Developing Seven Bible Studies Related To The Atonement, Consistent With A Cosmic-Conflict Paradigm Of Salvation History

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING SEVEN BIBLE STUDIES RELATED TO THE ATONEMENT,
CONSISTENT WITH A COSMIC-CONFLICT PARADIGM
OF SALVATION HISTORY

by

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Problem

A new view of the atonement threatened to divide some local congregations of Seventh-day Adventists. Referred to in this study as the "trust-healing model" of atonement, the new paradigm proposed by A. Graham Maxwell was developed from a wide reading of Scripture and claimed additional support from the "great controversy" motif in the writings of Ellen G. White. However, because it seemed to call in question certain aspects of the long-accepted substitutionary model of the atonement, the new paradigm became a point of conflict.

Method

This dissertation seeks to clarify the issues by comparing the trust-healing model of atonement with the substitution model of atonement, and evaluating both models on the basis of Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White. Incorporating the sound concepts from both models, a cosmic-conflict model/paradigm was developed.
From this cosmic-conflict paradigm seven atonement-related doctrinal concepts were presented in Bible study form. They were field tested on two groups of individuals and evaluated as to their effectiveness in helping individuals separate the truth about God from common misconceptions of God’s character.

Results

The seven Bible studies did assist the participants in the process of identifying and filtering out Satan’s misrepresentations. Understanding God increased confidence in and trust in God.

Conclusions

Both the substitutionary and the trust-healing models contain valid concepts. This dissertation combines the strengths of both models in order to avoid misconceptions often associated with one model or the other. The effect of the seven Bible studies on those who participated in them suggests that the Bible studies were influential toward overcoming common misunderstandings about God.
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A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Ministry

by
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May 1998
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Within some local Seventh-day Adventist congregations, as well as within the denomination as a whole, a number of members are discovering a new paradigm regarding God's role in the plan of redemption. It is referred to as the Trust-Healing model of atonement. Others are alarmed by this new paradigm, viewing it as an unbiblical approach that undermines the pillars of the Adventist faith.1

What should the proper response be? Excommunicating the "heretics" is not the answer for the call to unity. Rather, there is a need to be redemptive by gently explaining from Scripture the dangers of any error, and thus win them back. Therefore it is necessary first to investigate the new paradigm in the light of God's Word. If it is not in harmony, the conclusion has to be that "there is no light in it."2 Any other course would be dangerous, leading persons away from the One the Word witnesses to.3 Christians must be biblical, and genuine new light will also be biblical and in harmony with a biblical theology.

While some individuals need to heed the call to return to a

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1For an example of this perspective, see Richard Fredericks, "The Moral Influence Theory--Its Attraction and Inadequacy," Ministry, March 1992, 6-10.

2"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn," Isa 8:20 NIV.

3"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me," John 14:6 NIV.
biblical base, others need to be open to and willing to investigate new light that is waiting to be discovered in the Scriptures.

A further dimension is present because the conflict that threatened to divide certain Seventh-day Adventist congregations was a debate originally based on Scripture and systematic theology, setting forth an atonement model that was acknowledged to hold at least some concepts in common with the moral-influence theory of atonement.

Within the Adventist debate, scholars on both sides sought to augment the well-known scriptural arguments by drawing rather extensively on certain aspects of Ellen White’s writings, particularly her “great controversy” theme. Consequently, the writings of Ellen G. White came to play a major role in the debate.

Ellen White’s “great controversy” theme is a dominant motif in the Seventh-day Adventist perspective on salvation history. One way to evaluate new theological proposals in an Adventist context is to ask how consistent they are with this theme or paradigm of the conflict between Christ and Satan.

When doctrines and truths are presented separately from this context, they can appear disjointed or even in conflict. For example: God is love, and He is a consuming fire; He is a Friend, and there is a day of wrath; persons are saved by faith and persons are saved by the blood of Christ. Satan persuades millions to reject God because of inadequate, inconsistent, and non-faith-building answers to these dilemmas. The church’s message to a lost and dying world needs to be reflective of and consistent with the response God gives to Satan’s accusations in this conflict.1 The purpose of this dissertation is to combine the major

1"It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth. . . . The last rays of merciful light, the last message of
strengths of both the trust-healing model of the atonement and the substitutionary model of atonement in a new model called the cosmic-conflict paradigm, and then to develop seven Bible studies that are related to the atonement, and in harmony with this cosmic-conflict paradigm.

Methodology

The study briefly summarizes the two views of the atonement which have informed the controversy in the local congregations, namely, the Substitutionary Model and the more recent proposal by A. Graham Maxwell, which is designated the Trust-Healing Model of the atonement.

The dissertation, however, does not espouse either of these two models, as such. Rather, it investigates seven doctrinal dimensions of the cosmic-conflict paradigm of salvation history, seeking to discover what each of the seven doctrines teaches in relation to the great controversy theme that Ellen G. White brings out in her writings.

Although other prominent writers were consulted, authority is placed in the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White.

The project has helped me to focus my own theological paradigm and to have greater confidence in presenting doctrines that are biblically and hermeneutically sound, consistent, and relevant.

When shared with members of the congregation, the studies will help them to base their doctrinal views on a solid biblical foundation. Although not stated as a specific goal of this dissertation, I expect that in the process of joining together in study, church members will experience growth toward greater unity and purity of the church.

The study may help the Seventh-day Adventist denomination with its gospel commission by clarifying the issues of the war between God and mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love" (Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1900], 415).
Satan and stating the interrelationship between that theme and seven major Bible doctrines.

**Definitions**

The doctrine of atonement, as the work of Christ is often called, expresses the fundamental conviction that Jesus is the means of human salvation. The term "atonement" is ambiguous and requires definition. The only time the word is used in the King James Version New Testament is Rom 5:10, 11:

> For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.¹

For this dissertation, "great controversy" refers to the age-long warfare between good and evil, between Christ and Satan (Rev 12:7-9), especially as articulated by Ellen G. White in The Great Controversy.²

The proposed "cosmic-conflict paradigm" seeks to incorporate strengths from both the substitutional model of atonement and the trust-healing model of atonement. These strengths are informed by Ellen White's great controversy theme.

¹The Good News Bible renders the same two verses this way: "We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his son. Now that we are God's friends, how much more will we be saved by Christ's life! But that is not all; we rejoice because of what God has done through our Lord Jesus Christ who has now made us God's friends."

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEOLOGICAL BASE

Definitions

The purpose of this chapter is to review the pertinent literature and to evaluate two models of atonement, using Ellen G. White's great controversy theme as a basis for comparison.

It will be helpful to undertake this within the context of a brief history of the development of atonement theology.

History of the Development of Atonement Theology

In the words of Robert H. Culpepper, "the word 'atonement' is of Anglo-Saxon origin and its original meaning is 'at-one-ment' or reconciliation, the restoration of broken fellowship."1 "While in Shakespearean English to atone is to reconcile, in more recent times the term has come to mean to make reparation, to make amends for an offense."2 Perry Tkachuk suggests "the doctrine of the Atonement is best confined to the study: What did God have to do the [sic, to] save sinners?"3 In other words, how does Jesus' death solve the problem of sin?

2Dederen, ibid.
The New Testament gives no single answer to Tkachuk's question. There is no one theory of atonement described; "in fact, there are no theories at all. What we find instead are several striking metaphors, or symbols, describing what Jesus did."¹ Salvation, reconciliation, redemption, covenant, blood, and justification are just a few of the metaphors.²

"Probably if we pooled the contributions of all of the various speech figures, we would come closer to the truth. In the writings of Ellen White such a combining seems to occur."³ "The models presented are not mutually exclusive; their relationship is complementary." She writes about atonement as satisfaction, as judgment, atonement by substitution, atonement as mediation, as example, and as moral regeneration.⁴

Looking at the history of Christian thought, several prominent theories of atonement have influenced the thinking of the church from time to time, but none has ever enjoyed unanimous support. "None of the theories was adequate for the task. The reality is larger than any human concept of it."⁵


²John Stott states: '"Images' of salvation (or of the atonement) is a better term than 'theories'. . . . Each highlights a different aspect of our human need. Propitiation underscores the wrath of God upon us, redemption our captivity to sin, justification our guilt, and reconciliation our enmity against God and alienation from him. These metaphors do not flatter us. They expose the magnitude of our need" (John R. W. Stott, The Cross of Christ [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986], 168, 202).

³Jack Provonsha, You Can Go Home Again (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 44.


⁵Provonsha, 44.
The early Church Fathers took a bargaining notion from Jesus' statement that He had come to give His life a ransom for many (Matt 20:28 and Mark 10:45) and from Paul's phrase that we are bought with a price (1 Cor 7:23). This motif remained dominant down to the eighth century. Origen (d. ca. 254) pictured Satan holding us until the ransom, the blood of Jesus, was paid him. Gregory of Nyssa (d. ca. 396) gave the picture a twist that even Martin Luther used. God deceived Satan in the same way that a fish hook is baited. Rufinus (ca. 395) continued the same motif. Gregory the Great (ca. 604) varied the motif to that of a snare for birds. Augustine likened the cross to a mousetrap baited with the blood of Christ. Jack Provonsha calls this transaction theory "crude." "To us today it is mainly important because the notion of a transaction forms the conceptual base for the later objective atonement theories." The satisfaction theory has probably been more influential than any other. It received its classic formulation in the writings of Anselm, a churchman of the eleventh century, and it reflects the thought world of medieval times, with feudal lords and vassals. "It is Anselm's fundamental conviction that it is unthinkable that the Divine Overlord would allow anything in his universe to remain in a permanent state of disorder." Also, among the principles of Roman law still current was the

1"In its crudest essentials the ransom theory suggested that when man fell from grace he became the devil's possession and, however it came about, a just God could not ignore it. In order to free man from this bondage, He agreed to pay a price, the death of His own Son. Since the Son's value was more than that of all the damned souls together, Satan willingly entered into the arrangement. But, alas, in accepting the payment he was deceived. Satan, unable to hold the Son of God in his power, thus lost both the souls of the damned and the soul of the Son of God" (Provonsha, 23).


3Provonsha, 25.

notion that one could provide satisfaction as an alternative to punishment. According to this theory, sin is an outrage to the honor of God, which demands satisfaction. Man cannot repay this debt. Christ solves the problem by virtue of His twofold nature.¹

The moral-influence theory arose in reaction to the satisfaction theory. Peter Abelard (1079-1142), the father of this theory, emphasized the effects of Christ's death on man, rather than God. Atonement is a revelation of the love of God. Christ's death saves us by giving us a vivid portrayal of God's love for us and moving us to love God in return.²

The power of the cross lies not in any objective, sin-bearing transaction but in its subjective inspiration, not in its legal efficacy (changing our status before God) but in its moral influence (changing our attitudes and actions).³

The most outspoken champion in this century of the moral-influence theory has probably been Dr. Hastings Rashdall, who addressed this issue in his 1915 Bampton Lectures. He insisted that a choice had to be made between Anselm's objective and Abelard's subjective understandings of the atonement.⁴

The reformation-atonement theory goes under various names: penal, legal, or forensic. Martin Luther viewed Christ as reckoned by God as a sinner in man's stead, a voluntary substitution. John Calvin took the legal basis of his era and patterned a penal theory of the atonement. Man has sinned and must be punished. God is just and sin cannot go

¹Provonsha, 28.

²Jack Provonsha, 31, summarizes Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274) and John Duns Scotus (1265?-1308): while Aquinas and Scotus differed markedly on other matters, they agreed that the atonement was not absolutely necessary.

³Stott, 217.

⁴Ibid., 219.
unpunished. Man is disobedient to God's law, therefore, according to Calvin,

God is angry with him and hostile to him. Unless God can be appeased, man's cause is hopeless. But a righteous person appeared, one on whom was inflicted the punishment which belonged to us. He it was who acted as our substitute, suffering for us the penalty, condemnation, curse, and torments which apart from him we must have suffered. Faith then, in Calvin's fine words, apprehends an absolution in the condemnation of Christ and a benediction in his curse.

The Socinians of Poland preferred the example of Christ. They criticized the Reformers' penal concepts—especially the satisfaction notion. The governmental or rectoral theory (Hugo Grotius, 1583-1645) held a subtle but fairly radical shift in man's conception of God. He acts not in terms of His own sovereign will, but to preserve something He values—an orderly universe.

In his summary of theories of atonement, F. W. Dillistone writes:

No single interpretation is adequate or final. ... By viewing the Cross from different angles, by exposing themselves to the enlargement or correction which comes from another angle of vision, men in successive generations have moved forward in the unending task of seeking to comprehend with all the saints the multi-dimensional love of God which has been manifested in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ellen G. White's Great Controversy Theme

One of the central themes of Ellen White's theological system is that of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, succinctly stated as follows:

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little

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1 Provonsha, 41.

2 Dillistone, 192-3. "Calvin's framework has worked its way into the very warp and woof of Reformed theology. ... we see it forming the background of the thought of Grotius, Dale, Denney, and Brunner, to name but a few" (193).

3 Provonsha, 42.

'Dillistone, 195.
world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: 'Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.' John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.

This statement mentions at least five purposes for the plan of redemption. It would (1) provide for "the salvation of man," in order to "make heaven accessible to men," (2) "vindicate the character of God before the universe," (3) "establish the perpetuity of the law of God," (4) "reveal the nature and results of sin," and (5) "draw" men to Christ. Each of these is briefly considered for the light it sheds on her concept of the atonement. Already is evident the cosmic sweep of her theme: it reaches back to "the rebellion of Satan" and forward to the "judgment of this world."

The "plan of redemption" (or atonement) has a broad and deep scope that will challenge the serious student throughout eternity. It is a science that we will study through the millenniums.

Paul saw that the character of Christ must be understood before men could love Him or view the cross with the eye of faith. Here must begin that study which shall be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity.

Since there will always be new insights into this fabulous field of knowledge and experience, we should not conclude that we have the full and final picture. The study of the plan of redemption and of God's character is inexhaustible; with each new horizon, there is another to

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Provide for the Salvation of Man

The "plan of redemption" includes the salvation of man. Why does humanity need saving? How are we saved? And how are we kept safe? These are questions that need to be answered. Yet, the issues for this plan of redemption are much larger than the above questions, although the questions are also significant.

With salvation, heaven is accessible. God's plan of redemption seeks to bring reconciliation between God and man, to bring atonement, to repair the separation that sin has caused. Christ took our human nature when He came down to this earth so that we might understand and safely receive His revelation of truth. Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as our intercessor is a ministry that God provides for us, that there might be communion between heaven and earth.

Christ also speaks in our behalf when Satan, the accuser of the brethren, makes his charges against us. The real target of Satan's charges is God. The ultimate purpose of the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary, then, is not for God to gain information in deciding our cases but, rather, God reveals before the universe His saving mercy and activity. God will be vindicated before the eyes of the universe (Ezek 36:23). While God is not hostage to our human perceptions of His justice, He vindicates Himself by revealing to us His justice and righteousness. And when we are on the witness stand, may we say of God what is right. White states that God's character is vindicated before the universe! Satan is finally left with nothing to say. Atonement between

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"The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. . . . It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin" (White, The Great Controversy, 488).
God and man can now be completed. They will be one. They will commune face to face. O blissful moment!

**Vindicate the Character of God**

One "purpose" for the plan of redemption is to vindicate the character of God. Satan, in his rebellion against God, has made at least three basic accusations about God's character. First, he has presented God as arbitrary, vengeful, severe, unforgiving, untrustworthy, and incapable of self-denial. Second, Satan presented God's law as an unrealistic standard, impossible to be in harmony with. And third, any mercy on God's part would destroy His law, His justice, His character.

Redemption's purpose is to vindicate God's character of these charges. Christ came to represent and reveal the truth about the character of the Father, truth hidden by Satan's deceptions. Jesus claimed, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well" (John 14:6, 7 NIV). According to Ellen White,

As the Saviour is lifted up before the people, they will see his humiliation, his self-denial, his self-sacrifice, his goodness, his tender compassion, his sufferings to save fallen man, and will realize that the atonement of Christ was not the cause of God's love, but the result of that love. Jesus died because God loved the world. The channel had to be made whereby the love of God should be recognized by man, and flow into the sinner's heart in perfect

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1"We are not to think of God only as a judge, and to forget Him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this; for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character" (Ellen G. White, "Visit to Tramelan, Switzerland," Review and Herald, April 5, 1887, 209-210).

2Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 5:738-39: "Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer."

3Ibid. See also Wood, 710, 712.

harmony with truth and justice.¹

Christ revealed God's character, demonstrating in His life that Satan's portrayal of God is a total misrepresentation. God is not arbitrary, vengeful, severe, unforgiving, or untrustworthy. Rather, God is love; He is compassionate, forgiving, seeking to heal and reconcile.

Christ's revelation also answers Satan's misrepresentation of God as being so loving that He will forgive anything, that God will compromise His law in order to forgive man. The cross of Christ says otherwise. "There is no argument in favor of the unchangeable character of God's law, so forcible as that presented in the cross of Calvary."² God's law, His character, His holiness are not compromised when He forgives man.

Furthermore, the vindication of God's character is not provided and shown merely for mankind on earth. This "plan" is to be conducted "before the universe." Though the rest of the universe has not experimented with sin like our earth has, the questions that Satan has raised still place the entire universe at risk. God must deal with the "rebellion of Satan," but much more than that, God must do it in such a way as to justify Himself and the Son, not in His own mind, but in the minds of the universe. That is the only way to ensure that the questions and rebellion will not be repeated.³ God is the justifier, and He is just in the minds of the universe, in the way He justifies. According to Ellen White,

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one


³"Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God" (Ellen G. White, "God Made Manifest in Christ," Signs of the Times, January 20, 1890, 33-34.)
can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe.1

In Rom 3:25,26 (NIV), we find:

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice ... so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Establish the Perpetuity of the Law

The plan of redemption answers the accusations of Satan and reveals the truth to the entire universe. Satan's character is seen for what it is.2 The plan of redemption reveals the perpetuity of the law of God. God's forgiveness does not negate the law or His holiness. The cross demonstrates that God can and does forgive. The cross also demonstrates that God's holiness is not compromised in the least. Justice and mercy are both upheld.

Reveal the Nature and Results of Sin

The plan of redemption would also reveal the nature and results of sin.3 Sin is rebellion against God, and resulted in the fall of man. Through this choice of going our own way (Isa 53:6), of rebelling against God's way, preferring to be out of harmony with God (falling short of God's glory, Rom 3:23), we are in a state of alienation and enmity

1White, Desire of Ages, 759.

3"Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds" (ibid., 758).

3White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 69.
towards God (Col 1:21). This is the nature of sin.

The Cross demonstrates the true consequences of sin, the separation from God due to being out of harmony with Him.¹ Christ, man's substitute, dies man's death, satisfies the claims of the law, and experiences the consequences of man's sins.²

Since God is the only source of life, when man rebels and is out of harmony with God, the consequence of sin is loss of life.

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is 'alienated from the life of God.' Christ says, 'All they that hate Me love death.' Eph. 4:10; Prov. 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This is accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.³

If this consequence of sin were to take place immediately, the cause of death would not be understood by the onlooking universe. God would be seen as the cause, and God might achieve loyalty, but it would be loyalty based on fear. Therefore, the result of sin, the consequences of sin, the wages of sin, are not fully experienced right away.⁴

¹ "The agony which Christ endured, broadens, deepens, and gives a more extended conception of the character of sin, and the character of the retribution which God will bring upon those who continue in sin" (Ellen G. White, "Satan Sought to Crush Christ," The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1956], 5:1103).

² "Christ came to pay the debt for the sinner which it was impossible for him to pay for himself. Thus, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, sinful man was granted another trial. . . . Jesus, our Substitute, consented to bear for man the penalty of the law transgressed" (Ellen G. White, Faith and Works [Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1979], 30).

³ "At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A
Thus the plan of redemption reveals the nature of sin and the result of sin. The Cross gives us an understanding of how God is involved in the destruction of sin and sinners at the end of time. When all the questions of the great controversy have been answered, when judgment is complete, when every knee has bowed and every tongue has confessed that God is right and fair in His dealings with the great controversy, then the cleansing fire of God's glory consumes sin and sinners.

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law.1

God next recreates the earth, and makes His dwelling with man, the one speck in the whole universe that has rebelled against God.

Draw Men to Christ

The plan of redemption involves man being "drawn to Christ" and allegiance being won over once again. All the revealing of the truth, all the answers to the great controversy questions, all that God does through Christ to bring reconciliation accomplishes little unless man responds in faith, allows Christ to live within, receives a new heart, and is morally regenerated.

The plan of salvation is not merely a way of escape from the penalty of transgression, but through it the sinner is forgiven his sins, and will finally be received into heaven—not as a forgiven culprit pardoned and released from captivity, yet looked upon with suspicion and not admitted to friendship and trust; but welcomed as a child, and taken back into fullest confidence.2

As we are drawn by Christ's love and the Father's love, we are

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1Ibid.

forgiven, cleansed, reconciled, and healed. As we behold His glory, His character, we will grow into an appreciation of Who He is; our faith, trust, and confidence in Him will grow, He will live in us, and we will rejoice in the harmony of our will with His.

This brief summary of Ellen G. White's theme of the great controversy provides a perspective that is wide, deep, and broad. This great controversy theme sets forth an understanding of God's purposes, of who He is, and of the process of coming to have faith in Him.

This great controversy theme has also provided a great stimulus for later Adventist scholars, several of whom have undertaken to set forth varying aspects and viewpoints on the atonement, all of which appropriate to some degree the basic presuppositions and insights of Ellen White's great controversy theme.

Ellen G. White's great controversy theme is now used to evaluate the following two models of atonement.

The Substitutionary Model of Atonement

Norman Gulley, an Adventist theologian, has written rather extensively on the substitutionary theory. Gulley sees Calvary as "the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ to pay human debt and satisfy God's broken law (2 Corinthians 5:19). Some view this as the penal, forensic, or legal model. It also includes the concept of Christ as representative Man (2 Corinthians 5:14, Romans 5:18-19)." This view places major emphasis on the concept that Christ, motivated by love and making a voluntary choice, took on the role of our substitute.

The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23), and God made Christ who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). The death that Christ died, He died to sin once for

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all (Rom 6:10). While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8). He gave His life as a ransom for many (Matt 20:28).

Ellen G. White wrote much that is supportive of the substitutionary theory.

God could not alter one jot or tittle of His holy law to meet man in his fallen condition; for this would reflect discredit upon the wisdom of God in making a law by which to govern heaven and earth. But God could give His only-begotten Son to become man's substitute and surety, to suffer the penalty that was merited by the transgressor, and to impart to the repentant soul His perfect righteousness.¹

"To the judge of the universe He [Christ] had made Himself responsible for the transgression of the law."² In Christ's role as a substitute, He accepted our sin debt: "In the crucifixion of His Son is revealed God's hatred for sin. This penalty Christ bore for the sins of the transgressor."³ Sin is fully punished in the Substitute.⁴

Christ came to pay the debt for the sinner which it was impossible for him to pay for himself. Thus, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, sinful man was granted another trial. . . . Jesus, our Substitute, consented to bear for man the penalty of the law transgressed.⁵

As a result of His substitutionary work, sinners are enabled to grasp the reality of the enormity of sin and what it cost the Savior.

When the sinner beholds Jesus lifted upon the cross, suffering the guilt of the transgressor, bearing the penalty of sin; when he beholds God's abhorrence of evil in the fearful manifestation of the death of the cross, and His love for fallen man, he is led to repentance toward God because of his transgression of the law which is holy, and just, and good. He exercises faith in Christ, because the divine Savior has become his substitute, his surety, and


³Ibid.


⁵White, Faith and Works, 30.
advocate, the One in whom his very life is centered.¹

Because of Christ's substitutionary work in our behalf, He has become our surety. This is His pledge or guarantee that because He has become legally liable for our debt, we are to be the recipients of His life. This transfer—our impending doom for our sins, which is traded for eternal life for His righteousness—is the heart of the substitutionary theory.

Leon Morris also writes about faith in our Substitute:

Without committing ourselves to believing that Althaus has solved all the problems of substitution we may yet feel that there is something very valuable in the thought that substitution, as we see it in the atonement, is not some purely external thing, which stops when it sees the wages of sin borne by the Substitute. Rather it reaches its consummation only when the sinner has become one with his Substitute, and therefore has come to view sin with the same mind as his Substitute.²

Specifics of the substitutionary model of atonement are discussed further with regard to the doctrine of Christ’s mission and the doctrine of sin understood from the cross.

The Trust-Healing Model of Atonement

The trust-healing model of atonement is a more recent development which seeks to correct some of the perceived limitations of the substitutionary theory. It builds on Ellen G. White’s great controversy theme. Satan’s charges against God (Satan’s misrepresentations of God) have caused man to question and doubt God, to be apprehensive of and alienated from God. God reconciles (provides atonement for) man by winning man’s trust and healing the relationship. God responds to Satan’s accusations and falsification of God’s character.

The theme of vindicating the character of God has been extensively developed by Graham Maxwell. “God is not the kind of person His enemies


have made Him out to be--arbitrary, unforgiving and severe."¹ God seeks to reconcile mankind on earth and the intelligences of other worlds by revealing the truth about Himself. This revelation is the Word made flesh. Jesus said, If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father (John 14:9, paraphrase). We see light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus (2 Cor 4:6).

The trust-healing model views 'atonement' as having a broader and deeper purpose than merely the salvation of man. It was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. Through Christ, God reconciled to Himself "all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Col 1:20 NIV). Though other worlds have not sinned, they will have questions regarding the war going on between God and Satan and God's response to it. The fact of the incarnation of the Son of God, that He became flesh and dwelt among us, teaches that atonement is more than an objective payment that could have been made on some other planet.² Jesus came and

¹Graham Maxwell, Servants or Friends? Another Look at God (Redlands, CA: Pineknoll Publications, 1992), 186. The context is a position statement Graham makes, which now is placed on many church bulletins under the heading "What Adventists Believe." The full statement, entitled "Another Look at God" follows:

"I believe that the most important of all Christian beliefs is the one that brings joy and assurance to God's friends everywhere--the truth about our heavenly Father that was confirmed at such cost by the life and death of his Son.

"God is not the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be--arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. God is just as loving and trustworthy as his Son, just as willing to forgive and heal. Though infinite in majesty and power, our Creator is an equally gracious Person who values nothing higher than the freedom, dignity, and individuality of his intelligent creatures--that their love, their faith, their willingness to listen and obey, may be freely given. He even prefers to regard us not as servants but as friends. This is the truth revealed through all the books of Scripture. This is the everlasting Good News that wins the trust and admiration of God's loyal children throughout the universe.

"Like Abraham and Moses--the ones God spoke of as his trusted friends--God's friends today want to speak well and truly of our heavenly Father. They covet as the highest of all commendations the words of God about Job: 'He has said of me what is right'" (ibid., 186-187).

²Uriah Smith decided from his study that the term "atonement" must be limited to the mediatorial work of Jesus as High Priest in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary after 1844. During the 1950s, the concept of atonement began to broaden rapidly. From Nichol's hesitant affirmation in 1952 of atonement beginning with the cross, the vision
revealed the Father, He reconciled us by His death and saves us by His life (Rom 5:10). Atonement involves His death and His life. There is meaning to the atonement that is meant to affect us and our relationship with God; the atonement is so much more than a transaction or transfer of record keeping in heaven.

The length of time that God has allowed the great controversy to continue teaches that there is more than just an objective payment to be made. Time is given for both God and Satan to fully present their case before the universe that all might clearly understand.

Reconciliation involves an understanding of God, a subjective impact, that goes beyond a merely objective event. God wants us to understand His character, His Truth, His ways. Mrs. White helps us to see God’s desire for awareness in our minds and hearts. God holiness and justice is “demonstrated” in the sacrifice of Christ. The value God places on man is “shown” in the price that is paid. "Christ draws the sinner by the exhibition of his love upon the cross, and this softens the heart, impresses the mind, and inspires contrition and repentance in the enlarged until, in 1957, atonement included the entire reaction on the part of God, to the sin problem from inception to eradication. Russell Holt, “A Comparative Study of the Sanctuary and Its Implications for Atonement in SDA Theology from Uriah Smith to the Present,” Term paper, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1969, 58, 599.

"In this way--by giving us understanding about Himself--God removes forever from our hearts any reasons we felt we had for not wanting to be His friends. And as our faith in Him grows we are set free to enter into ever-deepening fellowship with Him" (Dick Winn, His Healing Love [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1986], 218).


soul."\(^1\) "Beholding Jesus upon the cross of Calvary arouses the conscience to the heinous character of sin as nothing else can do."\(^2\) These words describe the response that God desires from us in atonement: "beholding," "see," "shows," "inspires," "softens," "draws," "demonstrated."

The trust-healing model reveals God as taking the initiative in atonement. While we were yet sinners, God sent Christ to die for us (Rom 5:8); He does not wait for us to make the first move to see our need and make ourselves worthy.\(^3\) God is reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, Paul says in 2 Cor 5:19. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Rom 5:11; "received reconciliation," NIV; "made us God's friends," Good News).

Ellen White states that the atonement of Christ "was not the cause of God's love, but the result of that love."\(^4\) John Stott even claims: "It cannot be emphasized too strongly that God's love is the source, not the consequence, of the atonement."\(^5\) Stott leaves no room for ambiguity: "We must never make Christ the object of God's punishment or God the object of Christ's persuasion, for both God and Christ were subjects not

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\(^1\)Ellen G. White, "Repentance the Gift of God," Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, April 1, 1890, 193-4.


\(^4\)White, "Ye are Laborers Together with God," 729-30. The whole context is as follows: "As the Saviour is lifted up before the people, they will see his humiliation, his self-denial, his self-sacrifice, his goodness, his tender compassion, his sufferings to save fallen man, and will realize that the atonement of Christ was not the cause of God's love, but the result of that love. Jesus died because God loved the world. The channel had to be made whereby the love of God should be recognized by man, and flow into the sinner's heart in perfect harmony with truth and justice."

\(^5\)Stott, 174.
objects, taking the initiative together to save sinners."\(^1\)

"The Cross of Christ is God's act to win us, not Christ's act to placate God."\(^2\) "Christ's death shows God's great love for man. It is the pledge of our salvation. . . . The Cross brings us near to God, reconciling us to him."\(^3\) The cross was the "vehicle, not the cause, of divine grace."\(^4\) Raoul Dederen writes that "God's feelings towards us never needed to be changed. But God's treatment of us, God's practical relation to us--that was brought to change."\(^5\)

How are we reconciled? How are we saved or healed from being "alienated from God" and "enemies" in our minds towards Him, as Col 1:20, 21 states? Ellen White is very explicit that

the plan of redemption is not merely a way of escape from the penalty of transgression, but through it the sinner is forgiven his sins, and will be finally received into heaven,--not as a forgiven culprit pardoned and released from captivity, yet looked upon with suspicion and not admitted to friendship and trust; but welcomed as a child, and taken back into fullest confidence.\(^6\)

God wants us to know Him, to have a trust relationship with Him.\(^7\) "And in coming to know Him, our relationship with Him will be healed, or

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\(^1\)Ibid., 151. Stott quotes I. H. Marshall: "There is no suspicion anywhere in the New Testament of discord between the father and the Son, 'whether by the Son wresting forgiveness from an unwilling Father or by the Father demanding a sacrifice from an unwilling Son,'" (Work of Christ [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969], 74). Stott continues: "There is no unwillingness in either. On the contrary, their wills coincided in the perfect self-sacrifice of love," (Stott 152).

\(^2\)Winn, 13. Winn writes on p. 236 that he searched for any place where Jesus expressed or implied that His Father's attitude toward us was changed or modified by the Son's appeal, merit, substitutionary life, or legal covering, and reports "I found none."


\(^4\)Provonsha, 105.

\(^5\)Dederen, 10c.

\(^6\)White, "Christ Our Sacrifice," 593-4.

\(^7\)The five foolish virgins were sadly informed, "I do not know you" (Matt 25:12). Eternal life is knowing God (John 17:3). And we are save by grace through faith, through trust (Eph 2:8).
'set right,' as the word justify implies."¹ There will be at-one-ment between God and mankind, between God and His created universe. These are some of the main themes of the trust-healing model of atonement.

**Comparison**

Some might say that the trust-healing and the substitution models exclude each other. Some say that the substitution theory is too cold, a bookkeeping system, no personal relationship, too objective, and seems to describe humanity making atonement (through Christ) and God receiving it. The difficulty others will have with the trust-healing model is that it is seen to be strictly subjective and slight the costliness of forgiveness.² It is seen to underrate both the seriousness of evil and the holiness of God.

This dissertation has not undertaken the task of disproving or endorsing either theory. Rather, its goal is to take the concept of the great controversy as found in inspired sources and see how it impacts certain salvation-related doctrines. In clarifying the great controversy theme, a comparison of the substitutionary model and the trust-healing model to the great controversy theme is made.

We have seen that Ellen G. White points out five purposes for the plan of redemption. These are here repeated and are used to compare the trust-healing model and the substitution model for atonement. The plan of redemption would: (1) provide for “the salvation of man,” making heaven accessible, (2) “vindicate the character of God before the universe,” (3) “establish the perpetuity of the law of God,” (4) “reveal the nature and results of sin,” and (5) draw men to Christ.³

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¹Winn, 90.

²“The GCTHM is silent on human guilt needing atonement. It is a limited view of Calvary that overlooks the seriousness of sin as lawlessness (1 John 3:4)” (Gulley, 74).

³White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 68, 69.
The Salvation of Man

Both the substitution model and the trust-healing model of atonement begin from the perspective that man is indeed in trouble and in need of salvation. How this is accomplished is a point of departure for the two models. Norman Gulley maintains that "justification through Christ's substitutionary sacrifice and imputed righteousness are essential components of salvation." What does this mean? What does a substitutionary sacrifice accomplish and how? The trust-healing model asks these questions, and wants to investigate deeper. Why is a substitute necessary? Is a broken and offended law the obstacle? Is there a deeper issue? Why was the law broken? Could it be that the serpent cast doubts as to God's motives? "Jesus came to reveal the Father and thus win human hearts to a trusting relationship with Him."

Richard Rice compares the ransom, the satisfaction, and the moral-influence theories by noting the location where each places the obstacle to divine-human fellowship.

According to the moral influence theory, the obstacle to reconciliation lies within man; our misperception of God's character needs to be corrected. Christ removes this obstacle by clarifying God's attitude toward us. The satisfaction theory places the primary object of atonement within God himself. According to views of this type, Christ's death satisfies the demands of God's own nature. . . . The ransom theory seems to place the object of atonement outside both God and man.

Salvation of man is critical to both the substitution model and the trust-healing model. The respective answers to the question of what it takes for man to be saved will differ.

1Gulley, 75.
2Weber, 15.
3Rice, 173, 174.
Mrs. White states that the plan of redemption had a yet "broader and deeper" purpose than the salvation of man. Her great controversy paradigm urges us to broaden our horizons, to dig deeper, for a fuller understanding of the meaning of salvation and redemption. Since it is a science that we will study through the millenniums, we should not be content with merely the historical understanding.

Gulley, who supports the substitution model with a larger view of Calvary,\(^1\) urges that the model must not judge Scripture and inspired writing, selectively using them\(^2\) or judging some parts of God’s Word as more primitive than others. “Although God invites us to use our reason (Isa 1:18),” Gulley continues, “reason must not be the final court of appeal. Human reason must bow before divine revelation, or we are left with rationalism.”\(^3\)

This critique of the trust-healing model is a reminder of important hermeneutical points. It seems that the substitution model could be more open to asking the question “why” and seek to understand Mrs. White’s great controversy in the cosmic sense. God is not threatened by questions. And the trust-healing model, while appearing to be selective in use of Scripture, could endeavor to be more systematic in harmonizing different parts of Scripture as the “why” questions are asked. This is Mrs. White’s approach in the great controversy theme of atonement. We need to understand the connection between different passages, how they build upon one another. God invites us to reason, to believe, to be

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\(^1\)Gulley, 68: “I define ‘the larger view’ of the cross as the full revelation of Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White, rather than a view of the great controversy representing less than all that is revealed (as in the GCTHM).”

\(^2\)Gulley, 67, 76.

\(^3\)Ibid., 68.
convinced that His truth is believable and logical, and not at the expense of consistency.

Establish the Perpetuity of the Law of God

A broken law is a prime focus of the substitution model. But redemption is broader and deeper than this one issue. A broken law's penalty being paid does not answer all the questions that Satan has raised about God's government and character.

The trust-healing model looks at the law as a "transcript of God's character" and any breaking of the law, is a rejection of God's character, a fresh wound to Jesus, and affects our relationship with Him. Is this too subjective? "It is worth repeating that moral influence theology offers a great deal of truth, beautiful and profound," writes Richard Fredericks, who has been an emphatic critic of this subjective model of atonement (though he recognizes that the trust-healing model goes beyond the moral-influence model).

Without a doubt, it has been a step forward for many Christians burdened by legalism. However this reaction against legal categories has led to a distortion of the atonement itself. This distortion grows out of what the theory denies, not what it affirms.

Jack Provonsha concurs. Abelard's concept (the moral-influence theory) "is not wrong so much as it is deficient." A complete picture is needed, not a deficient one, nor one that is excluding and denying, but an understanding based on all of God's revelation.

John Stott writes:

In fact all three of the major explanations of the death of Christ

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1White, Great Controversy, 434.
2Fredericks, 7.
3Provonsha, 51.

"Jack Provonsha suggests that "He is a substitute, then, from our perspective, not from God's" (ibid., 104). Dick Winn comments that Jesus "is God's gracious substitute, even as He is ours" (Winn, 48)."
contain biblical truth and can to some extent be harmonized, especially if we observe that the chief difference between them is that in each God's work in Christ is directed towards a different person. In the 'objective' view God satisfies himself, in the 'subjective' he inspires us, and in the 'classic' he overcomes the devil.1

Reveal the Nature and Results of Sin

The substitution model seems to generate little discussion of the results of sin, and less on the nature of sin.

The classical definition of sin as transgression of the law is taught by the substitution model as well as the trust-healing model, although the law is seen in terms of a relationship with God, so sin includes whatever is "not of faith" (Rom 14:23).

Martin Weber is uncomfortable with Graham Maxwell's (trust-healing model) view of divine wrath "basically as something passive"; God giving sinners over to the natural result of their own choices.2 It seems that both models need to be less selective in their support texts, and take all relevant Scripture on this issue. Certainly, some passages support both sides, a passive or active response from God towards sin. One must be inclusive and seek to harmonize all biblical evidence. This is addressed in the doctrinal section on the results of sin.

Draw Men to Christ

The language of the substitution model focuses on law, sacrifice, and penalty, the objective, legal requirements. The trust-healing model focuses on the subjective side, a heart being won over to a trusting relationship.

Norman Gulley understands redemption to be the objective side of atonement, and revelation the subjective. He claims that the substitution model's primary focus is on redemption, while the trust-healing model's

1Stott, 230.

2Weber, 19.
"sole focus" is on revelation.¹ Both models should be more inclusive.

While Anselm taught that the death of Jesus Christ was an objective satisfaction for sin, and Abelard that its efficacy was largely subjective in the moral influence it exerts on us,² "the objective and subjective elements of the atonement must be held in indissoluble union,"³ asserts Raoul Dederen. This union is what is sought, to be inclusive of all truth, and that the union be logical and consistent.

For the atonement to be of benefit to us it must be more than just objective, it must also be subjective. Yes, Christ's atonement is an objective event. He died! That is a historical fact. Raoul Dederen writes:

But as long as it remains for us just that, a historical event, it has for us no saving significance. The objective atonement must be subjectively appropriated. Christ died for my sins whether I recognize it or not. But of what value is that fact to those who do not apprehend it subjectively, i.e. who do not accept God's salvation by repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ?⁴

Being drawn to Christ and won over to a trusting relationship presupposes "our acknowledgment that sin is real, that it is rebellion against God, enmity toward him, and that God's judgment upon sin is righteous."⁵ Only then can one experience atonement and reconciliation. While the trust-healing model does well to remind one not to be influenced by Satan's portrayal of God as vengeful and needing to be pleaded with to show us mercy, the trust-healing model does fall short of including a reason for Christ's heavenly ministry, or at least any discussion of it was not found.

A final thought before moving on. "Salvation is not so much a

¹Gulley, 77.
²Stott, 218.
³Dederen, 12c.
⁴Ibid., 11c.
⁵Ibid.
rational thing as a powerful thing!"¹ Jesus claimed that His Father had given Him power, power to give eternal life, and that eternal life is in knowing the Father and the Son (John 17:1-3). Does God have power? Does His atonement have power? He draws us with loving kindness (Jer 31:3). "That is the greatest definition of God's power: drawing love! And by this He has given us power--to become children of God (John 1:12)!"² What wondrous atonement!

We may now summarize the salient characteristics of a "cosmic conflict" paradigm of the atonement.

Cosmic Conflict Paradigm of the Atonement

We of the human race are in trouble and in need of salvation because we thought God was withholding from us what is best. We believed God’s enemy, who urged that God was not worthy of our trust. So we chose to live independently of God. Each of us has sinned, rebelling against God. We have developed a distaste for God’s glory and chosen to fall short of it. Since God is the only source of life in the universe, when we are not connected with Him and abiding in Him, separation (from the life source) and death is the result. Absolutely nothing we can do will improve our desperate situation.

First of all, Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice is necessary because within God’s own inner being is His essence of purity and holiness which hates and has a revulsion towards sin and consumes it. To simply forgive the sinner would cause a dissonance within God, would violate His inner, holy essence. God will remain consistent within Himself. His character/justice/law will not be compromised. His justice will be satisfied.³ Second, Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice is

¹Tkachuk, 112.
²Winn, 100.
necessary as a manifestation of another inner essence of God, His everlasting love. Third, Christ's substitutionary sacrifice is necessary because the human race, the angels, and the universe do not know the true nature and results of sin. Calvary and Gethsemane vividly manifest the heinous nature of sin. It results in separation from God, which is death. Fourth, Christ's substitutionary sacrifice is necessary because the human race, the angels, and the universe need to understand the true character of Satan. And fifth, Christ's substitutionary sacrifice is necessary because He was treated as we deserve, experiencing the result of our sin, its guilt and condemnation, and the awful death of eternal separation.

The cosmic-conflict model is both objective and subjective. The subjective aspect of atonement involves Christ's removal of the shroud of darkness that Satan has placed over God's character, obscuring the truth about God's loving attitude towards His creatures. Through our coming to an understanding of God, through being able to believe in Him and His truth, through allowing Christ to forgive us, live in our heart, and heal the enmity of the heart, through an ever-deepening "knowing" relationship with Him, we experience reconciliation with God, at-one-ment, redemption, and salvation. God gains our confidence and trust.

When God returns in the fullness of His glory, because the righteous know Him, value His character, and have received His character, they are not afraid at the sight of Him, and enjoy looking God in the eye; the wicked call for the rocks and mountains to hide them from Him. God's glory is life to the righteous but death to the wicked who have chosen still to fall short of His glory.

In seeking to gain our confidence and faith in Him, God, in judgment, reveals to us His righteous character, His redemptive acts. Then He asks what more He could have done. Christ, our advocate and comforter in the heavenly sanctuary, answers every claim Satan makes about us. Everyone, the righteous and the wicked, the angels, and the universe, are very satisfied with the evidence of God's righteous
judgments. All of Satan’s doubts and accusations are answered. The cosmic-conflict is over. The universe is in unity and harmony with God once again.\(^1\) All this is included in atonement from a cosmic-conflict perspective.

We now turn to six doctrinal concepts that are closely related to the atonement, considering each in the light of the cosmic-conflict paradigm of the atonement.

**Atonement-Related Doctrinal Concepts**

Earlier in this chapter, the history and development of atonement theology was discussed, and a synthesis offered of the atonement doctrine from a cosmic-conflict perspective.

Six other doctrinal concepts whose meaning is closely linked to one’s view of the atonement will now be considered in order to further clarify the significance of the atonement of Christ.

**The Cosmic Conflict**

The centerpiece of the doctrine of atonement is the cross of Jesus Christ.\(^2\) And when we gaze upon the scene of the cross, contemplating its meaning, we are compelled to comprehend the significance of this death. Surely it is more than mere death. The significance of the cross is located in what the Scriptures call the “war in heaven” between Michael and the dragon (Rev 12:7), understood to mean Christ and Satan.\(^3\) What is the reason for the “war in heaven” between Michael and the dragon? What does this serpent, the devil or Satan, have against God, and why and how does Satan “lead the whole world astray” (Rev 12:7-9 NIV)? Is the issue in

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\(^1\)White, *Great Controversy*, 678.

\(^2\)“The sacrifice of Christ as our atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster,” White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 5:1137.

\(^3\)Ibid., 7:809.
the conflict between God and Satan over who has the greatest power? Why then does Mt. Calvary not have a similar showdown as Mt. Carmel did? What are the issues of this "war," of this cosmic conflict?

Issues of the Conflict

The plan of redemption has a "broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. . . . It is to vindicate the character of God before the universe,"¹ writes Mrs. White. The Cross was not intended to show who has the greatest power.² The scenes of the Cross speak of something much different than power as the issue of the cosmic conflict. It has to do with vindicating God's character. God loves us to the point of dying for us, soliciting a "believing" response from us (John 3:16). Redemption is a "long struggle for the loyalty of God's free, intelligent creatures,"³ writes Graham Maxwell. God wants to reestablish faith and trust, and trust is established through evidence and understanding.⁴ The issue is

¹White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 68.
²Philip Yancey writes of the "impotence of power to bring about what God desired most, the love and faithfulness of his people" (Disappointment with God [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988], 71).
³Maxwell, 12
⁴Dick Winn writes about the prodigal son: "The wandering son came home when he began to understand who his father really was" (His Healing Love [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1986], 9). Reconciliation, then, involves understanding God and His character. The apostle Paul identifies the mystery of God as "Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:2,3), knowledge of the Father.

"God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant" (Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956], 105).

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," Isa 1:18 KJV.

"God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service" (White, The Great Controversy, 493).

"In order to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, it is essential that you meditate much upon the great themes of redemption. You should ask yourself why Christ has taken humanity upon himself, why he
not power, then, but truth, who has the truth, that trust and faith might be reestablished. Jesus claimed, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6 KJV). He came to reveal the truth about God (John 14:9). The conflict is over the character of God, Maxwell maintains. What is the truth about God? God's character will be vindicated.

More than vindicating God in the eyes of man, the great controversy seeks to vindicate God before the universe. God reconciles things on earth and in heaven, according to Col 1:20. Angels long to look into things concerning salvation (1 Pet 1:10, 12), and God's wisdom is to be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Eph 3:10). The story of Job pushes out the boundaries from which God is being evaluated; there is a cosmic dimension to God's evaluation. Philip Yancy understands that Daniel's angelic being who needed reinforcements (Dan 10:8-14) indicates that "the big picture, with the whole universe as a backdrop, includes much activity that we never see." Ellen White writes about God's character being vindicated to angels and to other inhabited worlds.

What is the truth about God? Who speaks the truth in this great controversy, Jesus or Satan? Ellen White explains the strategies of both Satan and Jesus in this cosmic conflict:

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men suffered upon the cross, why he bore the sins of men, why he was made sin and righteousness for us. You should study to know why he ascended to heaven in the nature of man, and what is his work for us today" (Ellen G. White, "God So Loved the World," The Signs of the Times, December 1, 1890, 573).

Faith and trust in God come by knowing and understanding Him, His truth, His character.

Maxwell, 8.

Yancey, 237.

"But why was it necessary to wage the warfare in the sight of other worlds? . . . That all might behold the real nature and results of disobedience to God's great moral standard" (Ellen G. White, "The Love of God," Signs of the Times, November 18, 1889, 689.)
to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself, --as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,--that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. . . .

It was by falsifying the character of God and exciting distrust of Him that Satan tempted Eve to transgress. . . .

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life.¹

Satan's Accusations

What are these claims that Lucifer (Satan) makes about God?

When Satan, disguised as a beautiful serpent in the garden of Eden, boldly claimed to Eve, "You shall not surely die" (Gen 3:4), he was calling God a liar. By phrasing the question, "Did God really say," Satan suggested to Eve that God could not be trusted to be factual and truthful, that instead of being on her side, God was really against her, that (using Jack Provonska’s terms) instead of being friendly, God was hostile.² It did not take long for these doubts to take effect. At their next encounter with God, Adam and Eve hid from Him (Gen 3:8).

By stating to Eve, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5), Satan represents God as being selfish, withholding something good. Satan charges God with having no respect for freedom, that He made selfish use of His authority and power, writes Maxwell.³ Ellen White also adds to our understanding of Satan's accusations against God:

When Christ came to our world, Satan was on the ground, and disputed every inch of advance in his path from the manger to Calvary. Satan

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:738-39.
²Provonska, 18.
had accused God of requiring self-denial of the angels, when he knew nothing of what it meant himself, and when he would not himself make any self-sacrifice for others. This was the accusation that Satan made against God in heaven; and after the evil one was expelled from heaven, he continually charged the Lord with exacting service which he would not render himself. Christ came to the world to meet these false accusations, and to reveal the Father.¹

John Wood adds that "Satan portrays God as requiring absolute justice, and that such "justice" is merely arbitrary and unjust self-exaltation."²

Daniel writes that, in the midst of the seventieth week, the Messiah will be cut off, and have nothing (Dan 9:26). When Christ died, there was nothing for Him because His selfless love had moved Him to give absolutely everything in order to redeem us. Ellen White writes about Calvary's response to Satan's accusations:

The victory gained at His death on Calvary broke forever the accusing power of Satan over the universe and silenced his charges that self-denial was impossible with God and therefore not essential to the human family.³

As the Saviour is lifted up before the people, they will see his humiliation, his self-denial, his self-sacrifice, his goodness, his tender compassion, his sufferings to save fallen man, and will realize that the atonement of Christ was not the cause of God's love, but the result of that love. Jesus died because God loved the world. The channel had to be made whereby the love of God should be recognized by man, and flow into the sinner's heart in perfect harmony with truth and justice.⁴

Satan attacks God's government and His law. God's act of imposing divine law becomes for Lucifer the act of an arbitrary tyrant.

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that


²Wood, 697.

³White, Manuscript Release 50, 1900. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7:974.

the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner.¹

Satan tries to tell us that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace when actually they cannot exist without each other.² By His life and death, Christ proves that God's mercy does not destroy His justice, that His justice does not destroy His mercy. When Christ showed that "Sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous . . . Satan's charges were refuted."³

"There is no argument in favor of the unchangeable character of God's law, so forcible as that presented in the cross of Calvary."⁴ That the law could not be changed, that the "cup" did not "pass from" Christ (Matt 26:39, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42), proves the immutable nature of the law of God.⁵

**Justice Satisfied**

The importance of the law is often described by stating that justice needed to be "satisfied" and is done so through the divine sacrifice. "The claims of infinite justice, and the demands of God's law, can be met only by the atoning sacrifice of Christ,"⁶ writes Ellen White. Without careful reflection, though, it is easy to conclude with another

¹White, *Desire of Ages*, 761.

²Morris Venden writes: "Satan's original charge was that the law of God could not be obeyed. When man broke the law of God, Satan rejoiced and added another charge, that man could not be forgiven" (Morris Venden, "What I Believe About Salvation," quoted in Weber, *Who's God the Truth?* 131).

³White, *Desire of Ages*, 762.


⁵"The rectitude and justice and moral excellence of the law must be maintained and vindicated before the heavenly universe and the worlds unfallen" (White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:951).

⁶White, "The Great Controversy: Cain and Abel," 86.
of Satan's accusations against God or misrepresentations of God; that is, God must be appeased before He can extend mercy. If God's love is demonstrated in that while we were yet sinners, He sent Christ to die for us (Rom 5:8), God's attitude towards us did not need to be changed. So what does it mean for justice to be satisfied? John Stott poses the question, "How, then, could God express his holy love—his love in forgiving sinners without compromising his holiness, and his holiness in judging sinners without frustrating his love?"^2

What is the obstacle to forgiveness? Is it the devil, the law, God's honor or justice, or the moral order? "The primary 'obstacle' is to be found within God himself," Stott maintains. "God must not only respect us as the responsible beings we are, but he must also respect himself as the holy God he is."^4 Is Christ a victim of His own character? Or is God subordinate to something outside and above Himself which controls His actions, to which He is accountable, and from which He cannot free himself?

"Satisfaction" is an appropriate word, providing we realize that it is he himself in his inner being who needs to be satisfied, and not something external to himself. Talk of law, honor, justice and the moral order is true only in so far as these are seen as expressions of God's own character. ^5

God will not compromise His holiness^6 in order to forgive. Leon Morris adds, "The forgiveness sinners receive is not at the expense of

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^1 "The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, is also a demonstration of God's unchanging love" (White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 33).

^2 Stott, 88.

^3 Ibid., 112.

^4 Ibid., 110.

^5 Ibid., 123.

^6 Ibid., 132.
ignoring sin's consequences."¹ Raoul Dederen writes, "There is a necessity in the divine nature that when sin is forgiven it must be forgiven in such a way as to make the total opposition of God to it unmistakable."² God's holiness is in opposition to sin, which is a good definition for God's justice. Ellen White views God's justice as the holiness of God in relation to sin.³ Justice is not something that must be physically equalized to be satisfied, but that God's total opposition to sin must be unmistakable.⁴ God wants to justify, but He wants to do it in a manner that is just, that He is seen to be just Himself. "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice . . . . so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Rom 3:25, 26 NIV)

God realizes that "justice must not only be done, but must be seen to be done,"⁵ writes Jack Provonsha. He reconcile Himself, and vindicates Himself by revealing the righteousness of saving activity for each of us (Ps 51:4 and Rom 3:4).⁶

For justice to be satisfied, therefore, is not suggesting that God is arbitrary, severe, and needs to be appeased—these are misrepresentations made by Satan. Rather, it means that God desires and of necessity wants to be consistent. To be just is to be righteous, and

¹Morris, 302.
²Dederen, 10c.
³White, MS 145, 1897, quoted in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7:951.
⁴In this sense, can we say "Christ's atonement is an objective event, meeting a necessity in God"? (Dederen, 11c).
⁵Jack W. Provonsha, A Remnant in Crisis (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993), 121.
⁶"By bearing himself in Christ the fearful penalty of our sins, God not only propitiated his wrath, ransomed us from slavery, justified us in his sight, and reconciled us to himself, but thereby also defended and demonstrated his own justice. By the way he justified us, he also justified himself" (Stott, 211).
God's holiness is pure and righteous.¹

God’s justice is satisfied, His holy character is not compromised. Satisfaction of God’s justice deals with His holy character, and also His loving character. Mrs. White writes, “Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man’s stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon.”² God’s justice is satisfied.

Other issues that Satan raises in this great controversy (issues that are dealt with below) include the following: the true nature of sin, its consequences and eradication (Satan said “you will not surely die”); the true meaning of sacrifices, the sanctuary and judgment; and the mission of Christ in coming to this earth. Satan has tried to "spin" each of these issues to cause doubt about God's intentions. Understanding the cosmic conflict will help protect against giving any kind of room for Satan's misrepresentations.

Before we move on to understand God's response to Satan's accusations, another aspect of God's response is His desire to establish faith, trust, and loyalty. His response to Satan and the universe is to provide atonement or reconciliation through faith-building evidences of His truth and character. Ellen White observes that

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's

¹For God to be just is not for Him to physically balance or equalize something. Instead, for God to be just is for Him to do the right thing, to be righteous. When Jesus talked about the lex talionis in Matt 5, did he advocate the renunciation of justice? No. Rather "He called men to divine justice, involving love, mercy, and forgiveness" (Provonsha, You Can Go Home Again, 58). This is the kind of justice God seeks to satisfy.

²White, God's Amazing Grace, 139.
government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe.1

Time is given for Satan's principles and his character to be clearly seen. Wood reasons that

God does not visit the penalty of sin on Lucifer and his cohorts because inexperienced finite beings could not yet understand the implications and would thus be moved to fear rather than love and insure their own destruction.2

God does not want a relationship with mankind and the universe that is based on fear or misunderstanding, rather His goal is a relationship based on truth and love. Thus time is given for truth and love to win against Satan's lies and manipulations.

Why are these issues that Satan has raised important to answer? White's explanation is that "we are not to think of God only as a judge, and to forget him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this; for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character."3

Satan wants everyone's spiritual life to be dysfunctional. And he does this by planting negative conceptions about God's character in our minds. It is time that we expose Satan's distortions and proclaim the truth. As White affirms,

It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His

1White, The Desire of Ages, 759.
2Wood, 699.
goodness, mercy, and truth.¹

If the third angel's message is about justification by faith,² and through the revelation of His character God is encouraging that faith and a trusting relationship, it is time that His church proclaims in word and practice that truth.

Mission of Christ

A second major atonement-related doctrine is that of the mission of Christ. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 NIV). These are the words of Jesus, summarizing His mission. This verse clarifies three points in regard to Christ's mission: His death, His Father's love, and believing.

Christ's Death

An understanding of Christ's death is central to understanding His mission. Ellen White also stresses its importance. The cross of Christ is "the great truth around which all other truths cluster." The others will only be fully understood when "studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary."³ When Jesus hung upon the cross, many were motivated to study the Scriptures and thus discovered the meaning of Christ's mission.⁴

Jesus came to this earth to experience death, our death. John Stott summarizes a great biblical truth when he writes, "God gave his Son to die for us."⁵ Christ's death accomplishes several things. A number of

¹White, Christ's Object Lessons, 415.
²White, Selected Messages, 1:372.
³White, MS 70, 1901, cited in Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 5:1137.
⁴White, MS 45, 1897, cited in Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 5:1137.
⁵Stott, 214.
these were discussed when dealing with the atonement, others in connection with the issues of the cosmic conflict, and others will be discussed when dealing with sin and its eradication. Here again is a quick summary from Ellen White: Christ’s mission, the plan of redemption, was broader and deeper than the salvation of man—it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe, it was to justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan, it was to establish the perpetuity of the law of God, and to reveal the nature and results of sin.1

Col 1:22 states that God has reconciled us by Christ’s physical body through death. Christ, who had no sin, was made to be sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). Our iniquities were laid on Him (Isa 53:6). Jesus did not deserve to die, He had no sin. But He died our death because of our sin. He became sin; we become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21).

The cosmic-conflict model broadens the understanding of this trade, this substitution, so that we do not end up with Satan’s picture of Christ’s death appeasing God. God does the "giving" mentioned in John 3:16, giving us His Son; we do not offer the Son to God (cf. Lev 17:11). God takes the initiative and is reconciling the world to Himself through Christ (2 Cor 5:19), making peace through His blood shed on the cross (Col 1:20). God is not the object of Christ’s death, we are; we are being extended peace and reconciliation. Christ took my sin, and became sin to "reveal the nature and results of sin,"2 writes Ellen White. John Stott adds: Christ experienced the "horror of sin-bearing and God-forsakeness"3 for us.

It is often said that Christ died as the sinner’s substitute. What

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1White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 68, 69.

2Ibid., 69.

3Stott, 214.
does that mean? Does it mean that because the law has been broken, God cannot love us until the law's honor has been satisfied?1 (God loves us while we are still sinners, even before the cross. But God will not act in a way that is contradicting His own holy character and law. Jesus, as the Substitute, honors or fulfills God’s holy character, so that mercy, forgiveness, and redemption are not at the expense of God’s holiness and justice). Does “substitute” mean that God cannot forgive until someone, a substitute, pays the penalty of the law? (God’s attitude towards us is love, compassion and forgiveness. He forgives us knowing that because His revulsion toward sin was manifested at the cross, His holiness and justice remain uncompromised). Is God’s favor towards us dependent upon His holiness being appeased? (Yes; not in the pagan sense of the soothing of arbitrary anger, but in the sense that He must maintain His own inner consistency, not compromising His holy revulsion against sin).2

In the upper room with His disciples, before His death, Jesus tried to communicate the meaning of His death by taking bread and stating, This is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22:19). Dederen reasons, "We therefore speak of Christ's death as 'vicarious,' i.e. a death he died for others, or with their benefit in view."3 Some will try to distinguish between "in your behalf" (hyper) and "in your stead" (anti). Dederen claims that Scripture does not warrant such a radical distinction.4 "His was a vicarious and substitutionary death."5

1"The heavenly host understood that the object of his mission was to exalt the Father's law and make it honorable, and to justify its claims by paying with his own life the penalty of its transgression. It was thus that he makes reconciliation between God and man" (Tkachuk, 37). "Christ died to magnify the law, and to attest to its validity and immutability" (ibid., 38).

2See section, "Heavenly Sanctuary," below.

3Dederen, 7c.

4Ibid.

5Ibid.
Is this substitution a physical phenomenon? Does Christ's punishment (stripes) physically heal us or does it reconcile us conceptually, through truth, through revealing the truth, through demonstrating reality?

The cosmic-conflict paradigm teaches that there is more than a broken law that needs to be justified, there is a broken relationship that needs to be justified, reconciled, and healed. Our view of God, of Who He is, His character, needs to be adjusted. He needs to be vindicated so we will trust Him once again. Christ's death brings peace (Col 1:20), and His stripes bring healing (Isa 53:5) as we understand the why of the Cross, and understand the questions of the cosmic conflict that Satan has raised about God. The demonstration of the truth, of reality, reestablishes the truthfulness of God and affords the opportunity once again of trusting Him.

Christ came to this earth to die a substitutionary death, a physical, objective death, our death, to answer the questions of the cosmic conflict.

Love, the Motive for Christ’s Mission

John 3:16 clearly states that God was motivated by love to give His Son, and not motivated by the Son's sacrifice to love. Another aspect of Christ's mission was to reveal the Father's love. Ellen White comments:

The enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear; they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to

There is no need to water down the language of the biblical writers, to reduce their colourful metaphors to a uniform drabness. They did not intend ransom to be taken as a full and sufficient statement of what the atonement was and did, but as far as it goes it gives a picture of one aspect of that great work. It is a metaphor which involves the payment of a price which is plainly stated in several places and understood in others to be the death of Christ. From the very nature of the imagery this involves a substitutionary idea; instead of our death there is His, instead of our slavery there is His blood. All our verbal juggling cannot remove this from the New Testament" (Morris, 53).
discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men.¹

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life.²

The reason why it seems so difficult to win souls for Christ, is that Satan is continually engaged in misrepresenting the character of God to the human mind. Christ came to reveal the Father to the world in his true character, that the false conceptions which men entertained of the divine character might be swept away.³

Jesus claimed, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father... Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:9, 11). Jesus' life revealed the truth that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). God "demonstrates" His love for us in the fact that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8 NIV). Christ came to reveal the loving character of the Father. God has "given us the truth in the Son... [Jesus is the] radiance of the glory of God, [the] flawless expression of the nature of God" (Heb 1:1, 3 Phillips). God gives us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6 NIV).

God is love, and He loved us even while we were sinners. His love did not change on account of Christ's sacrifice. Yet this truth needs to reconcile with the concept that Christ died that man might be reinstated in the favor of God.⁴ Descriptions of the heavenly council, discussing the redemption of mankind, might suggest (with a casual reading) a Father that had to be won over. We read in Ellen White:

Sorrow filled heaven, as it was realized that man was lost, and the

¹White, Steps to Christ, 10, 11.
²White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:738-9.
world which God had created was to be filled with mortals doomed to misery, sickness, and death, and there was no way of escape for the offender; the whole family of Adam must die. The heart of the Son of God was touched with pity for the lost race. Upon his lovely countenance rested an expression of sympathy and sorrow. Soon he approached the exceeding bright light which enshrouded the Father, and he seemed to engage in close converse with him. The anxiety of the angels was intense while Jesus thus communed with his Father. Three times he was shut in by the cloud of glory; the third time he came forth his countenance was calm, free from all perplexity and trouble, and shone with benevolence and loveliness, such as words cannot express. He then made known to the angelic host that a way of escape had been made for lost man.¹

To understand the Father's attitude, the cosmic-conflict model offers the vantage point of Satan's accusations and rebellion. The three meetings discussed what means it would take to fully answer all the questions that Satan had raised. All of Satan's probable objections were anticipated. What would it take? The cost was heavy. "It was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race."² With the plan of redemption in place, God would be able to forgive, and still demonstrate that His holiness had not been compromised. Maxwell observes, "Christ died primarily to prove the righteousness of God in the great controversy"³ (see Rom 3:25-26). The way that God the Father and God the Son responded to the sin problem is demonstrated as right (or just) and loving.

The church, the body of Christ, is to continue the same mission that Christ had while He was on this earth. He came to reveal the Father's character of love, in response to Satan's distortion of the truth. Thus, the church's mission should be the same, to reveal the Father's character of love. "The last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His [God's] character of love,"⁴ Ellen White

²White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 63.
³Maxwell, Can God Be Trusted? 88.
⁴White, Christ's Object Lessons, 415.
admonishes. When that Christlike characteristic "shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."  

Faith, the Goal of Christ’s Mission

John 3:16 clarifies that Jesus came to this planet to solicit a belief response; God wants humanity to believe "in Him." A trusting relationship that has been broken is the problem in the great controversy, and Jesus came to address that problem.

When Jesus took the cup that evening in the upper room, He was sharing with His disciples the purpose of His upcoming death. The new covenant of Jer 31:31-34 was about to be ratified and sealed by His own blood. This is a covenant of mind and heart, a covenant relationship between a God and His people, where they will "know" Him. Stott understands that "He is going to die in order to bring his people into a new covenant relationship with God." God covets a trusting relationship with each one. That is why Jesus came: to make opportunity for just such a relationship. Ellen White elaborates:

The plan of salvation is not merely a way of escape from the penalty of transgression, but through it the sinner is forgiven his sins, and will finally be received into heaven—not as a forgiven culprit pardoned and released from captivity, yet looked upon with suspicion and not admitted to friendship and trust; but welcomed as a child, and taken back into fullest confidence.

How would God gain the trust of the beings He had created?

Trust is not merely an intellectual exercise. Trust is a learned response. Regarding Jesus and His disciples, Winn writes that Jesus "constantly worked to still their fears and give them reasons to trust Him." Ellen White further explains:

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1Ibid., 69. George R. Knight places both quotes side by side (Angry Saints: Tensions and Possibilities in the Adventist Struggle Over Righteousness by Faith [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1989], 149).

2Stott, 70.


4Winn, 213. "Since God relishes free, thoughtful loyalties, won
God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. . . . The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly present him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes. That men might have salvation, He came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature.

The father was revealed in Christ as altogether a different being from that which Satan had represented him to be.

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,--to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, 'I have manifested thy name.' 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' When the object of his mission was attained,--the revelation of God to the world,--the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. 

In summary, Jesus' mission was, in the words of Tkachuk, to "set man right through the revelation of God." He wants us to "believe" in Him (John 3:16), to trust and have confidence in Him. "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid" (Isa 12:2). "I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me" (Jer 3:19 NIV).

The cosmic-conflict model responds to all the questions and issues of the sin problem, of Satan's accusations, and to the trust/relationship dimension of atonement. Indeed, the cosmic-conflict model provides a clearer understanding of sin—which is the topic of the next section.

without force or coercion, He had but one option. He had to demonstrate the actual superiority of His government so that His people might make informed choices to live with Him" (ibid., 264). "Righteousness, that coming into right relationship with God because the misconceptions about Him have been removed, brings us peace as a natural consequence" (ibid., 26).

1White, "God Made Manifest in Christ," 33-4.

2Tkachuk, 46.
Sin Understood from the Cross

A third major doctrinal concept that is sharply affected by one's view of the atonement is that of sin. Notice how Ellen White links the sinner's awareness of Christ's love with the question, "What is sin?"

Although the plan of salvation calls for the deepest study of the philosopher, it is not too deep for the comprehension of a child. In dying for sinners, Christ manifested a love that is incomprehensible; and in beholding this love, the heart is impressed, the conscience is aroused, and the soul is led to inquire, "What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim?"

For a more complete understanding of Christ's mission and why He had to die, one should seek a clearer understanding of the character of sin. Ellen White encourages us (in the above quote) to inquire: What is it about sin that it requires death? What solution does death provide to the sin problem? A substitutionary death does not answer all the cosmic-conflict issues. But by taking a cosmic-conflict perspective towards the Cross, the understanding of how Christ's death does answer Satan's accusations becomes clearer. The question now under discussion is "What is sin?" Ellen White comments: "The agony which Christ endured, broadens, deepens, and gives a more extended conception of the character of sin, and the character of the retribution which God will bring upon those who continue in sin."^1

By looking to the Cross, the truth about sin is made plain. Satan had said that sin would not produce death. God said that it would. Who was telling the truth? Winn responds that "the answer was demonstrated in most dramatic terms on a rugged cross when Jesus showed the universe how evil sin really is."^3 Dederen adds, "At the cross, sin fully exposed its

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^1White, "Repentance the Gift of God," 193-4.

^2White, MS 35, 1895.

^3Winn, 73.
true nature."\(^1\) Winn also writes: "The cross is a statement of reality--of the sure outcome of sin and God's desire that we never experience it!"\(^2\)

When on the cross, Christ cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46 NIV). White clarifies, "God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed."\(^3\) God had not forsaken His Son. So why did Christ cry out? White answers:

The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. . . . He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. . . . It was the sense of sin . . . that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.\(^4\)

God gave His Son to die for us, "to the horror of sinbearing and God-forsakenness,"\(^5\) adds Stott. Dederen concurs, stating that "the irresistible and irrevocable issue of sin is to be God-forsaken. Sin, in its origin, was rebellion against God. Sin, in its harvest is to be God-forsaken. . . . Sin is alienation from God by choice."\(^6\)

**Sin as the Breaking of a Relationship**

Christ's experience on the cross reveals the true nature of sin. Jesus experienced our sin. Sin, to Jesus, was to be God-forsaken, alienated, and separated from God. The harvest of sin, then, is a relational issue between a pure and holy God and a sinful creature. And if the harvest of sin is a relational issue, the origin of sin must also be a relational issue. The Bible teaches this concept. Whatever is not of faith is sin, states the apostle Paul (Rom 14:23). Any response to God other than in trust is sin. Morris Venden clarifies that "the primary

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\(^1\)Dederen, 11c.

\(^2\)Winn, 180.

\(^3\)White, *Desire of Ages*, 753-54.

\(^4\)Ibid., 753.

\(^5\)Stott, 214.

\(^6\)Dederen, 9c.
issue in temptation is to do anything, right or wrong, outside of the
faith relationship with Christ."¹

From the classic definition of sin (transgression of the law, 1
John 3:4 KJV), one might understand "sin" only in relationship with the
law. This transgression definition is even identified by Ellen White as
"the only definition of sin."²

Yet we should notice how the "law" is identified in that
definition.

Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is
'the transgression of the law'; it is the outworking of a principle
at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the
divine government.³

Since love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom 13:10), keeping the
law becomes a relational concept when I love God and neighbor (Matt

The New American Standard Bible translates 1 John 3:4 with sin
being "lawlessness." Sin is failing to be guided by the "great law of
love which is the foundation of the divine government."⁴ Maxwell
concludes that "this would indicate that sin is first a rebellious
attitude or frame of mind, a hostility to God and to his law, that in
turn may lead me to commit this or that act of disobedience.⁵

God looks at our thoughts and attitudes of the heart; that is what
the Word of God judges (Heb 4:12). Our thoughts and attitudes are of
alienation and being enemies against God (Col 1:21).

"The beginning of all sin is to depart from God and not trust

²White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7:951.
³White, The Great Controversy, 492-93.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Maxwell, Servants or Friends? Another Look at God, 103.
"So guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith" (Mal 2:16 NIV).

The issue confronting Eve was whom do you trust, the talking serpent or God? Provonsha understands that "the original sin was thus an act of distrust of God." White’s view of what made the first parents transgressors was distrust of God’s goodness, disbelief of His word, and rejection of His authority. Winn believes that "in essence, sin is the condition of being separated from the Father. It is alienation from God, which comes from believing that He is either hostile, indifferent, or irrelevant."

For Eve and for us, sin is a "breach of faith, a breakdown of trust," Maxwell states. Winn sees sin as "breaking of a faith relationship with God." When the serpent extended the invitation to Eve to "be like God," it was an invitation to "moral autonomy apart from God, and that is the very essence of sin. Self-sufficiency apart from God is the 'original' sin," comments Provonsha. And that is the essence of sin for us today. "Human autonomy and self-sufficiency apart from God, versus truthful dependence on God, constitute the two sides in the great controversy."

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1Treatise on Christian Liberty, quoted in Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), 183, which is quoted in Jack Provonsha, You Can Go Home Again, 63.

2Provonsha, You Can Go Home Again, 80.


4Winn, 95.

5Maxwell, 108.

6Winn, 179, 9; see also Provonsha, You Can Go Home Again, 77.

7Provonsha, A Remnant in Crisis, 140.

8Ibid. "Freedom as self-sufficiency leads to tyranny and self-destruction. Freedom under God leads to eternal life" (145).
The law we transgress when we sin is the law of God, which is "a transcript of His character,"\(^1\) states Ellen White. Stott adds that it "expresses his righteous character."\(^2\) "For the law is the expression of his own moral being, and his moral being is always self-consistent."\(^3\) Transgressing God's law is to be lawless or in rebellion against God's moral being, His character. It is to be in rebellion against God Himself.

Transgressing God's law of love, being lawless ("To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin," Jas 4:17), rebelling against God, and being separated from Him, this is sin.

Since sin describes a relationship to God that is broken, then the answer to the sin problem would need to address that relationship. That is the Good News. "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Rom 1:17 NIV). The Good News deals with the broken relationship. The eternal good news, writes Maxwell, is: "Yes, you can trust God."

Understanding this reality of the true character of sin, as seen on the Cross, helps us to avoid Satan's portrayal of God. Take the text in 2 Cor 5:21: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Without the cosmic-conflict perspective, it is easy to conclude that God is dealing only with record keeping, that He is transferring sin from us onto a Substitute, that once Somebody pays the price, then He is happy.\(^5\) If Jesus bears my sin in a

\(^1\)White, *Great Controversy*, 434.
\(^2\)Stott, 89.
\(^3\)Ibid., 117.
\(^4\)Maxwell, *Can God Be Trusted?* 160.
\(^5\)This is more than a straw man. Satan is highly successful with this argument, be it blatant or in its more subtle forms. "With intense interest he [Satan] watched the sacrifices offered by Adam and his sons. In these ceremonies he discerned a symbol of communion between earth and
record-keeping manner, how does this benefit the onlooking universe, which has not sinned? The cosmic-conflict paradigm, on the other hand, brings into the picture the accusations of Satan against God, the issue of broken trust and how to repair it.

John Stott identifies this paradox: "On the one hand, God was in Christ reconciling. On the other, God made Christ to be sin for us."¹ John answers by urging that "we must hold both affirmations tenaciously, and never expound either in such a way as to contradict the other."² Raoul Dederen concludes that "made to be sin" means that Christ was "treated as a sinner" in a "substitutionary" character.³ But in the cosmic-conflict paradigm, being treated as a sinner (a sinner's substitute) has cosmic intentions, to demonstrate to the universe the truthfulness and righteousness of God in dealing with the sin problem. It is more than balancing the record books. Jesus being made sin vindicates God's character in respect to Satan's charges.

Wages of Sin Is Death

The cross of Christ reveals the reality of the nature of sin, that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). "Sin so changes the sinner that it actually results in death,"⁴ writes Maxwell. Satan, on the other hand, has "led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as

heaven. He set himself to intercept this communion. He misrepresented God, and misinterpreted the rites that pointed to the Saviour. Men were led to fear God as one who delighted in their destruction. The sacrifices that should have revealed His love were offered only to appease His wrath" (White, Desire of Ages, 115).

¹Stott, 140.
²Ibid.
³Dederen, 7c, 8c.
⁴Maxwell, Can God Be Trusted? 79; see also idem, Servants or Friends? 133.
punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin,"¹ explains Ellen
White. Satan portrays death as a threat from God. God warns us of death
as a consequence of sin.

Not arbitrary

Death is "not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The
rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown."² "Whatsoever a
man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7). "Then, after desire is
conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives
birth to death" (Jas 1:15 NIV).³ This can be seen from an Ellen White
illustration.

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not
understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the
full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not
have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable
result of sin.⁴

Elsewhere she writes:

The inhabitants of heaven and of other worlds, being unprepared to
comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, would not then have
seen the justice and mercy of God in the destruction of Satan. Had
he been immediately blotted from existence, they would have served
God from fear rather than love.⁵

What causes death? Satan says that it is an act of arbitrary power
on the part of God.⁶ God states that death is the consequence of sin.
"God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he
separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life,"⁷ Ellen White

¹White, Desire of Ages, 471.
²Ibid., 764.
³"But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul" (Prov 8:36
KJV). "As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return
upon your own head" (Obad 15 NIV).
⁴White, Desire of Ages, 764.
⁵White, Great Controversy, 498-99.
⁶White, Desire of Ages, 471, 764.
⁷Ibid., 764.
explains. He is "alienated from the life of God" (Eph 4:18). "All they that hate Me love death" (Prov 8:36), God declares. "The separation that sin makes between God and man was fully realized and keenly felt by the innocent, suffering man of Calvary."\(^1\)

God "simply allowed Jesus to bear the results of man's choice when he withdrew from God," Winn clarifies. Jesus "died because He experienced the consequences of sin for us."\(^2\)

Wages as legal penalty and retributive justice

The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). The legal penalty for sin is death. Jesus experienced this legal penalty for us. Mrs. White writes: "Only by bearing the penalty of our disobedience could Christ deliver us from eternal death. He became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."\(^3\) Jesus experienced for man the legal penalty of separation that sin makes between God and sinner.

Jesus experienced our "wages of sin" death. Mrs. White often writes of retributive justice being inflicted upon man's substitute.\(^4\) She uses the word "retribution" in writing how Jesus set before the leaders of Israel their real condition, "and the retribution sure to follow persistence in their evil deeds."\(^5\) Is this retribution inflicted by God? Mrs. White comments, "The agony which Christ endured, broadens, deepens, and gives a more extended conception of the character of sin, and the character of the retribution which God will bring upon those who continue

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\(^2\) Winn, 120.

\(^3\) Ellen G. White, "The Hope of the World," Signs of the Times, June 17, 1903, 370.

\(^4\) White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 5:1103.

\(^5\) White, Great Controversy, 610.
in sin."¹ Christ experienced retribution, and being forsaken. Retribution can be understood then as the consequence of separation from the Source of life.

Incompatible with God’s holiness

Wood and Stott view death as a result of sin being in God’s presence. "Dying itself is from a sense of sin in the presence of a holy God."² Since "sin is incompatible with his holiness . . . our sins effectively separate us from him."³ "Height and distance, light, fire and vomiting all say that God cannot be in the presence of sin, and that if it approaches him too closely it is repudiated or consumed."⁴

"Without holiness, no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14 NIV).

Maxwell explains sin’s relationship to God’s glory.

Sin so changes the sinner that it actually results in death. Separated from the Source of life, he will surely die. Out of harmony with his Creator, he can no longer endure the life-giving glory of His presence.⁵

Ellen White has the same understanding. "By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them."⁶

This concept of the reality and nature of the second death will be more fully discussed in dealing with how sin will be eradicated. For now, it is seen that sin is willful separation from and rebellion against God. And Satan will try to reinterpret God’s response to sin to portray Him as

¹White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 5:1103.
²Wood, 17.
³Stott, 102.
⁴Ibid., 108.
⁵Maxwell, Can God Be Trusted? 79, see also idem, Servants or Friends? 133.
⁶White, Desire of Ages, 764.
arbitrary, vengeful, and a fearful being. One of the most significant doctrines for integrating seemingly diverse truths about sin, salvation, and the cosmic conflict between God and Satan is the doctrine of the sanctuary, to be considered next.

Sanctuary

The sanctuary is important for a fuller understanding of several doctrines, the primary of which is atonement. Once again Satan has tried to misrepresent the essential truth, even of the sanctuary, that God might be disbelieved. We have to filter out Satan's "spin" on things to not miss out on God's truth. In regard to His people's understanding and practice of the sanctuary, God at one point even had to say,

The multitude of your sacrifices--what are they to me? I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. (Isa 1:11 NIV)

Where had God's peoples' concepts gone wrong? How had the sacrifices gone from being an "aroma pleasing to the Lord" (Lev 1:9) to being detestable (Isa 1:13)? Ellen White explains Satan's role.

He misrepresented God, and misinterpreted the rites that pointed to the Saviour. Men were led to fear God as one who delighted in their destruction. The sacrifices that should have revealed His love were offered only to appease His wrath.1

God had a different message that He wanted the sanctuary to convey. The Lord said to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exod 25:8). The Hebrew word shaken, "dwell," means to be a permanent resident in a community. It is closely related to the word Shekinah, the symbol of the divine presence manifested in the sanctuary.2 Because God's glory, His holiness, cannot be in the presence of sin without consuming it, He would no longer talk with mankind face to face. At the same time, God would not leave His people without revealing

1Ibid., 115.

2The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 1:636.
Himself in some way, without providing the possibility of a relationship, and the sanctuary provided that avenue.

Through the sanctuary, God seeks to establish a faith relationship with us, so that we will have confidence in Him. Thus Ellen White can say: "The correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith."¹

The sanctuary reveals the truth of God's intentions for us, His plan of redemption, and the issues of the great controversy.

The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. . . . It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin.²

The earthly sanctuary followed the pattern of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:5). While the physical aspects of the sanctuary could be studied, Roy Adams urges that "the safer approach is to concentrate on the theological signification, rather than on the structural specification"³ in order to seek theological meaning from the sanctuary structure. The courtyard, Holy Place, and Most Holy Place portray three fundamental dimensions of salvation: atonement, intercession, and judgment, respectively. Lewis Walton explains:

The courtyard depicts repentance and confession of sin. The holy place adds to this Christ's ministry of sanctification, where God's people accept His imparted righteousness, with all the behavioral changes this implies. His holy place ministry is therefore a vital part of preparing His people for the judgment. In turn, the most holy place reveals the judgment itself, in which the lives of those claiming salvation are compared with the standard of God's law. . . . So each apartment of the sanctuary—heavenly as well as earthly—means something. Each deals with a progressive step in getting ready to meet God.⁴

¹Ellen G. White, Evangelism (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1974), 221.
²White, Great Controversy, 488.
⁴Lewis R. Walton, Omega II, God's Church at the Brink (Glennville, CA: Lewis R. Walton, 1995), 89, 90.
Sacrifice

Central in the services of the sanctuary were the sacrifices made by God's people. Since the sanctuary was built that God might dwell with His people, that their faith would have a "foundation," what were the sacrifices for? Ellen White answers:

Many have expressed wonder that God demanded so many slain victims in the sacrificial offerings of the Jewish people; but it was to rivet in their minds the great truth that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.¹

Satan takes the requirement of blood and suggests that it is to appease God's wrath; that the greater our sin, the greater number of sacrifices needed to win God over to an attitude of mercy towards us. Listen to the theology or lack of theology that Jesus encountered as He came to the temple. Ellen White writes:

As Jesus came into the temple, He took in the whole scene. He saw the unfair transactions. He saw the distress of the poor, who thought that without shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness for their sins. . . . Christ saw that something must be done. Numerous ceremonies were enjoined upon the people without the proper instruction as to their import. The worshipers offered their sacrifices without understanding that they were typical of the only perfect Sacrifice.²

They had not been taught that the blood pointed forward to the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

As Jesus tried to explain His upcoming death, the cup representing His blood was extended in a covenant invitation. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28). Christ seeks to reestablish a relationship through His death,

¹White, "Christ Our Sacrifice," 593-4. She goes on to state: "A lesson was embodied in every sacrifice, impressed in every ceremony, solemnly preached by the priest in his holy office, and inculcated by God himself,—that through the blood of Christ alone is there forgiveness of sins. How little we as a people feel the force of this great truth! How seldom, by living, acting faith, do we bring into our lives this great truth, that there is forgiveness for the least sin, forgiveness for the greatest sin!" (594). Scripture states that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness (Heb 9:22).

²White, Desire of Ages, 157.
through His spilled blood. "It is the blood that makes atonement for one's life, and I have given it for you" (Lev 17:11). So Christ is "making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:20 NIV).

Make peace

How does blood make peace, atonement, or reconciliation? First, the blood represents the cost Christ was willing to pay, the lengths to which He was willing to go to demonstrate His love. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8, NIV). Second, God makes peace through Christ's blood in that Christ's death answers Satan's accusations and misrepresentations against God, thereby vindicating God as truthful, trustworthy, and friendly (not an enemy). Our relationship with God can be healed. Christ invites us into a faith relationship with Him.

The blood of Christ in ever-abiding efficacy is our only hope; for through His merits alone we have pardon and peace. When the efficiency of the blood of Christ becomes a reality to the soul through faith in Christ, the believer will let his light shine forth in good works, in bringing forth fruits unto righteousness.1

The blood is efficient when, by faith, it becomes real to me.

Third, peace is made possible by Christ experiencing the consequences of our sin for us. If Adam and Eve had experienced death immediately, as they had been warned, it would not be apparent that it was the inevitable result of sin. "God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles."2 But as time elapsed, the argument was presented by Satan that, "See, sin does not result in death; God was just trying to scare you. You don't need to worry!"

The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended

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1White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 6:116.

2White, The Desire of Ages, 764.
to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin
that caused death. To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was
a most painful ceremony.¹

The sacrifices pointed forward to Christ (Behold, the Lamb of God,
which taketh away the sin of the world, John 1:29), and His blood makes
peace in that He died the second death for us.²

By being the sacrificial lamb, by experiencing the consequences of
sin for us, Jesus received the legal penalty of sin. The wages of sin is
death, which is separation from God, the life source. In the prior
discussion of the satisfaction of God's justice, the point was made that
it is God's own holy character that is satisfied versus compromised (when
forgiving sinners). The same point should be made regarding the legal
penalty. When we are out of harmony with God's holy character, death is
the result, death is the legal penalty. When we say the legal penalty is
paid and justice is satisfied, we are saying that God's holy character is
not compromised in forgiving us.³

Jesus makes peace through His blood by taking our consequences of
sin, the legal penalty of sin. Angel Rodriguez writes about "transfer of
sin" which helps to clarify Christ's peace-making blood.

The biblical evidence, however, indicates that the confessed sins of

¹White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 68.

²"And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether
things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood,
shed on the cross" (Col 1:20 NTV). "Christ was suffering the death that
was pronounced upon the transgressors of God's law. . . . The agony which
Christ endured, broadens, deepens, and gives a more extended conception
of the character of sin, and the character of the retribution which God
will bring upon those who continue in sin. The wages of sin is death, but
the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ to the repenting,
believing sinner" (White, MS 35, 1895, quoted in Seventh-day Adventist
Bible Commentary, 5:1103). "And death and hell were cast into the lake of
fire. This is the second death" (Rev 20:15, see also 21:8).

³"Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death
penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met
both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ exhausted the
penalty and provided a pardon" (White, God's Amazing Grace, 139). God's
justice is satisfied not only in terms of His holy character, but also
His loving character.
the Israelites contaminated the sanctuary. We have argued that such a contamination was the result of the transfer of sin from the sinner, via the sacrifices, to the sanctuary. . . . The Day of Atonement made the cleansing, effected through the daily transfer of sin, final. It also indicated that holiness and sin/impurity are essentially incompatible.¹

The sanctuary sacrifice was a process of transferring sin. God’s response of providing peace-making blood was a legal substitution for the legal penalty of man’s sin. This satisfaction is necessary, not because sin is an entity that is physical or mechanical that can be transferred to balance some kind of scales, but rather satisfaction is necessary in order that God’s own holy integrity will be uncompromised. Satisfaction is further necessary in light of Satan’s cosmic challenge of God’s character and Satan’s misrepresentations of the true nature of sin.

The "things in heaven" that are also reconciled by the peace-making of Christ's blood (Col 1:20 NIV), even though they never sinned, also benefit from Christ experiencing the consequences of sin for them.

It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God.

The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.²


"He endured the cross, despised the shame. He made it of small account in consideration of the results that He was working out in behalf of, not only the inhabitants of this speck of a world, but the whole universe, every world which God had created" (Ellen G. White, “Christ Man’s Example,” Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, September 4, 1900, 561-2).

"This work of Christ was to confirm the beings of other worlds in their innocence and loyalty, as well as to save the lost and perishing of this world. He opened a way for the disobedient to return to their allegiance to God, while by the same act He placed a safeguard around those who were already pure, that they might not become polluted." (Ellen G. White, “Bible Study,” Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, January 11,
Heavenly Sanctuary

Discussion of the heavenly sanctuary should include the issues of 1844, the investigative judgment, our High Priest, and our advocate.

Concerning 1844, Norman Gulley summarizes a cosmic-conflict paradigm of that event: "Properly understood, 1844 provides us an invitation to focus on Christ rather than upon our character, on His judgment rather than upon ours, and on His perfection rather than upon our own."¹

What are God and Jesus doing in the heavenly sanctuary? They are cleansing the sanctuary, dealing with the question of sin. (The investigative judgment will be dealt with in the next doctrinal concept). For now, we can say that because the judgment is real, the sanctuary in heaven is real. Clifford Goldstein states why a real sanctuary is important. "For this reason, the sanctuary in heaven is real—not because God needs it for Himself, but because the heavenly intelligences need it to witness how God deals with sin and the process by which He saves sinners."²

Since God and Jesus are cleansing the heavenly sanctuary, Ellen Whites urges that we should be with Him in this work and be cleansing the sanctuary of our souls of all unrighteousness, that our names may be written in the Lamb's book of life, that our sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. It is the most solemn work that was ever given to mortals.³

On the day of atonement in the earthly sanctuary, not only was the


²Clifford Goldstein, "The Full and Final Display" Ministry, October 1994, 43.

³Ellen G. White, MS 226, 1888, EGWRC, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, quoted in Knight, Angry Saints, 142.
sanctuary cleansed, the people were also. "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" (Lev 16:29, 30). This once-a-year ritual produced a clean sanctuary and a clean people together. "He shall make an atonement for the tabernacle . . . and for all the people of the congregation" (Lev 16:33).

The Father is glorified when we bear much fruit, when our characters are developed. Ellen White writes:

The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, 'even to the principalities and powers in heavenly places,' the final and full display of the love of God.\(^1\)

"Unfortunately, the idea of a final, faithful generation is usually taught in the context of soteriology and perfectionism, not eschatology,"\(^2\) comments Goldstein.

Only against the backdrop of this cosmic panorama does Adventism work. The cross and the reconciliation it brought make better sense only in the context of God displaying both justice and mercy before the onlooking universe. Christ's high priestly ministry in a literal sanctuary, including the pre-Advent judgment, becomes more meaningful when understood as another step in ending the great controversy in an open and fair manner before heavenly intelligences. The emphasis on a loyal remnant and faithful generation—studies in the context of the universe's questions about God's law, justice, and mercy—far from conflicting with the truth of justification by faith, takes the truth to its grand conclusion.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the cosmic dimension, from a human perspective, is motive. How much better to strive for holiness, not as fire insurance, but out of love for God and a desire to glorify Him before men and angels.\(^3\)

Within the cosmic-conflict paradigm how does one understand such concepts as "propitiation"? The KJV renders Rom 3:25: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Propitiation means appeasement. The Greek word translated "propitiation" here is "hilasterion." That is the word used in the Greek Septuagint for the


\(^2\)Goldstein, 62.

\(^3\)Ibid.
mercy seat. Maxwell explains:

Actually, the Bible does not mention 'mercy seat' in the Old Testament. Luther made it up. The Hebrew word for the lid of the ark—the ark of the covenant—means just a 'covering'. But in his understanding of the significance of that covering, Luther translated it into the old German 'gnad stuhl' (now written Gnadenstuhl), the source of our English 'mercy seat'.

The KJV uses mercy seat in Exod 25:17 and mercy seat in Heb 9:5, but does not use mercy seat in Rom 3:25. It uses propitiation. Mercy seat would have been closer to the Greek meaning of "a place or means of reconciliation"—a place where atonement or unity and at-one-ment take place.

That is the meaning of the sanctuary: God is seeking at-one-ment with us. That is what the tax collector wanted in his heart-felt cry, "God be merciful (hilasthati) to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13).

C. H. Dodd has encouraged those who resist the idea that propitiation means averting divine wrath (therefore undercutting the judgment-bearing and substitutionary aspects of the Cross). According to Dodd hilaskesthai and its cognates should read expiation (of sin) and not propitiation (of God).

Jesus is the "propitiation for our sins," the scriptures say in 1 John 2:2 (KJV). We want to avoid Satan’s interpretation of this concept, but that does not mean the verse should be dismissed as less inspired. Propitiation means appeasement, "atonking sacrifice" (Amplified), a place or means of reconciliation. Clarification comes from another usage of the word, 1 John 4:10 (Good News): "This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven." The appeasement provided by God Himself, to Himself, to save sinners while remaining true within Himself to His pure, holy, and just character and its revulsion


2Ibid.

towards sin.

The sanctuary is a ministry of love and reconciliation, God seeking at-one-ment, within Himself, with us, and the universe. The sanctuary reveals the cost of this redemption (appeasement), God’s love (through His death), and that He is on our side (advocate).

The sanctuary also reveals a message of judgment. Understanding the sanctuary from the cosmic-conflict paradigm incorporates the concept of the investigative judgment very meaningfully. We now consider the doctrinal concept of the judgment.

Judgment

The cosmic-conflict paradigm blends in the doctrine of the judgment in a very meaningful way. The prospect of judgment is not usually met with enthusiasm. The concept associated with judgment in most people’s minds is similar to Belshazzar’s experience: "You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting" (Dan 5:27 NIV). Who wants to be exposed and found inadequate?

Not for God’s Information, but about God

The cosmic-conflict paradigm does not discount accountability, but places it in a setting of being a witness for God. The last-day message of the first angel of Rev 14, calls attention to the hour of God’s judgment that has come (Rev 14:7). It is God’s judgment. Charges have been brought against God, charges leveled by Satan. And these questions, these seeds of doubt have been planted in the minds of the universe. God actively, not passively, steps forward and reveals His righteous judgements. We are honored to be witnesses for God. We testify as to whether these accusations brought by Satan are true or not. That is the issue that judgment addresses.

God, being omniscient, does not need these judgments for His own
sake.¹ He holds these judgments for the benefit of created beings. Norman Gulley writes:

All nonhuman created beings plus the few human representatives in heaven (of whom are Enoch, Elijah, and Moses, and the 24 elders of Revelation 4 and 5) witness the pre-Advent investigation, all the redeemed witness the millennial investigation and all the lost witness the postmillennial judgment. In this way all intelligent created beings participate in the evaluation of God's judgments, and find Him to be just (Revelation 15:3). The issue in the great controversy, calling in question the justice of God, is thus answered.²

"Only with the cosmic perspective does the investigative judgment even make sense,"³ Goldstein maintains. Provonsha goes on to state:

The notion that God has to learn something by poring over some books of record is, of course, simple nonsense. The logistics alone are so incredible as to boggle the mind. But the idea that God allows the universe to audit His saving mercy in action, and thus to know that justice was done when forgiveness was granted, is not. It could be that the real subject of the judgment is God Himself. God is on trial in His people. In them the hour of His judgment is come.⁴

¹Gulley "Focusing On Christ, Not Ourselves," 30. Gulley cites several texts:
"From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth--he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do," Ps 33:13-15.
"Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll--are they not in your record?" Ps 56:8.
"You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar," Ps 139:2.
"I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please," Isa 46:9,10.
"A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name," Mal 3:16.
"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered," Matt 10:29, 30.
"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" Rom 11:33.
"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms," Eph 3:10.
"The Lord knows those who are his," 2 Tim 2:19.
³Goldstein, 43.
⁴Provonsha, A Remnant in Crisis, 121.
From the vantage point of God's omniscience, it seems that the purpose of judgment is not for God to gain the necessary information to make an adequate verdict.¹ In the judgment, God is not seeking any excuse to declare us guilty and trip us up. Rather, the judgment is for the universe to witness that God has been fair in His dealings with the sin problem, that God is a Person worthy of our trust throughout eternity.

The Apostle Paul clarifies an outcome of judgment with the concept of Rom 3:4—"That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." Today's English Version is clearer than the King James Version: "You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried."² Verse 25 elaborates about the purpose of judgment in stating that God's justice (or righteousness) is "demonstrated" so as to show Him to be "just" and the one who "justifies" those who have faith in Jesus. God not only justifies, but He is just/righteous in the way He does so; He is vindicated.

We do not suggest that God is limited by our verdict, by our human reasoning. God is not dragged into court and put on trial. He reconciles His own inner Self and reveals before our eyes (Ezek 36:23) the rightness of His redemption and justice. He comes to court as the actor, active and not passive. The author of Romans quotes Ps 51:4 which states "be clear when thou judgest."

We cannot have trust in God and the universe be safe and secure throughout eternity if we do not understand His ways. "You are always righteous, O Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with

¹"The records are kept because the historical course of sin has not yet finished. Iniquity still has not been fully eliminated. God's name has not yet been fully vindicated," Parker, 12.

²Paul is quoting Ps 51:4, "that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Goodspeed translates Rom 3:4, "That you may be shown to be right in what you say, and win your case when you go into court."
you about your justice; Why does the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jer 12:1 NIV).

Abraham pleaded with God regarding the city of Sodom: "Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen 18:25 NIV). Trust in God means having confidence in Him and understanding His ways. So God opens Himself up for investigation. Gulley explains that "He does it to win the trust of the redeemed and the unfallen beings so that sin will never arise again. . . . So the judgment is as much good news as the gospel!"¹

Jesus explained that the question in the judgment is whether or not we have chosen to trust in God. He told Nicodemus:

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life. It was not to judge the world that God sent his Son into the world, but that through him the world might be saved. (John 3:16 NEB).

Jesus also stated:

But if anyone hears my words and pays no regard to them, I am not his judge; I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the man who rejects me and does not accept my words; the word that I spoke will be his judge on the last day. (John 12:47, 48 NEB)

The question in the judgment is whether we have chosen to trust in God. That is God's goal in the cosmic conflict, to win us and the universe back to a trusting relationship. The judgment is part of God's plan at winning us back. "Our Father wants debtors to love Him, not just to be satisfied that the books balance," Winn maintains. "The key to eternal life is not in hearing a pronouncement of innocence but in knowing the One behind such a declaration."²


²Winn, 200. Tkachuk makes the comment: "Sometimes it seems that God is more interested in the sinner's account, than in the sinner's heart" (Tkachuk, 79).

³Winn, 113. The five foolish virgins were sadly turned away with the words, I do not know you (Matt 25:12).
Through the judgment, God desires to vindicate His character and win us back to a trusting relationship with Himself. So judgment is good news! We can "sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth" (1 Chr 16:33). When God comes "near" for judgment, we do not need to "fear" Him (Mal 3:5).

We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:16-18 NIV).

We can rejoice in judgment because it is His redemption of us "with an outstretched arm" (Exod 6:6).

That fact that God conducts judgment openly, before the eyes of the universe (Ezek 36:23), should not suggest that the basis of evaluating God is man's rational judgment. God reconciles His own character, purity's revulsion towards sin. In judgment, He actively reveal His righteous character and righteous saving activity. Satan questions God's character, His motives and methods; and God opens the judgment books and reveals His justice. Has God operated consistently with His own character? After investigation in this open court, all will acknowledge God's justice: the universe, the righteous, and the wicked.

Our witness for God's righteousness is challenged by Satan, the accuser. How are we to be validated?

**Basis of Evaluation**

We are witnesses for God in His trial. Consequently, we experience a mini-trial to validate whether our testimony for God is trustworthy or not. How is this evaluated?

"All who sin under the law, will be judged by the law (Rom 2:12 NIV). What law is this? Is it the concept of "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Deut 19:21 NIV)? We are going to be judged by the law of liberty (Jas 2:12). This is the law of
love (Rom 13:9, 10), which summarizes God's goal, His "requirement" (Mic 6:8), and our opportunity to love God and neighbor (Matt 22:35-40). We will be judged not merely on whether we have avoided inappropriate behavior but on whether we have remembered the weightier matters of the law (Matt 23:23; justice, mercy, and faithfulness), on whether we have fulfilled the law of love (Rom 13:10), and on whether we have lived up to every opportunity to "do good" (Jas 4:17).

God is looking for witnesses who have obedience from the heart (Matt 5:28; Heb 4:12), and obedience motivated by a relationship with God. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4 KJV). God is looking for witnesses who love to be in harmony and in relationship with Him (Matt 25:12).

We are judged by the law, and "the just requirement of the law" (Rom. 8:4, RSV) is union with the Father, Winn writes. "God did this so that the righteous demands of the Law might be fully satisfied in us who live according to the Spirit, and not according to human nature" (Rom 8:4 TEV). A trusting relationship is what the judgment is all about.

In judgment, "God will give to each person according to what he has done" (Rom 2:6). In the judgment parable of the sheep and goats, the deed that God looks for is kindness given "unto the least of these" (Matt 25:40), "for in the same way you judge others, you will be judged" (Matt

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1"Young friends, wherever you are and whatever you do, remember, 'Thou God seest me.' No part of your conduct escapes observation. You cannot hide your ways from the Most High. Human laws, though sometimes severe, are often transgressed without detection, and hence with impunity. But it is not so with the law of God. The deepest midnight is no cover to the guilty one. He may think himself alone; but the very motives of his heart are open to divine inspection. Every action, every word, every thought, is as distinctly marked as though there were only one individual in the entire universe, and the attention of Heaven were centered on his deportment" (Ellen G. White, "An Address to the Young," The Signs of the Times, September 11, 1884, 546).

2Winn, 183.
7:2 NIV). We can treat others with genuine love only as we abide in Him and are in relationship with Him.

Finally, we will be judged on whether we have accepted the words of Jesus, His revelation of truth. If we have not, His words themselves will judge us (John 12:48). To accept His word is to accept Him and be in relationship with Him.

May our testimony for God, in His trial, be like that of Job's, where he spoke of God what is right (Job 42:7, 8). "Like Abraham and Moses, who were called friends of God, we shall be jealous for God's reputation." Maxwell speaks highly of this vision.

An Advocate in Judgment

How does the concept of "advocate" add to the cosmic-conflict paradigm? How does God want us to understand this point, and how does Satan want us to understand it?

"And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. . . ." (1 John 2:1). Ellen White paints the following picture.

This is the great day of atonement, and our Advocate is standing before the Father, pleading as our intercessor. In place of wrapping about us the garments of self-righteousness, we should be found daily humbling ourselves before God, confessing our own individual sins, seeking the pardon of our transgressions, and cooperating with Christ in the work of preparing our souls to reflect the divine image. Unless we enter the sanctuary above, and unite with Christ in working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, we shall be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and shall be pronounced wanting.

The concept of "advocate" is associated with the work of preparing our souls to reflect the divine image. Does the Father need to be appeased? Does He need to be persuaded to forgive our sins? Does the concept of "advocate" imply that God is hostile towards us?

It has already been stated that we do not offer the sacrifice of

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1Maxwell, Can God Be Trusted? 160.

2White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7:933.
Christ up to God to change God's attitude towards us. Rather, God offers the sacrifice of Christ to us. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:18, 19). God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8). God's attitude towards us does not need changing. He loves us. Jesus Himself explained this truth about the Father:

Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. (John 16:25-27 NIV)

"Advocate" must mean something other than Christ helping us to get on the good side of the Father.

The same Greek word translated "advocate" in 1 John 2:1 is translated "comforter" in John 14:16. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." So when we sin, we have an advocate, a comforter, a counselor, helping us in the work of preparing our souls to reflect the divine image.

The Judge

When the court is seated and the books are opened, the Ancient of Days takes the judgment seat (Dan 7:9, 10). "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22 NIV). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. . . ." (2 Cor 5:10 NIV). Yet Christ will not judge but His words will, the truth He revealed will judge us (John 12:47, 48). The Bible indicates two others as the judge: the saints will judge the world and the angels (1 Cor 6:2, 3). God even invites the universe to take notice of His character's vindication, to "know the righteousness of the Lord" (Micah 6:5), asking what more

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1When Jesus states that the Father loves you because you have loved me, the meaning is not that His love is based on our behavior, but it means that those who have entered into a relationship with the Son also enter a special relationship with the Father.
could He have done (Micah 6:3)?

Truth will be understood all the way around, about ourselves, about reality, about Satan, and about God. Through it all, God is on our side. And the accuser is Satan (Rev 12:10). Maxwell brings out that “just as Satan accused God before the heavenly council, so he accuses God’s people now. He accused Job before the heavenly council (Job 1:8-11) and Joshua, the high priest, in the presence of the Lord (Zech 3:1, 2).”¹

Satan presents our sins as evidence that we are not fit to be saved. And the Advocate defends us against such charges. He states that, by His substitutionary death, He became our sin, and gained the legal right to give us His righteousness. We are forgiven and no longer condemned. We have been healed of our sins by His stripes. We are saved by God’s grace (through faith), inspired back into a faith relationship with Him, healed and fully rejoicing in and appreciating His wonderful character. Winn adds:

If God is for us, who can be against us? Will not he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, with that gift give us everything? Who can bring any accusation against those whom God has chosen? God pronounces them upright; who can condemn them? Christ Jesus who died, or rather who was raised from the dead, is at God’s right hand, and actually pleads for us (Rom 8:31-34 Goodspeed).²

Yes, the judgment is good news! And when we see the truth about God as revealed in a true concept of judgment, are we prepared to not misjudge God in His work of eradicating sin?

How Sin Is Eradicated

Ellen White reports how alarming the incorrect conclusions can be

¹Maxwell, Can God Be Trusted? 133.

"This is the Advocate-Intercessor portrayed in Zechariah 3, where the cosmic/great controversy dimensions of the pre-advent judgment come into focus. . . . So Joshua stood accused by Satan, and with clothing to prove the charges correct" (Gulley, “Focusing on Christ,” 29).

²"In the judgment the blood Christ pleads is God’s message to us that He’s taken care of the results of our separation from Him” (Winn, 76).
regarding what people make of God's dealings with sin.

An eternally burning hell preached from the pulpit, and kept before
the people, does injustice to the benevolent character of God. It
presents Him as the veriest tyrant in the universe. This widespread
dogma has turned thousands to universalism, infidelity, and
atheism.\(^1\)

Satan has gotten a lot of mileage from this particular
misrepresentation of God's character. What is the truth, then, about how
God will deal with the eradication of sin?

We have talked about sin and how it separates us from God. Sin
places us "so out of harmony with God" that His very presence is to us a
consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy those who cling
to sin. Ellen White brings out that this needed to be demonstrated.

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not
understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the
full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not
have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable
result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in
their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and
woe.\(^2\)

So "God gives them existence for a time."\(^3\) The sacrifices pointed
forward to the Lamb of God and the reality of sin's death, our second
death. Death's delay did not diminish its reality. Winn explains:

In Eden He set in motion the plan of salvation whereby we have been
spared, to a great degree, the effects of separation from Him. Were
we to experience the actual results of this separation, we would not
live to learn the awful truth of it. However, in order for us to
experience reality, He allows us to encounter, even now, a measure
of the consequences.\(^4\)

What is the truth, then? How do we avoid Satan's picture of how God
eradicates sin?

\(^1\)White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:344-45.


\(^3\)Ibid.

\(^4\)Winn, 239. "We are not always quick to grasp how hurtful it is to
depart from His ways; and--lest we begin to live in a fantasy--He
mercifully brings us face-to-face with the tragedy of our foolishness"
(213).
Wrath

First, we need to look at wrath. The Bible is fairly specific in mentioning God's wrath. And that wrath easily lends itself to supporting Satan's picture of God.

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (Rev 14:10, 11)

God's wrath sounds like a fearful thing. But God does not want our response to Him to be based on fear. He longs for a relationship based on faith, trust, and on knowing and appreciating His character. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18 NIV). The ones who do not inherit the kingdom of God are the "fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars" (Rev 21:8). God wants our response to be based on love, and not fear. So what is the meaning of His wrath?

We let the Bible define and explain sin and everlasting fire, so we should also allow the Bible to explain God's wrath. The Bible states that "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:9 NIV). His wrath could be said to be the opposite of His salvation.

What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory. . . . ?" (Rom 9:22, 23 NIV).

God's wrath here is associated with God's power. We look at this power and its association with God's "glory" below. God's wrath is "a

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1"Moral faintheartedness," Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary 7:891. In Matt 8:26, Jesus calms the sea and asks, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? God wants us to have faith and trust.
burning zeal for the right, coupled with a perfect revulsion for everything that is evil,"¹ Leon Morris writes. And Stott adds that wrath is God’s "holy reaction to evil."²

The particular elements of the Atonement together with those that declare the love and grace of God form a unity. What possible attitude can God take to sin but wrath and judgment? There is no meaning to the universe unless its moral structure is reflected in the righteous dealing with sin in the judgment-death of the Cross...We dare not banish normative morality from the universe. Only if God cares enough to be angry can we say he cares enough to redeem.³

God's wrath, His power, His holy reaction/revulsion against evil are manifested in two primary ways (in addition to OT judgment). Winn explains that "God's wrath is His posture of allowing the consequences of sinful acts and behavior to fall upon man."⁴ He "gives them [sinners] over" or "gives them up" to the consequences of their sin (Rom 1:18, 24, 26, 28).⁵ Maxwell notes this aspect of God's holy revulsion against evil when he observes that "God's wrath, as Paul seems to describe it, is His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable consequences of their own rebellious choice."⁶

The cross of Christ illustrates God's wrath. Ellen White writes: "The wrath of God fell upon his beloved Son as Christ hung upon the cross of Calvary in the transgressor's place."⁷ Christ experienced God's wrath, God's holy reaction to our sin; Christ was handed over to the

¹Morris, 209; see also Dederen, 9c.
²Stott, 103.
³Mikolaski, 625.
⁴Winn, 239.
⁵"So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts," Ps 81:12.
consequences of sin. Raoul Dederen states that "when I say that our
Savior bore the wrath of God I mean that he suffered the expression, the
crude effect of God's revulsion against evil."\(^1\) Ellen White elaborates
on Christ's experience of God's wrath:

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us
all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the
condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was
pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible
manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the
soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been
publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and
pardon. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme.

But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see
the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine
countenance from the Saviour in his hour of supreme anguish pierced
His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man.

So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt. . . .

. [Christ] feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their
separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the
sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty
race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the father's wrath upon Him
as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke
the heart of the Son of God.\(^2\)

The second manifestation of God's wrath is fire. In the third
angel's message, God's wrath is associated with smoke. Isaiah pictures
wickedness burning like a fire "by the wrath of the Lord Almighty" (Isa
9:18, 19). God's "wrath is like fire," Nahum reports to the citizens of
Nineveh (Nah 1:6 NIV). This fire is a manifestation of God's glory, which
is discussed below.

God Is Not the Executioner

What causes the eradication of sin? The Sovereign Lord declares, "I

\(^1\)Dederen, 9c.

\(^2\)White, Desire of Ages, 753.

"The fact that His own Son, the Surety for man, was not spared, is
an argument that will stand to all eternity before saint and sinner,
before the universe of God, to testify that He will not excuse the
transgressor of His law. Every offense against God's law, however minute,
is set down in the reckoning, and when the sword of justice is taken in
hand, it will do the work for impenitent transgressors that was done to
the divine Sufferer. Justice will strike; for God's hatred of sin is
intense and overwhelming" (White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,
3:1166).
take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek 33:11 NIV). God might not take pleasure in it, but does He do it? Ellen White answers:

God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. . . . The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is . . . no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.¹

In the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unerring certainty. . . . Every seed sown produces a harvest of its kind. So it is in human life. . . . God destroys no man. Every one who is destroyed will have destroyed himself.²

If we will not accept His grace, we will "have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love."³ If we turn from God's everlasting truth, God "leaves" us to ourselves, "to be filled with the fruit" of our "own doings."⁴

Destruction by Separation

The death that Christ experienced on Calvary was caused by our sin, not His, for He had no sin. He died our death, the second death. This second death is the one all unbelievers (those who have not come to a trusting relationship with God) choose at the end of the millennium. If we want to understand how this second death is accomplished, we can look to Calvary, and seek an understanding of how Christ died our second

¹White, The Great Controversy, 36.

²White, Christ's Object Lessons, 84.

³The context of this EGW quote is: "Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will; and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not desire to be set free, if we will not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' 'Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.' 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7, 8, (Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956], 34).

death. Ellen White makes this point:

The agony which Christ endured, broadens, deepens, and gives a more extended conception of the character of sin, and the character of the retribution which God will bring upon those who continue in sin. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ to the repenting, believing sinner.¹

We can better understand how God will eradicate sin by seeking to understand God's involvement in Christ's death on Calvary.

While hanging on the cross, Christ experienced God's wrath (of being handed over to the consequences of sin).² "Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race."³ Our sins and the sins of the world weighed so heavily on Jesus, our heinous sins hid the Father, that it seemed their separation would be eternal. In despair Christ cried out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46). God the Father was giving Jesus over, handing Him over to the reality of sin, to the true end result or wages of sin. The Father was not the executioner, nor was He acting out of vengeance. Winn comments that

realistically, if a branch is severed from the tree it will die, but not because the tree is angry at the branch. When our first parents allowed their doubts about God to sever their relationship with Him, God knew that they had no other means of survival. In order to give them (and to us) the chance to understand this reality, God chose to allow that reality to be fulfilled on the cross.⁴

Jesus did not die at the hand of God. "I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:17, 18 NIV).⁵ Jesus did not die from a loss of blood. "Jesus died when His Father withdrew His life-giving presence from Him,

¹White, MS 35, 1895, quoted in Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7:1103.
²See discussion of God's wrath above, (Wrath).
³White, Desire of Ages, 753.
⁴Winn, 66.
⁵"But He voluntarily laid down His life" (White, "Christ Man's Example," 561-2).
thus verifying for all the universe just how deadly it is to separate from God,"¹ writes Winn.

How God deals with the eradication of sin is crucial to answering some of the charges Satan was making at the beginning of the great controversy. Winn reminds us that back in the garden of Eden, in the temptation of Eve,

Satan wasn't just offering fruit; he was appealing for a shift of loyalties. He implied that God was not telling them the truth, that God was keeping them in line through false threats. He claimed he could take better care of them than the Father could, by helping them experience immediate growth. 'Trust me as your life-giver,' he said. Sadly, they did. Having broken their relationship with God, they rightfully should have died—and the second death at that.

... But God had another plan in mind for upholding reality. On a rugged hill near Jerusalem, Jesus Himself revealed to the universe what happens when people separate from the Life-giver.²

The Father's involvement in the death of Christ on the cross will be the same involvement in the final destruction of sinners. Ellen White writes:

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God [sin and sinners perishing]. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God and thus cuts himself off from life.³

The second death is the choice of the unbeliever to be eternally separated from God, the life-giver. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36). God's wrath is to be handed over, separated from God the life-source, and the result is death.

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By

¹Winn, 97.
²Ibid., 221. Is the garden of Eden phrase "Ye shall surely die" a warning or harsh demand for obedience under penalty of death? Maxwell, Can God Be Trusted? 78.
³White, The Desire of Ages, 764.
choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.\(^1\)

**Destruction by Fire**

The eradication of sin is pictured in the Scriptures as being accomplished by fire. Revelation describes the wicked who "marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them" (Rev 20:9 NIV).

Satan has taken this imagery and wording of the Scriptures to portray God in a terrible light, that He is vengeful, mean, and exacting. Millions have believed these lies, and concluded that God is not worth spending eternity with.

For those who are jealous for God's reputation, another conclusion other than Satan's has to be biblically available for an understanding of fire. As we have allowed the Bible to give a clear understanding of everlasting fire and God's wrath, we should allow the Bible to explain the cleansing fire for sin.

We have seen how separation from God causes the second death, just as in Christ's death. What is this death like? What is this separation like? It is darkness, the absence of God. Stott poses the question, "For what is darkness in biblical symbolism but separation from God who is light and in whom 'there is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5)?"\(^2\) God is light, while sin is separation and darkness. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom 3:23), which means we have chosen separation and darkness.

What is God's glory? "To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain" (Exod 24:17 NIV).

\(^1\)White, quoted in Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 6:1110.

\(^2\)Stott, 79.
The burning bush that Moses saw in the wilderness turned out to be an angel of the Lord appearing to Moses in "flames of fire from within a bush" (Exod 3:2 NIV). God's glory and power are what fills the temple with smoke (Rev 15:8), "for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29). His eyes blaze like fire, His face is like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

If God's glory is a fire, does that not produce fear? The verse in Hebrews suggests that God being a consuming fire should encourage an attitude of worshipping God acceptably with reverence and awe. "And I myself will be a wall of fire around it, declares the Lord, and I will be its glory within" (Zech 2:5 NIV). God's fire is protection. Ellen White explains that "while God is to the wicked a consuming fire, He is to His people both a sun and a shield. Revelation 20:6; Psalm 84:1." The righteous will rejoice in God's fire. "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning? He who walks righteously and speaks what is right." (Isa 33:14, 15 NIV)

Ellen White adds that the pure in heart can abide in His presence. They enjoy God's glory, His holy character.

The sea of glass is part of the reward of the righteous (Rev 4:6), while the lake of fire is the reward of the wicked (Rev 20:14, 15). John also sees in heaven "a sea of glass mixed with fire" (Rev 15:2), meaning that the redeemed are able to be in God's holy, glorious presence. The Song of Moses will be sung by the redeemed on the sea of glass, and it

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1"For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God," Deut 4:24.
3White, Great Controversy, 673. "While the earth was wrapped in the fire of destruction, the righteous abode safely in the Holy City. Upon those that had part in the first resurrection, the second death has no power. While God is to the wicked a consuming fire, He is to His people both a sun and a shield," (ibid.).
4White, The Desire of Ages, 108.
was also sung by the Israelites beside the Red Sea (Exod 15), which embodied safety for the Israelites but destruction for the Egyptians.

The fire that the righteous enjoy basking in (like the three Hebrews--Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did, Dan 3:24-26) is everlasting because God's glory is.

God's fire seems to have a dual nature of blessing and destroying. Ellen White states that

1 at the second advent of Christ the wicked shall be consumed 'with the Spirit of His mouth,' and destroyed 'with the brightness of His coming.' 2 Thess. 2:8. The light of the glory of God, which imparts life to the righteous, will slay the wicked.

2 By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.

The wicked do not enjoy God's glory or fire. They are out of harmony with God and His holiness. God is offensive to them. When the wicked are brought close to God's glory, they want to hide, they want the rocks to bury them (Rev 16:6). 3 God honors their choice, gives them what they want, "handing them over" to the consequences of their choice, which is separation from the life-source and consumption by God's glory.

This is accomplished merely by God's presence. "As wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God" (Ps 68:2 KJV). Everlasting destruction comes "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess 1:9). How is God's glory/fire, which is life to the righteous, at the same time so destructive? In a giant fusion research project, every one of the hundreds of lenses must be spotlessly clean. Even a tiny speck of dust can stop light from going through a lens, which causes the light energy to become heat energy. Burn

1Ibid.

2Ibid., 764.

3"Go to the rocks, hide in the ground from the dread of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty!" Isa 2:10, 19, 21.
marks, scars, and destruction (from the light energy) follow very quickly. This analogy illustrates "how the persistently rebellious will be destroyed by the same brightness that brings rejoicing to the righteous," Winn explains. Everything causing sin will be thrown into the "fiery furnace," "then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt 13:41-43 NIV).2

On the one hand, destruction is accomplished by separation from the life source. On the other hand, destruction is accomplished by exposure to God's glory. Gulley states that "God's wrath involves both abandonment and active judgment."3 In both realities, Winn explains, God respects "the free choices of those who have avoided and rejected Him. He will not force His life-giving presence upon them. Separation they wanted; separation they shall have. They shall die the second death."4 Because they have chosen to be out of harmony with God's glory (His holiness), and would rather be forever that way, when God's presence comes upon them, light consumes darkness and they are destroyed.

Does their smoke ascend up forever? Yes, but not because they are still burning (Jude 7). Rather, the memory of the consequences of the choices the wicked made will be a witness to the issues of the great controversy. Their smoke ascends forever. Isaiah talks of the redeemed

1Winn, 54.

2"In my zeal and fiery wrath . . . the earth will tremble at my presence. . . . I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur. . . . And so I will show my greatness and my holiness," Ezek 38:19-23 NIV.

"I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them," Ezek 39:21 NIV.

"So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies," Ezek 39:23 NIV.

"I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, and I hid my face from them," Ezek 39:24 NIV.

3Gulley, "A Look at the Larger View of Calvary," 86.

4Winn, 210. "The lake of fire is the second death," Rev 20:14, NIV. "Fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death," Rev 21:8, NIV.
looking upon the dead bodies of the wicked, and of the fire that will not be quenched. This verse follows the one about keeping the Sabbath in the new heavens and new earth (Isa 66:22-24). So the fire of God's glory is everlasting to the wicked in that the consequences are everlasting. And God's fire is everlasting to the redeemed in that they bask in God's glorious presence.

Ellen White describes how "some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished 'according to their deeds'."¹ But this punishment also comes from God's presence. The context of the previous quote goes on to state: "While God is to the wicked a consuming fire, He is to His people both a sun and a shield."² When the life of Christ in all its "glory and majesty"³ is displayed in "panoramic view,"⁴ the wicked "are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed."⁵ "The sinner's own thoughts are his accusers; and there can be no torture keener than the stings of a guilty conscience, which give him no rest day nor night."⁶ The greater amount of sin, the more out of harmony, means that God's holy, glorious, fiery presence will be all the more torture for the wicked.

God rewards everyone according to his or her works (Matt 16:27). This might seem to mean retributive justice, but staying consistent with the rest of Scripture, this does not mean strictly proportionate in duration. In worldly terms, God’s rewards do seem disproportionate to deeds in His treatment of the righteous (parable of the vineyard, Matt

¹White, The Great Controversy, 673.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., 669.
⁴Ibid., 666.
⁵Ibid.
⁶White, The Desire of Ages, 223.
Everyone gets what they want: eternally in God's presence or eternally separated from God ("hide us from the Face of Him," Rev 6:16). These are the ultimate rewards: life with God, or no life (because of separation from God). The reward for the righteous cannot be improved on, nor the reward for the wicked made worse (eternal death). Mrs. White writes:

God has given to men a declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin. "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6,7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalms 145:20; 37:38. The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.

This is retributive justice: God allows us to reap what we sow. We are either attracted by God's character or offended by it, and we reap the results.

When the great controversy is ended and the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences, sin has made manifest its nature, and Satan his character, "then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law."

Any future doubting of God's goodness, any future separation from the Life-source, can be allowed to immediately be played out, because the nature of sin and its consequences will have already been seen.

"Simon's way was to take no notice of Mary's penitent service. Her act of kissing Christ's feet and anointing them with ointment was exasperating to his hardheartedness. He thought that if Christ were a prophet, He would recognize sinners and rebuke them... He had despised the compassion of Jesus... Simon was touched by the kindness of Jesus in not openly rebuking him before the guests. He had not been treated as he desired Mary to be treated" (White, Desire of Ages, 566-7).

White, Great Controversy, 541.

White, The Desire of Ages, 764.
Summary

This chapter began by considering Ellen G. White’s great controversy theme and examined the substitutionary model of atonement and the trust-healing model of atonement in light of Ellen G. White’s great controversy theme. The cosmic-conflict paradigm incorporates the strengths of these two models, carefully separating Satan’s distortions of God’s character and God’s response to the sin problem without lessening any of God’s truth. God answers the sin problem by winning our trust without compromising His holy character. Then six atonement-related doctrinal concepts were explored from the perspective of a cosmic-conflict paradigm of the atonement. For each of these, there are significant insights that enhance the understanding of that particular doctrinal concept.

On the basis of these insights, seven Bible studies were developed to facilitate presentations of these concepts to church members in my congregation. The seven Bible studies appear in Appendix A. Chapter three describes the initial testing of the seven Bible studies.
In developing the theoretical base for this project (chapter 2), a period of two years was spent reading and making note cards on many books and articles. One especially meaningful goal was to reread the entire Bible using the New International Version. Many new insights emerged from very familiar passages. This reading of the Bible was undertaken from a great controversy perspective. Though familiar for many years with the phrase 'great controversy,' its meaning and ramifications have only recently begun to be understood. With new insights and connections with other passages emerging from the reading of old and familiar portions of Scripture, I often wondered why these points had not been recognized before. The leaders of Israel rejected Christ due in part to a misreading of Scripture, which led them to reject the character of His kingdom. Would it not also be possible for one to reject Christ today because of a misreading of Scripture, leading to a misunderstanding of His character? The issue of the great controversy is God's character.

Taking these note cards and arranging them under different doctrinal headings, seven Bible studies were developed for this project, studies related to the atonement, and consistent with the cosmic-conflict paradigm. The studies included (1) the cosmic conflict, (2) the mission of Christ, (3) atonement, (4) sin, (5) the sanctuary, (6) judgment, and (7) how sin is eradicated (see Appendix A).
First Group

I then accepted a call to pastor a different church. Just before leaving, I conducted the first field test of the seven studies. The studies were conducted in a home between November 1 and 10, 1995.

The home where the studies were given belonged to a church member who had not been coming to church because of a divorce. As the church's new pastor, I had visited this member over a few years, developing a friendship. When this member remarried, his new wife desired that religion be a part of their marriage. They decided to go to each other's churches. They would come to the pastor's class on occasion. The husband called me one day, asking me to come and visit. At the appointment, he requested Bible studies for himself and his wife. He suggested a Bible reading format with discussion.

Ed (not his real name) enjoyed the weekly studies. The discussion was about God as a personal friend. Ed began to talk about God with fellow workers at his place of employment. He wanted to share his new friendship. A few came to our weekly discussion time. His Catholic wife, one of his sons, and a few of his friends made up our group.

Each of the seven volunteers was asked to fill out a questionnaire at the beginning of the seven studies, and also at the conclusion. Comparing the responses provides an evaluation of the studies.

On a scale of 1 to 10, respondents indicated their answers, 1 indicating extreme disagreement, and 10, agreement. Each respondent is discussed below.

Ed’s Response

All of Ed's responses changed in the questionnaire given after the Bible studies, with the exception of statements #1, #2, and #12, which remained the same. (See table 1.) The most striking change is Ed's visualizing himself as comfortable in the Father's presence as in the Son's (statement #14); a shift of four points. From Ed's comments in the discussion, this was anticipated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before Studies</th>
<th>After Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a hard time understanding -- what I see as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The reason I believe God is that I don't want to be in the camp of the lost in the end.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I understand the relationship between sin and death.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I understand how Christ dying my death makes me safe to save.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I visualize myself being as comfortable in God the Father's presence, as I am in God the Son's presence.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I know what a faith relationship is.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are two responses that did not fit Ed’s pattern. After the studies, Ed felt slightly less certain (8 to 7) as to how Christ’s death makes one safe to save (statement #13). Possibly statement #11 may not have been clear enough; the desired shift was greater confidence in God and appreciation of His character, rather than avoiding being lost. Ed’s response shifted in the wrong direction, from 4 to 6. Since this response seems out of character with the others, there must have been a lack of clarity in the statement.

Joanne’s Response

Joanne, Ed’s wife, would appear to have a good personal relationship with God (her results as well as those of the other volunteers are located in Appendix B). While the Bible studies may not have dramatically increased her appreciation of God, it seems that she came to realize that explaining her faith was not as easy as she thought. Her response to statement #5 changed from 7 to 5. The great controversy concept was new to her and opened up for her a wider dimension of the plan of redemption. Her earlier answers may have come to seem inadequate. She left blank her second response to statement #13 (how Christ’s death makes me safe to save). While no one has a complete understanding of the science of salvation (it will be a topic of study throughout eternity), searching for answers will deepen one’s love and appreciation of God.

Bob’s Response

Bob, Ed’s son, is more quiet and did not speak up much during the discussion of the Bible studies. His responses to statements #3 and #4 are interesting. He made a major shift in seeing God as a parole officer (from 8 to 2), and yet seems a bit tentative in understanding what he sees as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament. While he saw his relationship with God as meaningful and relevant both before and after the studies (statement #1), he did come to see his commitment as less doctrinal and theoretical, but increasingly more relational.
Jack’s Response

After the Bible studies, Jack found his prayer life more meaningful and reflecting a friendship relationship with God (from 4 to 8 on statement #8). He felt more confident in knowing what a faith relationship is (from 5 to 10 on statement #15). He understood the relationship of blood to forgiveness more completely (from 5 to 10 on statement #7). The cosmic conflict paradigm seemed to increase Jack’s confidence in God.

Dan’s Response

Dan is a new Adventist, and seemed very eager to embrace a personal God. Maybe he had a doctrinal foundation in preparation for baptism, and enjoyed discovering a relational foundation. His faith relationship (#15) went from 3 to 10. From one response, Dan’s religious commitment seems to have moved from relational back to doctrinal (1 to 8 on statement #10), these responses do not fit his other responses at all. The statement must have been read in reverse, both in the “before” response and “after” response. His understanding of blood’s relationship to forgiveness went from 2 to 10. The response to question #16 is puzzling. He ended up less encouraged by the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked (from 4 to 1). This could mean that Dan still has questions about God’s character in regard to this doctrine, or it could mean that Dan does understand, and yet there is a sadness about the conceptions of the individuals who choose to be forever separated from God, who choose death, a yearning on Dan’s part to help correct the misconceptions and share the good news of God’s character.

Sue’s Response

Sue saw her relationship with God as meaningful and relevant in both the “before” and “after” responses (statement #1). The studies did seem to help her visualize being comfortable in God the Father’s presence (6 to 10 on statement #14) and in her religious commitment motive moving
from doctrinal to relational (4 to 1 on statement #10). She became more confident in a positive view of the destruction of the wicked (5 to 10 on statement #16). Her reason for believing in God, though, increased on the motive not being lost (5 to 10 on statement #11). It is hoped this merely reflects a lack of thinking, that there is a higher motive, which is a love and appreciation for God. Sue left blank her second response to statement #13 (understanding Christ’s death making one safe to save). She wrote in “I don’t understand the ? I understand his death made me saved.” This calls for further discussion and teaching, on how iniquity does not rise up the second time.¹

Earl’s Response

Unfortunately, Earl, the last volunteer, was not present at the last Bible study, so his second responses to the sixteen statements are missing. From his involvement and discussion the other studies, a deeper appreciation of God was evident.

Summary

These seven individuals were a blessing to study with. The discussion was enthusiastic and the response was genuine appreciation. During the seven sessions, a bonding relationship developed. The prayer time after each session reflected a more personal understanding of God and a relationship with God. The atmosphere was that of a special week of prayer for the small group.

Second Group

I moved to a new pastorate soon after the conclusion of the Bible studies. Within the setting of a new church and a new Conference, I thought it best to get acquainted with the church family and not focus on field testing new studies right away. With the reaction that certain

¹All our questions of God’s character are answered, we are convinced of God’s trustworthiness. Even with the freedom of choice, the universe is safe. We are safe to save.
church members took from the Fredericks’ *Ministry* article to legitimize ostracizing “heretics,” I did not want to foster the same atmosphere in the new church. There was greater respect for the opinion of others within the new body; and with increased denominational acceptance of the great-controversy paradigm (see Jonathan Gallagher’s Sabbath School lessons for the second quarter of 1997), the timing for a field testing of these Bible studies during a pastor’s class seemed right.

This was accomplished during the first quarter of 1998. The group enjoyed discussion, and a study would often take two or three Sabbaths. Since the time frame was over three months, and not a mere week, the makeup of the group varied. Though the group size varied from eight to fifteen, only three individuals turned in both a before and after response sheet.

Tami’s Response

Tami has had a rough life. Abused when she was young, she is very independent, and trusts no one. Basically homeless, she gets by on help and lives in a converted room in a garage. She often blames God for not helping her. On her first response to statement #11, the reason she believes God, she crossed out “don’t want to be in the camp of the lost,” and wrote in, “because there is no other alternative to Satan.” She missed most of the studies, and there is no improvement in her responses. I have talked at length with her, discussing Job and Satan’s role to shake our faith. Yet she has had such a bitter life that she is bitter at God. Being comfortable in God’s presence? Tami places a “1” in both “before” and “after” responses (statement #14). After the second response, she added “not at all.” Her prayer life (statement #8), changed from 3 to 1. And after the second response, she wrote “I don’t pray at

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1Fredericks, “The Moral Influence Theory—It’s Attraction and Inadequacy.”

2Jonathan Gallagher, Adult Sabbath School Lesson.
all.” At prayer meetings, however, she has sometimes prayed on behalf of others in a compassionate way. Sometimes I wondered if Tami exaggerates her anger to get attention. Tami keeps coming to church, and though it may not seem that there is any growth; my prayer is that Tami will one day come to see God as being on her side.

Randy’s Response

Randy’s responses to the second questionnaire tended to drop one point, which is probably not significant given the three months between the responses. But it is also remembered that Randy was particularly impressed with the concept of being “transparent” before God, which we discussed at one point. Randy has an Asian background, and may have given his first responses from a frame work that one ought only to think positive thoughts of God and not ever question Him. Randy learned that it is healthy to be honest with God and oneself, that it is safe “to come” clean with God with one’s questions. Therefore, Randy’s second set of responses reflected a slightly more open relationship with God. Statement #10 indicates a very meaningful growth for Randy. His religious commitment went from doctrinal and theoretical motivations to relational ones (7 to 1).

At a Friday evening Bible study group that Randy also regularly attends, he made the comment once that he had thought of God in a personal friendship way. God was One you stayed on the good side of. And hearing of a relational God really was satisfying. He enjoyed discovering that God has good reasons for His guidelines, that they are there to help nurture quality time together with Him. Understanding the Sabbath in that way gave it so much more meaning to Randy. I responded by reflecting on how being a Christian is less finding and getting to God, than a journey together with Him.

Randy’s prayers have really grown as his awareness of God’s vision for him grows. His prayers are less having to do with requests, and more
worshipful and filled with praise. Watching Randy become increasingly aware of God is his life is an inspiring experience.

Clark's Response

Clark’s responses do reflect a pattern of growth, but rather continued hesitancy and uncertainty. Although Clark stated that his relationship with God was meaningful and relevant (8 for both responses on statement #1), he went from 10 to 5 on visualizing himself being comfortable in God’s presence (statement #14); and God seen as a parole officer changed from 5 to 8 (statement #4). Clues to Clark’s major uncertainty are found in his responses to statements #7 and #12. Understanding why blood is required for forgiveness went from 9 to blank. His understanding the relationship between sin and death increased from 4 to 10. This might seem like growth, but the pattern of the rest of Clark’s responses indicates that he sees death as punishment from a parole God and not as reaping a consequence. It seems some thought patterns are not easily adjusted. Sometimes a more elderly person has a difficult time comprehending, believing, and accepting God’s forgiveness. This would hinder understanding a new concept of God. Prayer and dialogue will continue to be offered to Clark.

An anonymous respondent did write in response to statement #16, regarding the destruction of the wicked, “no pleasure in death of wicked.” This individual, it seems, was trying to reconcile different scriptural statements and have a faith and confidence in God.

Sara’s Response

Sara and her husband did not make very many of the sessions. They have a child that requires special attention; sometimes it is necessary to stay home with him or even take him to the emergency room. And finances seem to be a sore point in their marriage. During visits to their home that I had made before this second questionnaire was filled in, Sara made the comment that she wished she had the kind of faith and
prayer relationship that her husband had. He seemed to really be helped by it, and she knew she needed it. We talked about making time for it as being the most difficult part. Sara placed her prayer life as meaningful and reflecting a friendship relationship with God at the poorest rating. My heart went out to her situation. She is learning to be open about it though, and that is the first step—to stop pretending with God. Sara is grateful to know that she can take her burdens to the Lord. I would enjoy giving Bible studies to Sara and her husband. They have told me that they are thinking about baptism. He commutes quite a distance to work and his home time is very limited. But if they can realize the importance of it, they will make time.

Annasett’s Response

One No Name questionnaire likely belongs to Annasett. She is a long time Adventist who, I was warned, used to publicly correct a preacher while he spoke, and then self-righteously walk out of the service. By demonstrating to her that I am open and willing to listen, she has calmed down. She carries a concordance and a two-volume combination of most of the major spirit of prophecy books in a carry bag wherever she goes. Annasett lately has been less selective in her reading and has discovered that Mrs. White writes about a kinder and gentler God, too. Annasett shares what she is learning, and she gets excited. Her prayers are increasingly about her own “insensitivity” and desiring the fruits of the Spirit. Her prayers had been for the benefit of others, barely disguised hints of their shortcomings and need for improvement. The church is noticing the transition. And Annasett wants to be a good witness. Every now and then the old theology or attitude is exhibited. When she realizes it, she feels badly and calls me on the phone to apologize. God is truly reaching her, healing her, and drawing her to Himself. Most of the time, Annasett is quite excited about piecing together theological issues; then she jumps right in and leads the class in discussion. Her enthusiasm and
motivation are inspiring.

**Procedures of the Two Field Tests**

The difference in the experience of the two groups that field tested the studies is significant. Evidently the first group's more compact time frame gave greater cohesion to the concepts of the cosmic-conflict paradigm. The second group continued to struggle with questions. Concepts were not being connected to the previous week's points, let alone months earlier. The group was not consistently present over the three months, missing important concepts that demonstrated the relational aspects of these doctrines.

The first group also did not have a church service that followed immediately afterward. This group could finish an entire lesson, grasp the entire package, and discuss questions without the pressure of time. The second group did not have that privilege. These studies could not be completed within forty minutes. So they were carried over to the second or even a third Sabbath.

For future classes, I would recommend providing for more time flexibility; if an extra thirty minutes is needed, have that luxury. Also a format covering two weekends might make it easier for individuals to commit full participation through the entire process, and not miss any of the sequence and flow of concepts from session to session. On a one-to-one study situation, a more normal once-a-week approach can be employed. Recapping and reviewing previously covered points and gently asked questions to ascertain comprehension work well in individualized Bible study settings.

People have various backgrounds and formative issues that affect one's view of God, which aid or hinder an openness to a God desiring at-one-ment with them, a personal relationship, unity based on harmony of.

\[1\]White, *Desire of Ages*, 668.
character. Paradigm shifts in one's thinking take time. Time should be patiently and generously given in these studies. It should not be forgotten that the science of salvation will be studied throughout eternity, that while looking through a mirror darkly, there might still be issues that are not yet fully resolved.

Also crucial in spiritual formation is the role of the Holy Spirit, Who understands the various factors of learning better than pastors and teachers. The Holy Spirit must be allowed to be sovereign in regard to timing of teaching, convictions, and application.

A central tenet about God, as the cosmic-conflict paradigm points out, is the utmost respect He gives for freedom of choice. He does not coerce or force, but gently knocks. He respects one's decision, even if it is incorrect and lethal (eternal separation). In sharing these studies, the same respect should be given towards any response.

Another observation that came from both groups, from those who seemed to experience some growth and those who did not, was that the motive for doing the right things is to make it to heaven (statement #2). The responses were consistently "10," even for the second response at the conclusion of the studies. The studies might further be refined to help underscore the fact that being righteous and doing what is right have their own benefit, without heaven entering the picture. A higher motive for doing what is right would be to be in harmony with God's character, to experience a oneness with Him.

From the Bible-study discussions, dialogues around potlucks, home visits, and phone calls with the field-test volunteers, there is evidence of an increased confidence in God, enthusiasm for God's vision of one's relationship with Him, and appreciation for God's character and redemptive activities.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This project was initiated as a response to a "new view of the atonement" (the "trust-healing model") that was being shared in a Sabbath School class of a local Seventh-day Adventist congregation. To a few members, this new view seemed to call in question certain aspects of the long-accepted substitutionary model of atonement. Consequently, it developed into a point of conflict for the leadership of the church.

This dissertation has sought to clarify the issues by comparing the trust-healing model of atonement with the substitution model of atonement, evaluating both models on the basis of Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White, and incorporating the sound concepts from both models to develop a cosmic-conflict model/paradigm.

The strength of the substitution model of atonement stems from its high regard for God's holy character and a clarification of God's steps to reconcile Himself. As a transcript of God's character, God's law is exalted in the substitution model.

While the substitution model is more objective, the trust-healing model is subjective. The strength of the trust-healing model of atonement is its focus on God's love for His creatures, His desire to win their trust again, thus enabling genuine change. God's goal is to reestablish a relationship with us. The trust-healing model is strengthened by an incorporation of the issues of the war between God and Satan. Significance of the cross, of atonement, of choice, and other issues greatly deepens in light of this war.
The cosmic-conflict paradigm takes these strengths from both the substitution and trust-healing models. It starts with the war in heaven between Michael and the dragon. Satan’s charges against God, His character, His government, and His intentions have drastically affected earth’s history and the view of God that earth’s inhabitants have. Satan has misrepresented God and done so well that it is difficult to untangle the deceptions from the truth. Part of Christ’s mission in coming to earth was to remove this shroud of darkness that Satan had wrapped around the world. Christ came to reveal the truth about the Father and His character. The cosmic-conflict paradigm helps to clarify the issues of the fall, sin, sacrifice, blood, why Christ’s death is necessary, judgment, fire, and wrath. Through it all, God seeks to reestablish confidence in His trustworthiness and is eager to share in a meaningful relationship with each one.

From this cosmic-conflict paradigm, seven atonement-related doctrinal concepts were presented in Bible-study form. They were field tested on two groups of individuals and evaluated as to their effectiveness in understanding God’s truth as separated from Satan’s distortions.¹

The topic of the science of salvation is inexhaustible. No matter how deeply we dig, there will be more depth. No matter how broad a perspective, there will be a more comprehensive outlook. No matter how linked the concepts are found to be, there will be more fine and intricate interconnections to amaze us. This project is just a beginning to the journey. Further study is definitely warranted, both in Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White. Even passages that have already been studied reveal wonderful gems not before seen.

Both the substitutionary and the trust-healing models contain valid concepts. The dissertation combined the strengths of both models in order

¹See chapter 3 and Appendices A and B.
to avoid the misconceptions often associated with one model or the other. The cosmic-conflict paradigm attempts faith-building and scripturally honest answers to the questions revolving around "Why the cross?" in order to improve one's view of God, to increase one's appreciation of God, to enhance one's understanding of God's vision for one's relationship with Him, and to inspire one's witness for Him.

The effect of the seven Bible studies on those who participated in them suggests that the Bible studies contributed to the participants' realization of these spiritual goals.
APPENDIX A: BIBLE STUDIES

The Cosmic-Conflict

1. The cosmic conflict is between what two factions? Where did this conflict begin? Rev 12:7-9

2. Is Lucifer one to be trusted? John 8:44

3. What is Satan’s goal? Job 1:8-12

4. But who would listen to Satan, anyway?

Satan’s Arguments:

5. Gen 3:1-4 God is________________________________________________________
   John 14:6

6. Gen 3:5 God is________________________________________________________
   God’s will or law is____________________________________________________
   John 10:10

7. Gen 3:4 “God’s word means nothing, really. He’s big hearted. He’s not going to do anything. He’ll forgive you. It doesn’t really matter—to do everything just the way He says. Come on, lighten up!”
   God’s mercy destroys His justice, His righteousness.
   Matt 26:39

8. Gen 3:3 “lest ye die.” God is____________________________________________
   John 9:1,2

Responses to Satan’s arguments:

9. God’s—Heb 1:1,2

10. Our’s—Job 42:7,8
Cosmic Conflict—thoughts to bring out

1. Rev 12:7-9. In perfect, sinless heaven, Lucifer starts a negative rumor against God. It turns into a smear campaign. Satan is so clever that the theological war threatens to divide the angelic hosts. God gives Satan time to let his principles be developed. Earth later becomes the focal point for the cosmic conflict.

2. John 8:44. Devil is the father of lies, misrepresentations, deceit.

3. Job 1:8-12. Satan’s goal = to shake Job’s “fear” or respect for God
    1 Pet 5:8. Satan is not just a casual nuisance. He seeks to devour.

    Matt 7:13,14. Only a few find the straight and narrow gate
    (Matt 24:24. The enemy tries to deceive even the very elect).
    What should I do? Ascertain if I unknowingly accepted Satan’s misrepresentations.

Satan’s arguments:

    John 14:6. Jesus claims to BE the truth. Who is correct?

    John 10:10. Jesus didn’t come to steal freedom from us, but rather to share a more abundant life, a more meaningful, fulfilling life.
    Do traffic laws restrict freedom? Or provide protection and safety for our own benefit?

7. Gen 3:4. In contradicting God, Satan undermines the seriousness of God’s warning. Sin is not a big deal. God is just trying to sound tough. He’ll never carry out His threat. He’s so loving and forgiving! When Satan gets us to bite on that logic, he is quick to suggest: God’s generous mercy makes a mockery of His word, His warning, His laws, His justice, and His righteousness. (Psalms 85:10).
    Matt 26:39. Christ experienced the fullness of the cup—death. His mercy did not destroy His warning, His law, His justice.

    John 9:1,2. Theology of Jesus’ time: God punishes evil with sickness, arbitrarily. (v 3 God’s grace manifested)

Responses to Satan’s arguments

9. Heb 1:1,2. God has not left us floundering with only Satan’s deceptions to guide us. God has revealed His truth to us, including Christ Himself.
    Job 42:7,8. May we come to believe God’s version of reality, and only speak the truth about God.
    Eph 3:16-21. Rooted and grounded in love, to know the fullness of God and His love.

Prayer: . . . . Forgive us for listening and believing Satan’s version. Help us to listen and to know only your voice in scripture, to believe that You always have in mind for us only what’s the very best for us. Help us to behold Your character, to be rooted and grounded in Your love, which passes all knowledge.
Christ's Mission

Why did Christ come to this earth? John 3:16

Love (Satan says: mean, arbitrary, severe, exacting)
1. What was Christ's work? John 17:4, 26

2. What is the relationship between Christ and God the Father?
   John 14:9, 11

3. What do we discover when we focus on Christ? 2 Cor. 4:6

4. The death of Christ on Calvary gives us what truth?
   Romans 5:8

5. What conclusion can we come to about God?
   1 John 4:8

Death (Satan says: not surely die)
1. Why did Christ die? 2 Cor. 5:21
   Isaiah 53:5

2. Christ's death was to accomplish what? Colossians 1:20

3. Who does the giving in John 3:16, and what does that mean?

Believe (Satan says: curse God)
1. What was promised in the garden of Eden? Genesis 3:15

2. What meaning of His death did Christ give during the Lord's supper? 1 Cor. 11:24-26
   Jer. 31:31-34

3. What does Christ try to heal in being the "way, truth, and life" (Jn 14:6)? Col. 1:21
Christ’s Mission—thoughts to bring out John 3:16 three key words

**Love** (Satan says God is mean, arbitrary, severe, and exacting).
1. John 17:4, 26. Christ stated that He had finished the work, His mission, which was to glorify His Father to the people on earth. Christ had declared/manifested the Father’s name, which is to reveal the Father’s character, that we might have the Father’s love.
2. John 14:9, 11. Jesus came to reveal the Father. By beholding Jesus, we behold the Father. The character we see Jesus manifesting, we can believe is the same character that the Father has.
3. 2 Cor 4:6. We learn of the light of the knowledge of the glory (character) of God, where? In the face of Jesus.
4. Rom 5:8. Here is a definition of God’s love: Christ died for us, WHILE we are still sinners, rebellious, turning our backs to Him, rejecting Him. God values us even before we are responsive and grateful.
5. 1 John 4:8. The conclusion is God IS love; more than loving, but IS love.

**Death** (Satan says, we won’t really die; God isn’t being truthful. Sin isn’t that big of a deal).
1. 2 Cor 5:21. Christ died (v 15) in that He was made sin, our sin. Is 53:5 Christ was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace (NIV) was upon Him, with His stripes (wounds) we are healed. God wants to bring healing. Sin is a big deal. It is real. It caused Christ’s death.
2. Col 1:20. Cross accomplishes peace. God reconciles TO HIMSELF, those of us on earth and in heaven. Issues and questions that Satan has raised involve the universe. Even though they haven’t sinned, they are watching this cosmic conflict played out on earth.
3. John 3:16. God does the giving and the loving. The death of Christ doesn’t cause God’s love, it is the result of that love. God is the giver, not primarily the receiver, of Christ’s sacrifice.

There is a sense that God receives. In the atonement that God provides (Lev 17:11 “I have given it to you“), God reconciles Himself, His own inner being, His holy and pure character that has a revulsion towards sin. But God provides it, He gives this reconciliation.

Satan twists the giving around. He has us thinking that WE give to God, extending Christ’s sacrifice up to God, to change God’s attitude towards us, to persuade God to be merciful and forgiving.

**Believe** (Satan urges us to doubt God, to blame God, to curse God).
1. Gen 3:15. God speaking to the serpent (Satan), that Satan would only succeed to bruising the woman’s heel, but the woman would bruise Satan’s head. Here is a promise of victory over Satan.
2. 1 Cor 11:24-26. The bread and cup (body and blood) broken and spilled FOR us, is a new testament, a new covenant Jesus makes with us. Jer 31:31-34. The new covenant: Our sins will be forgiven and forgotten. We will KNOW the Lord, His law/character will be written in our hearts.

Prayer: . . . . Thank you Father, for the tremendous gift, of sending Your beloved Son, to die the horrible death of our sin. Thank you for healing our alienation, our enmity and rebellion towards You. May Your Son’s death remind us of Your offered covenant, a covenant of being in relationship with You, of having Your character written on our hearts.
Atonement

1. What happened when Eve listened to and followed the serpent's lead?
   Genesis 3:8 ______________________________________________________

2. We have done the same thing. Isaiah 53:6 _________________________
   We have listened to Satan's suggestions: we can't trust God, we can do a better job running our own lives.

3. What is the result? Isaiah 59:2 _________________________________
   Colossians 1:21 _____________________________________________

4. What can be done about all this? Romans 5:10, 11.
   receive the atonement by Christ
   "At-one-ment" or reconciliation, means the restoration of broken fellowship ("Made us God's friends" Good News version).

5. God takes the initiative in the atonement.
   2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 __________________________________________
   Atonement is not what we offer God, but what God offer's us. He reconciles us, and Himself. God's love is the cause, not result of atonement.
   Romans 5:8 ____________________________________________________
   (Satan's picture is ___________________________________________)

   Luke 7:50 8:48 ________________________________________________

7. God desires a response to His atonement activities.
   John 3:16 ____________________________________________________
   Atonement presupposes understanding God, to be able to trust Him.

8. The atonement from the cosmic conflict perspective is more than our being healed of the sin problem.
   Colossians 1:20 ______________________________________________
   God is being vindicated against Satan's misrepresentations.
   God gives the universe faith building evidences of His truth and character.
Atonement—thoughts to bring out

1. Gen 3:8. Immediately after sin, Adam and Eve wanted to hide from the presence of God.
2. Is 53:6. Each of us have gone our own way, astray from God. We doubt God knows what is best for us, so we go on our own.
3. Is 59:2. Our sins hide God's face, separates us from Him. He can't hear, or we can't hear His voice.
   Col 1:21. Alienation, enmity towards God.
4. Rom 5:10, 11. When we are enemies, God reconciles us by Christ's death, and we receive atonement. From enemies to friends.
   Is 53:6b, 10-11. Our iniquities are laid on Christ, He is bruised. God's forgiveness and love does not violate His holy character. Rather, it is "satisfied" by Christ's death.
5. 2 Cor 5:18, 19. God in Christ, reconciling us To Himself.
   Christ's death is the result of God's love, not the cause of it.
   Rom 5:8. God's attitude towards us is love, even while we are sinners. The death of Christ doesn't change God's attitude. It is ALREADY of love.
   Satan's picture or version? God must first be appeased before He can forgive. This is a pagan concept that Satan has infiltrated into Christianity.
   God does propitiate or appease His own character. Purity and holiness consumes sin and darkness (Rev 3:16; 1Jn 1:5), and if God merely forgave sin, He would violate this revulsion towards sin. In Christ's death, God appeases Himself, He avoids this violation. His character is not compromised, but remains true and consistent.
   Same Greek words. We can say, "Jesus came to HEAL us from our sins."
   More than just forgive, but heal our alienation and enmity, our desire to go independent of God.
7. John 3:16. Whosoever BELIEVES. God desires a response. To believe requires comprehension and understanding. When we know God, we can trust Him. Atonement or at-one-ment with God presupposes this knowing and faith relationship with God.
8. Col 1:20. The cross makes peace, reconciles the universe. The cosmic conflict takes a wider perspective than merely our own salvation from sin. God makes peace in the universe (involving even those who have not sinned) by revealing His righteousness in contrast to Satan's accusations and misrepresentations. God's truth, His character is vindicated. These revelations, the evidence for God's just character, remove alienation, enmity, fear, and doubts, and increase confidence and trust in God.

Prayer: . . . . Father, we praise You for providing such a thorough atonement, whereby You invite us to know You, that You are not the way Satan has portrayed You, whereby You save us and heal us from our sin, and bring peace to the on-looking universe. May Your loving and holy character be magnified as we behold the cross, and may we be drawn closer to You through an ever deepening faith and confidence in You.
1. When Adam and Eve listened to Satan, what happened to their relationship with God? Genesis 3:8

In listening to Satan, we distrust God.

2. How does Isaiah 53 describe sin or iniquities? v 6

3. Sin is defined in relational terms in Romans 14:23

4. What is the classic definition of sin? 1 John 3:4

5. Satan's "take" on this definition?

6. "Transgression" seen as, relationship to God vs the law:
   Romans 13:10
   Matthew 22:34-40
   1 John 3:4 as "lawlessness"
   Rom 3:23

7. What are the wages of sin? Romans 6:23
   Genesis 3:2 threat or warning?
   Satan's "take" on the wages of sin?
   God's "take" on the wages of sin?

8. What is full-grown sin? James 1:15

9. What is God's answer to the wages of sin? Romans 6:23
Sin—Thoughts to bring out

1. Gen 3:8. Eve listened to Satan’s suggestions of distrusting God’s intentions (vs 1, 4), and Adam and Eve’s sin caused apprehension of being in God’s presence.

2. Is 53:6. Sin is going astray or going our own way. When we sin, we think that we know better than God does as to what is best for us. Sin is really distrusting God.

3. Rom 14:23. Whatever is not of faith is sin. Operating from a non-faith relationship basis is sin.

4. 1 John 3:4. Sin is the transgression of the law.

5. Satan suggests to us that transgressing the law or breaking a commandment is only breaking a little rule, void of any relationship awareness. Take breaking the Sabbath commandment, does it hurt the law, or a relationship?

6. Rom 13:10. Love fulfills the law. Transgressing the law then is not living the love principle that the commandments try to teach.

Matt 22:34-40. Loving God and neighbor summarizes all the commandments.

1 John 3:4. NIV translates instead of “transgression,” sin is “lawlessness.” Sin is living where we are not being guided by the principle of love. We are loveless.

Rom 3:23 Sin is coming short of God’s glory. It is being offended by God’s purity and holiness and turning our backs on it. God’s glory (or character) has a revulsion to anything of darkness and sin (Rev 3:16 and 1 Jn 1:5) and consumes anything out of harmony with it. This is the aspect of God’s character that He Himself appeases or reconciles. When we come short of God’s glory, we either seek to abide in God’s presence and let God’s holiness consume that sin, or we separate ourselves from God, His glory, the Source of life. This is the wages, or result, of sin.


Gen 3:3. Lest ye die. Is the statement a threat or a warning?
Threat is: “If you do______, I’ll place your hand on the stove burner.”
Warning is: “Don’t touch the stove burner, it will hurt.”
Satan’s “take” on the wages of sin: God punishes with death.
Arbitrary, vengeful, mean, exacting.
God’s “take” on the wages of sin: God warns of the consequences of sin.

8. James 1:15. When sin is full-grown it causes death.


Prayer: . . . Forgive us God for choosing our own way, thinking we know better than You do. Help us to comprehend more fully the true nature of sin, how being lawless hurts ourselves, hurts our neighbor, and hurts You; that our sin caused Christ’s death. Thank You Christ for becoming sin for us, and giving us the gift of eternal life. May we continue to desire to abide in You, allowing Your purity and holiness to consume our sin and darkness. May we abide in Your love and live by its principles.
Sanctuary

1. Why did God ask that a sanctuary be built? Exodus 25:8

2. It was a pattern of what? Hebrews 8:5
   Courtyard
   Holy Place
   Most Holy Place

3. What were the sacrifices to teach? Hebrews 9:22
   Satan's perspective on sacrifices
   God's perspective on sacrifices:
   Genesis 3:4
   Leviticus 17:11
   John 1:29
   John 3:16
   Isaiah 1:11
   Isaiah 53:10-11
   So why is blood necessary?
   Colossians 1:20

4. Daniel 8:14

5. Hebrews 7:22-25

6. Romans 5:10
Sanctuary—thoughts to bring out

1. Ex 25:8. God desired a sanctuary so He could dwell among His people. Though face to face communication was lost due to sin, God was not going to leave His people without an avenue of communication and relationship.

2. Heb 8:5. A pattern Moses was shown on the mount of heavenly things. Courtyard: atonement—repentance and confession of sin Holy Place: intercession—Christ's ministry of sanctification Most Holy Place: judgment—God's righteousness revealed; cleansing of sin, vindication.

3. Heb 9:22. The sacrifices were to teach that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.

   Satan's "take" on sacrifices: a pagan concept of appeasement, God finally won over with enough blood.
   God's "take" on sacrifices:
   Gen 3:4. Satan had claimed that sin would not cause death.
   Lev 17:11. God gives His blood (cost of sin) as an atonement for us.
   John 1:29. But Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world by sacrificing His life. Satan's claim is refuted; sin is shown to be lethal.
   John 3:16. God loves us, God gives His Son. Did not need to be persuaded.
   Is 1:11. God no longer found the sacrifices of His people meaningful. They had the wrong understanding. They thought if one was good for God, a multitude would be better. The pagan view was slipping in.
   Is 53:10-11. Christ was bruised, treated as our sins deserve. God's revulsion towards sin is satisfied. His forgiveness does not belittle His purity hatred for sin.

   Why is blood necessary (no forgiveness without it)?
   To teach the reality of sin, its heinous and lethal nature.
   To teach that the cost of forgiveness is death—the death of God's Son.
   To teach that sin hurts relationships.
   To bring us to a sorrow for sin.
   Col 1:20. pointed forward to blood of the cross, which brings peace and reconciliation to the universe by answering all of Satan's accusations against God's character and government.

4. Dan 8:14. Sanctuary to be cleansed. On the day of atonement, sins that had been placed in the sanctuary were symbolically cleansed and removed.

5. Heb 7:22-25. Christ lives to make intercession for His people. He ministers for us in the sanctuary to cleanse us. Christ intercedes in that He reveals the Father to us (we only know of the Father through Christ). Christ intercedes also as our advocate (1 Jn 2:1), answering before the Father, every charge that Satan the accuser makes to claim us as his, in this investigative judgment. (This is the topic for the next lesson.)

Rom 5:10. We are reconciled by Christ's death and saved by His life, which includes His ministry in heaven.

Prayer: . . . Father, we are even more grateful as we have learned more about why blood of necessity was spilt. We are filled with remorse at what our sin has caused You, Your character, and Your Son. When we are tempted to sin, remind us of Christ's being made that sin on Calvary. Thank You for Christ, the Lamb Who takes away our sin. We want You to cleanse us of all sin. In Your Son's Name we pray, amen.
1. Why did the sanctuary need to be cleansed? Daniel 8:14 Early Adventists thought Christ would come on Oct. 22, 1844. In the time of the Israelites, the annual Day of Atonement dealt with the sin "in" the sanctuary. The people thought about the meaning of sin and sacrifice, and how it affected their relationship with God. It was like a judgment. So, in 1844? ___________________

2. What is the timely message God needs to have the remnant church proclaim at this time? (part of the three angels' messages) Rev 14:6, 7 ___________________

3. What is the judgment concerned about? Gen 18:25 ___________________
Rom 3:26, 4 ___________________
Ps 51:4 (Ezek 36:23) ___________________

4. How does God win His case? 2 Corinthians 5:20 ___________________

5. Basis of evaluation of our testimony for God:
Romans 2:12 judged by the law
Romans 2:6 according to what we have done
James 2:12 law of liberty
Romans 13:9, 10 law of love
Matthew 22:35-40 love God and neighbor = sum of law
Micah 6:8 what does God require? ___________________
Matthew 23:23 the weightier matters of the law?
James 4:17 judged if know to do good, and don't.
Matthew 25:40 sheep & goats: "unto the __________ of these"
Matthew 7:2 judged on how I judge others
Matthew 5:28 not just behavior judged, but heart. Heb 4:12
John 12:47, 48 Christ's ________________, His truth, will judge us.
Matthew 25:12 the foolish virgins were not __________ by the doorman. Meaning? ___________________

6. Who is the judge? Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9, 10);
the Son (John 5:22); Christ's words (Jn 12:47,48);
the saints (1 Cor. 6:2, 3).
angels? ___________________

7. Who is the advocate? 1 John 2:1 ___________________
Satan's perspective? ___________________
2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 ___________________
John 14:16 ___________________

8. Who is the accuser? Revelation 12:10 ___________________

9. What can be our attitude about judgment? 1 Chron 16:33 ___________________
Job 42:7, 8 ___________________

10. What is the conclusion of everyone? Phil 2:10, 11 ___________________
Judgment-thoughts to bring out

1. In 1844, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary began. A pre-advent judgment began, and continues today.

2. Rev 14:6, 7. Worship God, for the hour of His judgment is come. Since God is omniscient, what is judgment all about?

3. Rom 3:4. God is justified in His sayings, He is vindicated in His judgments.
   Rom 3:26. God is the justifier, but He is also just in the manner He does so. (Gen 18:25: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”). In God's judgment, He steps forward. He is not the guilty and reluctant defendant. God is the actor, initiating His own vindication. He reveals His redemptive acts, and declares that they are righteous. Ezek 36:23 states that God sanctifies His great name before the eyes [of the universe].

4. 2 Cor 5:20. God honors us to be His ambassadors, to urge others to be reconciled to God, letting God make them into friends. Our lives witness as to whether we believe God to be trustworthy or not.

5. Basis of evaluation of our witness for God:
   Rom 2:6. According to what we have done.
   Jam 2:12. Law of liberty.
   Rom 13:9,10. Law of love.
   Micah 6:8. God requires us to do justly, love mercy, walk humbly.
   Jam 4:17. Judged if know to do good, and don't.
   Matt 25:40. Sheep and goats: unto the least of these.
   Matt 7:2. Judged on how I judge others, the measure I use.
   John 12:47,48. Christ’s words, His truth, will judge us.
   Matt 12:12. The foolish virgins were not known by the doorman. We need to be in relationship with God.

6. Who is the judge? Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9,10)
   The Son (John 5:22); Christ’s words (John 12:47,48).
   The saints (1 Cor 6:2,3). (During the millennium).
   The angels? Two thirds who were there when the conflict started. They are satisfied during the pre-advent judgement.

7. 1 John 2:1. Jesus Christ the Righteous is our advocate
   Satan’s take: pleading with an angry God (pagan concept)
   God’s take: 2 Cor 5:18,19 God IN Christ reconciling world TO Himself.
   God did not need persuading. The attitude shift that’s needed is ours!
   John 14:16. we have a comforter, is the same Greek word.


9. 1 Chron 16:33. Our attitude can be of singing and rejoicing in God’s judgments, because God’s name is vindicated and glorified. Satan has nothing left to say.
   Job 42:7,8. May we be jealous for God’s reputation, and only speak what is right about Him.

10. Phil 2:10,11. Everyone’s conclusion (righteous, universe, wicked, Satan): every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.
   Prayer: . . . . We don’t want to be in the group that reluctantly admits You are right, Father; but rather to rejoice in it. Help us now, to taste and see that You are good. Purify our hearts and our motives, and may our witness for You be positive.
How Sin Is Eradicated

1. The lake of fire is known as what? Rev 20:14
   - Rev 14:10 this fire is known as God's
   - 1 John 4:18 but perfect love drives out
   - 1 Thess. 5:9
   - Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28

2. What was the experience of Christ in dying our death?
   - Matthew 27:44-46
   - 2 Corinthians 5:21

3. How are the wicked destroyed? Rev 20:9
   - Satan's perspective: _______________________________
   - God's perspective: Christ was made sin.
     - Rom 3:23
     - Ex 3:2
     - Heb 12:29
     - Zech 2:5
     - Isaiah 33:14, 15
     - Daniel 3:24-26
     - 2 Thess 2:8
     - Ps 68:2

4. How will the universe be secure forever?
   - Nahum 1:9
   - Isaiah 66:24
   - Revelation 14:11
How Sin is Eradicated—thoughts to bring out

1. Rev 20:14. The second death is the lake of fire.
   Rev 14:10. The fire is of the wrath of God.
   1 John 4:18. But perfect love drives out fear.
   1 Thess 5:9. God has not appointed us to wrath, but to salvation.
   Rom 1:18, 24, 26, 28. God’s wrath is revealed against all ungodliness by
   God giving the wicked up (over) to their uncleanness. God gives
   them over to the full ugly consequences of their sin.

   second death, experienced forsakenness. The Father gave Jesus over
   to the fulness of sin’s heinous and lethal nature. Our sins caused
   a separation so black between Jesus and His Father that Jesus died
   of a broken heart.

2 Cor 5:21. Jesus, who knew no sin, was MADE our sin. Incomprehensible,
   that Jesus in all His pure and holy character, would be willing to
   be MADE sin!

   Satan’s take: arbitrary punishment inflicted by an angry, exacting,
   vengeful God.
   God’s take: This death is the second death, same as Christ’s death
   on the cross, which He died for those accepting Him. Christ
   was made sin.

Rom 3:23. All the sinned and come short of God’s glory.
Ex 3:2. The bush flamed, but was not consumed. This is God’s holy
presence.
Heb 12:29. God is a consuming fire.
Zech 2:5. God will be a wall of glory/fire for protection
Is 33:14, 15. Who can dwell with fire and everlasting burnings?
   The righteous can because they enjoy and are in harmony with God’s
   character and glory.
Dan 3:24-26. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego save in the fire of God’s
   Presence.

2 Thess 2:8. The Lord consumes and destroys with the brightness of His
   coming. God’s glory is life to the righteous, and death to the
   wicked.
Ps 68:2. The wicked perish at the presence of God. It is our choice,
   Rejoice at the glorious sight of redemption, or call for the rocks
   to fall on us, ending our torture of being in God’s firey and
   offensive presence (Rev 6:16). Let’s learn to taste and see and
   appreciate God’s holy presence now, that He is good and wonderful.

4. Nahum 1:9. Iniquity will not rise up the second time. Will it be
   different at this point, than it was at the beginning in heaven?
   Will God secure the universe by deleting freedom of choice?
Is 66:24. We enjoy the verses about Sabbath in heaven. But what does
   this verse mean? Will we enjoy this? Could it be that the smoke of
   the wicked’s torment which ascends forever (Rev 14:11), is actually
   the painful memory of earth’s experiment with sin. And this memory
   will be what keeps us from ever yielding to a similar doubt about
   God that Lucifer did back in the beginning of this cosmic conflict?
Rev 21:1–3. God re-creates, everything is new. God tabernacles with
   His people. Reunion is complete (after a six-thousand-year
   horrendous experiment).

Prayer: . . . . Father we marvel at how You have put up with the
   stubbornness and rebellion of Your people all these six thousand
   years. Not only are we so often ungrateful, but we deny You and betray You. We
   thank You for your patience and healing love. We look forward to the
   earth made new when we can enjoy communion with You face to face.
APPENDIX B: RESPONSE SURVEY

Name ________________________________

Please write in a number indicating your response. Use any number from one to ten, each higher number represents increasing agreement on your part. Use one when the statement is never true in your situation, and ten when it is always true. Use the numbers in between when the situation falls between the two extremes.

Illustration:
Never True 1 . 2 . 3 . 4 . 5 . 6 . 7 . 8 . 9 . 10 Always True

1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.

2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.

3. I have a hard time understanding -- what I see as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament.

4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.

5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.

6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.

7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.

8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.

9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.

10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.

11. The reason I believe God is that I don't want to be in the camp of the lost in the end.

12. I understand the relationship between sin and death.

13. I understand how Christ dying my death makes me safe to save.

14. I visualize myself being as comfortable in God the Father's presence, as I am in God the Son's presence.

15. I know what a faith relationship is.

16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.
TABLE 2
JOANNE'S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>After Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.</td>
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<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
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<td>3. I have a hard time understanding -- what I see as a harsh view of</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>God in the Old Testament.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is attractive.</td>
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<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
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<td>as I am in God the Son's presence.</td>
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<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the</td>
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<td>destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
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Note: Answers were given on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = extreme disagreement, and 10 = agreement.
TABLE 3

BOB'S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

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<td>4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.</td>
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<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.</td>
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<td>6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.</td>
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<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
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<td>8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.</td>
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<td>9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
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<td>11. The reason I believe God is that I don't want to be in the camp of the lost in the end.</td>
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<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
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TABLE 4

JACK’S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

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DAN'S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

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### TABLE 7

**EARL'S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

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<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a hard time understanding -- what I see as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The reason I believe God is that I don't want to be in the camp of the lost in the end.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I understand the relationship between sin and death.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>13. I understand how Christ dying my death makes me safe to save.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I visualize myself being as comfortable in God the Father's presence, as I am in God the Son's presence.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I know what a faith relationship is.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Answers were given on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = extreme disagreement, and 10 = agreement.
### TABLE 9
RANDY'S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before Studies</th>
<th>After Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a hard time understanding -- what I see as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament.</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The reason I believe God is that I don't want to be in the camp of the lost in the end.</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I understand the relationship between sin and death.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I understand how Christ dying my death makes me safe to save.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I visualize myself being as comfortable in God the Father's presence, as I am in God the Son's presence.</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I know what a faith relationship is.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Answers were given on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = extreme disagreement, and 10 = agreement.
TABLE 10
CLARK'S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before Studies</th>
<th>After Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a hard time understanding -- what I see as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. The reason I believe God is that I don't want to be in the camp of the lost in the end.</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I understand the relationship between sin and death.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I understand how Christ dying my death makes me safe to save.</td>
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<td>14. I visualize myself being as comfortable in God the Father's presence, as I am in God the Son's presence.</td>
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<td>15. I know what a faith relationship is.</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Answers were given on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = extreme disagreement, and 10 = agreement.
TABLE 11

JULIE’S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before Studies</th>
<th>After Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a hard time understanding -- what I see as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. The reason I believe God is that I don't want to be in the camp of the lost in the end.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I understand the relationship between sin and death.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I understand how Christ dying my death makes me safe to save.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I visualize myself being as comfortable in God the Father's presence, as I am in God the Son's presence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I know what a faith relationship is.</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Answers were given on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = extreme disagreement, and 10 = agreement.
**TABLE 12**
NO NAME’S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before Studies</th>
<th>After Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a hard time understanding -- what I see as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The reason I believe God is that I don't want to be in the camp of the lost in the end.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I understand the relationship between sin and death.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I understand how Christ dying my death makes me safe to save.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<td>14. I visualize myself being as comfortable in God the Father's presence, as I am in God the Son's presence.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I know what a faith relationship is.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Answers were given on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = extreme disagreement, and 10 = agreement.
### TABLE 13
**SARA’S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before Studies</th>
<th>After Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a hard time understanding — what I see as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The reason I believe God is that I don't want to be in the camp of the lost in the end.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I understand the relationship between sin and death.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I understand how Christ dying my death makes me safe to save.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I visualize myself being as comfortable in God the Father's presence, as I am in God the Son's presence.</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>15. I know what a faith relationship is.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Answers were given on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = extreme disagreement, and 10 = agreement.*
TABLE 14

NO NAME'S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before Studies</th>
<th>After Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a hard time understanding -- what I see as a harsh view of God in the Old Testament.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I see God as my parole officer, watching me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can explain to others regarding my belief in God, in a way that is attractive.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I look forward to meeting God on judgment day.</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>7. I understand why blood is required for forgiveness.</td>
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<td>8. My prayer life is meaningful and reflects a friendship relationship with God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. My current concepts of why Christ had to die are coherent, logical and believable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. My religious commitment is doctrinal and theoretical, rather than relational with God.</td>
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<td>15. I know what a faith relationship is.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I have always been encouraged by, and endorse the doctrine of the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Answers were given on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = extreme disagreement, and 10 = agreement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<th>After Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My relationship with God is meaningful and relevant.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to do the right things and my motive is to make it to heaven.</td>
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<td>14. I visualize myself being as comfortable in God the Father's presence, as I am in God the Son's presence.</td>
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Note: Answers were given on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = extreme disagreement, and 10 = agreement.
APPENDIX C: HERMENEUTICS

The study of the Bible and its themes, or the study of God and His character, while a noble endeavor, is also a risky one, often leading to inaccurate conclusions. And since a knowledge of God and a relationship with Him is so important in a Christian's life, we want to stay clear of all inaccurate conclusions. For a safeguard against them, we adopt principles of hermeneutics or interpretation.

1. Presuppositions

Presuppositions for this project will be the following principles regarding hermeneutics:

1. Proper attitude
2. Guidance of the Holy Spirit
3. All Scripture is inspired of God—Old and New Testament
4. Every doctrine must be based on ALL relevant Scripture
5. Literary context
6. Historical context
7. Comparing Scripture
   a. On a single occasion, God does not necessarily say

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Ray Holmes maintains that "The Seventh-day Adventist church has adopted the historical-grammatical method of Bible interpretation." Utilized in this method are the following five principles: a) The principle that the Bible is God's revelation. b) The principle of faith. c) The principle of God's revelation in history. d) The principle of divine inspiration of the biblical text. e) The principle of analysis of both the historical context and the literary-grammatical construction of the material. This method is contrasted with the historical-critical method, which has the following principles: a) The principle that the Bible is the record of man's understanding of God. b) The principle of doubt. c) The principle of human reason. d) The principle of analogy. e) The principle of correlation. (Ray Holmes, [The Tip of an Iceberg (Wakefield, MI: Pointer Publications, 1994), 37-39).
everything He intends us to know about a topic. Take the accumulated evidence, the entire stream of revelation.

b. Seek to harmonize the biblical writings.¹

c. Let the Bible be its own interpreter.²

8. The life and teachings of Jesus are the clearest revelation of Scripture.³

a. Christ came to undo Satan’s misrepresentations.

b. Avoid Satan's misportrayal of the character of God.

9. Principles verses details

10. Corporate principle

11. Truth often holds two complementary but contrasting concepts in tension.

a. Heresy is holding to one of the truths without its balancing partner.

¹Norman Gulley suggests that a larger view should not be a disclosure that demands priority over the claims of Scripture, rather, it "must of necessity be in harmony with the rest of Biblical revelation." ("A Look at the Larger View of Calvary: An Evaluation of the Debate in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" [Journal of the Adventist Theological Society Spring 1992], 76).

²"Which Adventist doctrine cannot stand on the Bible alone? Despite such a solid biblical base, some Adventists perceive sola scriptura to be a threat to the authority of Ellen White. Often they refer to this warning of inspiration: 'The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. . . . Satan will work ingeniously . . . . to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony.' . . . Perhaps Ellen White's friends have done much more damage to her reputation than her enemies. Really, she doesn't need us to defend her; all we need do is read her books in their proper relation to the Bible." (Weber, Who's Got the Truth, 208-9.

³Jesus stated "These are the Scriptures that testify about me" John 5:39 NIV. "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" John 1:18 NIV. The phrase "made him known" comes from the word underlying our English word 'exegesis,' which means to interpret, to bring out the meaning, to explain. (Caleb Rosado, What is God Like? [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988], 16). Jesus is the "normative revelation" of God. (Provonsha, You Can Go Home Again, 13).

"The express purpose of Scripture is to reveal to us the character of the Father," (Winn, His Healing Love, 205).
b. Examples:

(1) Transcendent / immanent nature of God
(2) Divine / Human nature of God
(3) Law / Grace
(4) Justification / Sanctification

Two of the just mentioned presuppositions are significant in regards to a study of the Great Controversy: Revelation meets people where they are (‘7a' in the previous numbering), and secondly, our interpretation of a text should be wary of Satan's distortions of God's character (‘8b'). These two presuppositions warrant further explanation and illustration.

Revelation Meets People Where They Are

"The chemical receptors that govern eyesight cannot withstand the full force of unfiltered sunlight."2 Philip Yancey offers that understanding for the sometimes hiddenness of God.

Because of sin and its effects, a full revelation at one time would be overwhelming and incomprehensible. God does not expect His people to be able to grasp His ideal for them right away. He reveals Himself gradually, a little bit of light at a time. He works with His people where they are, and brings them along.

Jesus once told His disciples "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear" (John 16:12 NIV). Martin Weber understands this verse to mean that the "content of prophetic messages cannot exceed the capacity of the intended audience."3

1"One cause of the polarity problem is that in a desire to escape from one sort of perceived error, people are liable to back into the polar opposite," [George R. Knight, "Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994" [Ministry August 1994], 13].

2Yancey, Disappointment with God, 74.

At Mt. Sinai, God's people were not capable of comprehending God's character as love, that a right relationship with God is to love Him and our neighbor (Matt 22:36-40). So the ten commandment law was added (Gal 3:19), as our tutor to bring us to Christ (Gal 3:24). The ten commandments were added to meet God's people where they were. When they were able to understand it, God gave them a "new commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

God brings people along, gradually lifting them up to His ideal, which he operates from and wants us to operate from also. His ideal for marriage is an illustration of His working to meet us where we are, all the while trying to uplift us to the ideal. God hates divorce (Mal 2:16), yet states that "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt 19:8). God's ideal for marriage is where He is allowed to join together male and female and they become one flesh.

The lex talionis at first appears to be an example of God working to meet His people where they are. In Leviticus 24:19, 20 one reads the directive about "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." Elsewhere Jesus stated, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt 5:38, 39 NIV).

Is Jesus stating a higher ideal than He had earlier? In Lev 19:18, God's people were urged to "love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus then had to broaden their definition of who the 'neighbor' was. For revenge, pay back, and overkill were not part of God's ideal.

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was still upholding the fairness issue (lex talionis) in a legal setting. Jesus was trying to curb an misuse of the lex talionis principle. They had taken the guideline for a legal setting, and concluded that it would be a correct
The Relationship Between the Earlier and Later Revelations

The challenge to this hermeneutical principle (that revelation meets people where they are), is the tendency to dismiss the earlier revelations of God's truth as primitive, that we should reach for the higher ideals discovered in later revelations. This conclusion is dangerous. It encourages a 'pick and choose' approach to Scripture. Soon one is dismissing the Old Testament, and then even the majority of the New Testament, and finally relying on higher revelations one receives individually, independent of Scripture. What is the proper relationship between the earlier and later revelations?

That God meets people where they are at, does that imply that revelation is progressive? Or does the "inability to understand everything at one time" suggest progressive understanding?

The apostolic church had to outgrow its "shut door" concept, that the "good news" of Jesus was meant only for the Jewish people. Through a vision (Acts 10:9-17) God led Peter away from this narrow-mindedness.

Does the fact that God gave us a "new commandment" to love one another, direct us to understand the ten commandments as primitive and no longer relevant? The new commandment, rather than doing away with the former commandments, amplifies the true meaning of the ten. What is

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1We should be careful though, in becoming exacting. Jesus told a parable of a king (court setting?) who forgave a servant a huge debt, but the servant was unable to treat a fellow servant in the same manner (Matt 18:23-35). The measure we use, will be the measure used on us.

2In Norman Gulley's estimation, the Great Controversy Trust Healing Model (GCTHM) utilizes a "selective use of Scripture" approach. ("A Look at the Larger View of Calvary: An Evaluation of the Debate in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," 76).

progressive is the understanding of God's ideal.

The Sermon on the Mount has several examples of Jesus amplifying the ten commandments. In talking about murder and adultery, Jesus was not destroying the ten commandments. Rather, as He shared His ideal, He built upon the ten, amplifying them to include our motives of the heart.

In Matthew 9 we read of Jesus' understanding of the relationship between the new and the old. One is advised not to put new wine in old wine skins (verse 17). This might seem to suggest that we should throw out all the old, that new light makes all the old primitive and obsolete. But the context is the incident of John's disciples approaching Jesus and asking Him why His disciples did not fast along with themselves and the Pharisees. Jesus responded by claiming that the bridegroom was present with them (verse 15).

Jesus was saying that the reason to fast revolves around the bridegroom, Himself. We rejoice in His presence, mourn and fast in His absence. Christ is the center of that spiritual activity. He is the center of all spiritual activity. What matters is whether we know Him and He knows us, that there is a vital relationship between us.

Any spiritual activity should now have this "new" focus, this new goal, this Christ-centeredness. Christ, the new wine, also brought a new framework to understand spiritual activities. He provided a "new wineskin" that encourages understanding new meanings and purposes to "old" spiritual activities. He didn't throw out the old. He built upon the old and gave it a new Christ-centeredness.

"Truth is always progressive," Ellen White wrote. "Revelation is always progressive, and as Ellen White has made clear, the character of God has not yet been fully revealed." So we continue to learn as God

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1 Ellen White to S.N. Haskell, June 1, 1894 (Knight, Angry Saints, 96).

2 Rosado, What is God Like?, 53.
continues to reveal. In writing about heaven, Ellen White writes "As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character." "It will take the whole of eternity for man to understand the plan of redemption."2

George Knight acknowledges a growth of understanding in Ellen White herself. Following the 1888 General Conference, she had a new emphasis, of uplifting basic Christian themes, of uplifting especially Jesus and righteousness by faith in Him. "That new emphasis was reflected in Ellen White's writings by a new direction in her literary effort."3 She wrote Steps to Christ in 1892, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing in 1896, Desire of Ages in 1898, and Christ's Object Lessons in 1900. Martin Weber talks about the reality of Ellen White's growing understanding of truth. In 1864 she believed that God does not love wicked children, while after 1888 she wrote, "Do not teach your children that God does not love them when they do wrong; teach them that he loves them so that it grieves his tender Spirit to see them in transgression."4

Ellen White wrote that "Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths."5

1White The Great Controversy, 678. "God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. . . . The teacher is the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. For all proceed from Him 'with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'James 1:17," (White Patriarchs and Prophets, 373).

2White, SDA BC vol 6, 1115

3Knight, "Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994"


5"We must not think, 'Well, we have all the truth, we understand the main pillars of our faith, and we may rest on this knowledge.' The
The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual speaks of the church being led by the Holy Spirit to a "fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word." In contrast, the reformation churches failed to advance beyond what their founders had said.

This hermeneutic principle should, in application, mean that though God at times may not reveal the full amount of light, when He does reveal His ideal, He does not contradict the earlier light, but rather builds upon it. "Any new light from God will not—cannot—contradict old light. . . . genuine new light actually strengthens appreciation for the grand old pillars of truth." For "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8 NIV).

truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light. . . . "The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. . . . "Long-cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible. It was the unwillingness of the Jews to give up their long-established traditions that proved their ruin. . . . "We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. . . . "Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's Word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion. . . . If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it." (Ellen G. White, Counsels to Writers and Editors, 33-40).

1Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (1990) 23. In 1861 J. N. Loughborough spoke of the danger of creeds: "The first step of apostacy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is, to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such." (Review and Herald, Oct 8, 1861, 148). "But there must be room in this church for those who have a slightly different understanding of the same truth." (Weber, Who's Got the Truth, 201).

2Ibid. 212.
Avoiding Satan's Portrayal of God

The second hermeneutic significant to a study of the Great Controversy is that of avoiding Satan's portrayal of God. Throughout Scripture, Satan is understood as being in opposition to God and His plans. From the war in heaven to the war on this earth, Satan has tried to gain converts away from God. We read about it in the Garden of Eden, in the attempts to devour the manchild, in the temptations of Jesus, to the war on the remnant. Satan is against God and His people.

Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). He wants to deceive, confuse, beguile, and devour God's people. What should our response be? Watch out for this roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8), watch out for his lies; be grounded in God's love (Eph 3:17) so that we are not deceived by Satan's cunning twisting of God's truth.

An appropriate hermeneutic then, would be to expect and anticipate Satan's mastermind deceptions, and avoid any conclusions that are based on Satan's lies about God, or the twisting of God's truth.

Revelation warns us about the mark of the beast, to come out of Babylon, to avoid any mixture of truth and error. So we as Seventh-day Adventists developed a good theology of the Sabbath, to preserve its essence of meaning, to protect it from Satan's cunning tramplings upon it. We have also developed a sound doctrine of the state of the dead, to protect ourselves from Satan's masterpiece deceptions.

Satan has attacked God's truth, and we have anticipated that. But what about the truth about God? Shouldn't we expect Satan to tell lies about God Himself? If Jesus came to this earth to reveal the Father (John 14:9), we should anticipate Satan to work hard to counteract that revelation, to do everything he can to undermine it. This hermeneutic then, recognizes this goal of Satan's, and seeks to be wary of any conclusions about God that Satan would be happy for us to make.
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