

b. Another conception is that the tree of life had a God given symbolic significance related to Adam and Eve's spiritual state; i.e., it had a life-symbolizing character. As long as Adam and Eve were spiritually alive, they had a right to partake of the fruit of the tree of life. Each time they ate of it, they symbolized the fact that they were alive to God. But when they fell from their original condition and died, they were barred from access to the tree of life because they no longer had the right to partake of it. To continue eating of it would have been a lie (spiritually dead people partaking of the tree of life!); and to permit them to continue to eat of it would have been a desecration of all that the tree stood for! Because of the symbolic character of the action of partaking of the fruit of the tree of life in terms of the spiritual state required in the partaker, so that only a spiritually alive partaker would be permitted to eat from a tree symbolizing life, this conception views the tree of life sacramentally rather than biologically.

In this conception, the tree of life is sacramentally important.

In the first conception, the way to the tree of life was barred because of the possibility that fallen man would eat of it and live forever. Does this not mean that the tree of life had biological power to reverse or hold in remission the physical death that Adam and Eve had incurred by their transgression, so that they would never die physically? Did the fruit of this tree have the power to rejuvenate human beings so that their bodies would never grow old and weak and infirm and worn out? When God told Adam and Eve that they would return to the dust, was this conditioned on their eating the fruit of the tree of life?

Before Adam and Eve sinned, when they had access to the tree of life was it the fruit of this tree that kept them in life and health? Was then the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil biologically poisonous, so that Adam and Eve swallowed a lethal dose when they ate the fruit? And was the fruit of the tree of life the only antidote to this poison?

In the second conception, the way to the tree of life was barred because of the possibility that fallen man would eat of it and desecrate it as symbolic of life. But what then does Genesis 3:22 mean when it says, "lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat and live forever"?

If the tree of life symbolized everlasting spiritual (and physical) life; and if Adam and Eve had not sinned and died spiritually (and begun to die physically); then they would have continued to live forever, and it would have been appropriate for them to eat of the tree of life.

Just as the connection between water baptism and cleansing of sins is represented sacramentally in Acts 22:16 ("And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."), as though by the performance of the rite one's sins are washed away, so here the connection between eating the fruit of the