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WORLDVIEW THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

"I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself."—Psalm 89:1–2

"With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare, 'Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.'"¹

In this day and age, there is a lot of talk about worldviews. It is discussed in matters of politics, media, education, and general societal discourse. Everyone subscribes to one worldview or another; even though our views may be different, we all have this characteristic in common. From our research we have discovered that there is little written on worldviews from the Seventh-day Adventist perspective. Therefore, in five articles, we will discuss worldviews through the lens of the great controversy.

The first question that a worldview will seek to answer is: where does truth come from? After all, answers to all other important questions are found via the answer to this initial question. The source of truth will serve as a guide in all areas of life. So where does truth come from? In John 17:17, Jesus is recorded praying to God His Father, saying, "Your word is truth." For those with a biblical worldview, God's Word is the standard for truth. Paul writes that "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). Looking through the lens of the Bible brings answers to the great questions of worldview, and as we do so, we begin to better understand God Himself. "To think like God, one must think like Scripture."²

The Bible presents a metanarrative that tells the story of the universe. In this narrative can be found all the answers to the basic questions a worldview asks. The stories we create and tell today in books and films echo the rise and fall of the grand narrative

found in Scripture. From *The Chronicles of Narnia* to *Star Wars* and the heroes of the DC and Marvel universes, we can see elements of the story Seventh-day Adventists call the "great controversy." Christians and non-Christians alike feel the pull of the metanarrative of the great controversy between God and Satan, and it shows in our creative works. After all, as Scripture shows us, this is the story of the universe imprinted on our hearts and minds.

This story is especially significant for Seventh-day Adventists, as Herbert Douglas notes:

For Seventh-day Adventists, the Great Controversy Theme is the core concept that brings coherence to all biblical subjects. It transcends the age-old divisions that have fractured the Christian church for centuries. It brings peace to theological adversaries who suddenly see in a new harmony the truths that each had been vigorously arguing for. . . . The distinctiveness of Adventism rests in its overall understanding of the central message of the Bible that is governed by its seminal, governing principle the Great Controversy Theme.³

John C. Peckham agrees with this notion of the centrality of this theme for Adventists: "Broadly speaking, this concept of a cosmic conflict between God and Satan is by no means unique to Adventist thinking, but it is uniquely essential to Adventist theology. It provides a great deal of the framework within which many doctrines of Adventist theology make sense."⁴

We see this great controversy theme playing out all around us, serving as the metanarrative for the universe. When we read the Bible, we can see that this story is composed of four acts: creation, the fall, redemption, and re-creation.⁵ Adventist theology is based out of this story, and most of Ellen G. White's writings reflect this narrative. Joseph Battistone notes, "The theme of the great controversy between Christ

and Satan is without question the central and most important theme in the writings of Ellen G. White.”⁶ Clearly this narrative cannot be ignored.

White points out how its theme can be found etched throughout the pages of God’s Word:

The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God. From the first intimation of hope in the sentence pronounced in Eden to that last glorious promise of the Revelation, “They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev 22:4), the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme,—man’s uplifting,—the power of God, “which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:57). He who grasps this thought has before him an infinite field for study. He has the key that will unlock to him the whole treasure house of God’s word.⁷

In the articles to come, we will explore the four acts of the great controversy and see how the great controversy gives answers to the most pressing questions our hearts ask, providing a worldview rooted in Scripture. ED

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 671.

² Richard L. Mayhue, “Cultivating a Biblical Mindset,” in *Think Biblically!*, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 43.

³ Herbert E. Douglas, “The Great Controversy Theme: What It Means to Adventists,” *Ministry*, December 2000.

⁴ John C. Peckham, “Great Controversy Issues,” in *God’s Character and the Last Generation*, ed. Jiří Moskala and John C. Peckham (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2018), 16.

⁵ Some may use the word “restoration.” This four-part perspective can be found in many Christian circles. Adventist theologian Jiří Moskala uses a similar perspective in *Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation—Fall—Re-Creation Hermeneutic (Biblical-Theological Reflections on Basic Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics Applied to the Ordination of Women)*, Theology of Ordination Study Committee (Baltimore, MD, July 22–24, 2013), <https://www.adventistarchives.org/back-to-creation.pdf>.

⁶ Joseph Battistone, “Ellen G. White’s Central Theme,” *Ministry*, October, 1975. Battistone also argues that the great controversy serves as the primary theme in the parables of Jesus; see Joseph J. Battistone, “The Great Controversy Theme in Jesus’ Parables,” *Ministry*, October, 1976.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1903), 125–126.

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