory of heaven.

What happens after death is indicated in Hebrews 9:27 which says, "*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment.*" No one can go to heaven without passing the examination of the judgment. Paul said, "*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*" This is what has been happening since 1844. The lives of all who have died in the past come up in review before God. If anyone has unconfessed and unforsaken sins remaining upon his or her record, that name will be blotted out of the book of life and all the good deeds will be erased. That person could not be admitted into heaven because there still are sins in the mind that would defile the purity of heaven

On the other hand, those who have confessed and forsaken



body still be warm, but the individual is no longer a conscious, thinking, functioning person.

The difference between the mind and the brain is that the brain is a tangible, physical organ which can be seen and touched and operated upon by a surgeon. But the mind is something spiritual, which cannot be seen or touched. The Holy Spirit also cannot be seen and touched, but His influence and power are infinitely greater than the human mind and spirit could ever be. Yet the human mind or spirit is also a spiritual power and influence, either for good or for evil, which will affect others around it.

If we understand that the mind, heart, soul, and spirit are all speaking of the same thing, and that the character is inscribed upon them, it will answer a lot of puzzling questions. For instance, we know that no taint of sin or defilement can enter heaven according to Rev.21:27. But what about the sinful thoughts and memories that are stored in the subconscious mind? We are told in MYP 144 that “ *Our thoughts are to be strictly guarded; for one impure thought makes a deep impression on the soul. An evil thought leaves an evil impress on the mind.*” And we are also told that these impressions and scars that sinning makes upon the mind and conscience are not removed when the sins are confessed and forsaken. The impress is permanent, though it will be weakened if it isn’t continually repeated. “*The thoughts, allowed to run in a low channel, soon pervert all the powers of the being... The greatest evil of it all is the permanent effect that these things have up-*

It is unfortunate that we have often insisted that man does not have a soul but that man is a living soul. That no doubt is also done to counteract the false notion of the soul continuing a conscious existence after death. Inspiration uses the word ‘soul’ in two different ways. Sometimes it refers to the whole being as in Genesis 2:7 and Acts 2:41. But if we look at all the usages of this word we will find that most of the time it refers to the spirit or mind of man. Micah 6:7 says, “*Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*” And Peter stated in 1 Peter 2:11, “*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*”

The Spirit of Prophecy is also replete with references to the soul as synonymous with mind and spirit. In Messages To Young People p.69 we read, “ *The flesh, in which the soul tabernacles, belongs to God.*” And in Education p.195 we are given the inter-relationship between the mind and soul and the physical part of the being. “ *Since the mind and the soul find expression through the body, both mental and spiritual vigor are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity; whatever promotes physical health, promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character.*”

This relationship between the spiritual and physical part of the being is an important part of the Third Angel’s Message and needs to be understood. The importance of keeping these two

components working together harmoniously in order to develop a good character that is to be taken to heaven cannot be stressed too strongly. Because the soul and mind find expression through the body, it becomes obvious that our eternal interests are involved in understanding this relationship.

*“The influence of the mind on the body, as well as of the body on the mind, should be emphasized. The electric power of the brain, promoted by mental activity, vitalizes the whole system...”* Education p.197. *“The mind controls the whole man. All our actions, good or bad, have their source in the mind. It is the mind that worships God and allies us to heavenly beings. . . . All the physical organs are the servants of the mind, and the nerves are the messengers that transmit its orders to every part of the body, guiding the motions of the living machinery”* Mind, Character and Personality p.396.

In view of what we have covered so far, it should be obvious that it is in our mind that our personal identity and character are developed. And the mind expresses itself through the body. That raises another question. What actually is the mind that controls the whole being? We are dealing here with the most important part of our being. Inspiration tells us that *“It was a wonderful thing for God to create man, to make mind... God created man that every faculty might be the faculty of the divine mind”* 6BC 1105. It is the uniqueness of man’s mind that makes him superior to every other creature, and *“The proper cultivation of the mental pow-*

*ers makes man all that he is”* 4T 438.

Unfortunately, the mind is often equated with the brain. But when we speak of the mind, we are not speaking of a physical part of the body. CH 586 tells us that *“The brain is the organ and instrument of the mind, and controls the whole body.”* The brain here is compared to an instrument like an organ. The most expensive organ cannot make a sound without an organist. And the most gifted organist cannot produce a note of music without an organ. So the mind cannot initiate a thought or action, or even experience consciousness without the physical brain. As quoted previously, *“All the physical organs are the servants of the mind, and the nerves are the messengers that transmit its orders to every part of the body, guiding the motions of the living machinery”* MCP Vol.2, 396.

These things help to explain why *“the body without the spirit is dead”* James 2:26. It is because in death there is no one giving orders or initiating any thoughts or activity in the body. This also helps us to understand what happens when a doctor pronounces an individual ‘brain dead’. The brain is no longer being acted upon as the instrument of the mind. It is no longer receiving stimulation from the mind to think or do. With modern technology they can keep the physical brain and body functioning after the person is declared ‘brain dead.’ The cells in the brain and body can be kept alive while hooked up to a life support system. The heart may keep pumping and the lungs breathing, and the