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The Cosmic Controversy: World View for Theology and Life

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World views affect the way we look at reality, including God, humanity, nature, Scripture and theological method.¹ There are at least thirteen major world views classified under three types: Material (Naturalism, 5 kinds), Spiritual (Transcendentalism, 5 kinds) and a Personal God (Theism, 3 kinds).² All systems of thought in philosophy or theology, as well as all systems in science, are thought out within a given world view. A popular world view in theology is “personal salvation.” Many Christians can tell you the date when they were saved, and their personal death, or secret rapture, is allegedly the time when they go to heaven. The cosmic controversy with its issues and final advent are not determinative.

Science has outgrown several world views. The Ptolemaic world view suggested that the earth is the center of all things. Everything in space revolves around planet-earth. This was the accepted world view for 1,400 years. Then Copernicus and Galileo challenged this world view by suggesting that the sun was the center of all things. The earth, together with all else in space, revolves around the sun. This was a broadened world view. This was believed for 400 years. Then Einstein, with his theories of relativity, suggested that everything in space is in motion. This is the most expansive world view in science.

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What has been done in science now needs to be done in theology. Theology needs to break beyond the man-centered world view about human salvation to the cosmic world view about the great controversy. Seventh-day Adventists have an opportunity to lead out in this Einsteinian-like breakthrough into the broader world view.

Origin of Sin and Issues in the Controversy

Scripture mentions the origin of sin in the universe. There was war in heaven (Rev 12:7) between Satan (Rev 12:9) and Christ (as Michael, Jude 9, 1 Thess 4:16; John 5:26-28). Satan sought to establish his throne in the place of God's (Isa 14:12-14). Ezekiel 28 speaks of this covering cherub, who later came to the garden of Eden, (see Gen 3). It says, "Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence and you sinned" (Ezek 28:16, NIV).

Richard M. Davidson tells of his discovery of the etymology for the word "trading" from the verb *rākal* which means trade or gossip. "The noun derivative *rākīl*—found six times in the OT, one being in Ezekiel 22:9—means "slanderer or talebearer." Instead of choosing the more common term for trade, *sāhar*, Ezekiel chose *rekullāh*, with its play on meaning. He purposely uses this word to point to the trading of Tyre, but especially to the slander of Satan. For Ezekiel is the only writer who chooses this word for trading, and all four instances are in connection with Tyre (Ezek 26:12; 28:5, 16, 18).³ Here we have Satan the slanderer. What an apt description of his controversy!

Sin's origin and the issues in the cosmic controversy are presented well by Ellen G. White in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 492-504. Sin originated in Satan, and not in Christ. Satan became proud, coveted Christ's position, and bent his energies towards obtaining His power. He pretended to be reverent to God, but under this guise worked to call His government into question. He sought to win the sympathy of angels, and charged that God had unjustly honored Christ instead of him. Note that his controversy was Christ-centered from its inception and continues that way.⁴ Within this context, Satan's

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charges against God are numerous. His fairness is called in question. His justice is called in question. His law is called in question. His mercy is called in question. Satan portrays God as severe and tyrannical. Satan clothes God and Christ with his own attributes, and presents himself as just the opposite.

Consider twelve ways Satan expressed these charges: (1) The Father and Christ have no self-denial.⁵ (2) They are selfish.⁶ (3) God is “oppressive.”⁷ (4) Christ is not self-sacrificing.⁸ (5) Satan “represented God as claiming all and giving nothing, as requiring men’s service for his own glory, but denying himself nothing for man’s good.”⁹ (6) On the one hand, in opposition to God’s law Satan claimed that “angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right.”¹⁰ (7) On the other hand, Satan “cast contempt upon the law of God, and declared that it was impossible for men to keep God’s commandment.”¹¹ (8) Furthermore, he “declared that men could not enter the kingdom of heaven unless the law was abolished and a way devised by which transgressors could be reinstated into the favor of God. . . and saved in their sins.”¹² (9) He “declared that the principles of God’s government make forgiveness impossible.”¹³ (10) Hence, he “charged upon God a lack of wisdom and love.”¹⁴ (11) After Christ’s death, “Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, that the death of Christ abrogated the Father’s law.”¹⁵

Consider his strategy. (12) “Uniting fallen man with himself, he kept a series of false theories in regard to God in continual circulation.” Satan caused humans to disobey God. He hoped to “exhaust the forbearance of God. . . He thought to so work with human agents as to cause the last spark of love to die from the heart of God, and cause him to lift the sword of justice and destroy the rebel race. Then Satan supposed that his claims would be vindicated before un-fallen worlds, before un-fallen angels.”¹⁶ What he obviously overlooked was the fact that God had not destroyed him, the arch rebel.

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It is necessary that the truth about God, Christ and Satan be made manifest. The real story of all three is involved in the cosmic controversy. The revelation of who they really are must be made so that all created beings, angelic (fallen and unfallen), humans (redeemed and lost) and the unfallen inhabitants of worlds afar, may all vote unanimously on who is right and who is wrong. Only one side can win, yet all from both sides must vote, and vote the same. This is done with complete freedom, and is done purely on the evidence given by both sides.

Importance of Focus. I grew up near London, in England. I listened to mission appeals about the needs in Africa. I wanted to become a medical doctor and go to Africa. But one day I felt drawn to my parent's bookcase. In that bookcase were some red-covered books, written by Ellen G. White. I reached in for *Messages to Young People*. I began to read that book, and the Holy Spirit worked on my mind and heart. I sensed a longing for something deeper. You know what I mean? God put within my heart a longing to know Him better and to know His Word better. So I decided to go to Newbold College to study the Bible.

I was eighteen. It was my first time to be away from home. Every evening the lights went out in the dorm at 10:00 o'clock. I would wait for the lights to go out and then slip to my knees at my bedside. There I would pour out my heart to God. I would picture Christ in my backyard at home. That backyard became the visual place where I met Christ every evening and morning. I still meet Him there. I would try to picture Him and talk to Him as a present friend. Those were wonderful meetings that blest my soul and set me free from myself. I was coming to focus on Christ through the day. The image of Him in that evening prayer time worked on my mind during the night, and looking to Him became the first thing I did in the morning.

This approach brought me, at an early age, to realize that everything revolves around Jesus. I still pray this way. I have made many mistakes. I am a sinner saved by grace. But I know one thing:

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my deepest joy and lasting peace is found in focusing on Jesus instead of on myself. This is crucial to making a practical application of the great controversy.

The Conflict of the Ages Series. Ellen White wrote a set of five volumes known as the *Conflict of the Ages* series. These works, discussing biblical and historical events, extend from the beginning of the great controversy to its end. Notice how she begins and how she ends the series: “‘God is love.’ His nature, his law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be. ‘The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,’ ‘whose ways are everlasting,’ changeth not. With him ‘is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.’”¹⁷ The fifth book ends with these words, “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”¹⁸

So the first words and last words of Ellen White’s depiction of the great controversy are “God is love.” The cosmic controversy has to do with the love of God. Satan’s charge about the law being impossible to keep is merely a questioning of God’s love. It says, God made a law that we cannot keep, so He is not a God of love. This is why Jesus said that the whole law may be summed up as love to God and love to mankind (Matt 22:37-40). God’s side of the great controversy reveals love. Satan’s side of the great controversy reveals the opposite to love. This is why we must ask: Which side of the great controversy is revealed in my church? Which side of the great controversy is revealed in my family? Which side of the great controversy is revealed in my life? Does love reign in all three? Where Jesus is, there is love. Where Jesus is not present, there is no lasting eternal love. The practical question is: How can I be sure to reveal God’s love? The answer has to do with our focus.

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The Centrality of Christ. Satan’s attack is against Jesus. He wants to take His place, and become God. He wants the position, but not the character of Christ. In stark contrast, Jesus became a human being and gave up everything in order to save mankind. In so doing, He revealed what the Trinity is really like. No wonder Paul talks about “the truth as it is in Jesus,” (Eph 4:21). If Christ could be seen as central to all our doctrines, and if they were arranged concentrically around Him, what a power they would have! If every doctrine was an opportunity to say something about Jesus, and if Christ was the perspective from which each was thought through and unfolded, what a system would result!

1. The first thing, then, is to consider the centrality of Christ to the cosmic controversy. Ellen G. White proposed this. “In every school established the most simple theory of theology should be taught. In this theory, the atonement of Christ should be the great substance, the central truth.”¹⁹ “The atoning sacrifice, the righteousness of Christ, is to us the vital center of all truth.”²⁰ “The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary.”²¹ What a mandate! In reference to the final message we are told, soon “one interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other—Christ our righteousness.”²² Look at our mission. “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world.”²³ We are told that “The cross of Christ is to be so distinctly presented before the world that every other power will be eclipsed, and the human race be drawn in homage to Christ Jesus.”²⁴ He is the core of Adventist beliefs. What mighty power there is in the cross—and in the cross alone. Christ promised, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32, cf. Gal 6:14).

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Jesus proclaimed “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Jesus knew that truth needed to be looked at in a fresh way. He declared that He was the truth. In other words all doctrinal truths relate to Him just as the sanctuary types and services did. Ellen White says, “While Jesus did away with the old forms, he re-instated the old truths, placing them in the frame-work of truth. He matched and joined them together, making a complete and symmetrical system of truth.”²⁵ If Jesus did this, no wonder we read, “The gems of truth are imperishable, and the Lord would have them gathered up and placed in their proper relation, that they may embellish and adorn the doctrine of Christ our Savior.”²⁶ Reflection on how the teachings of the Bible should be considered. They “are not uncertain, disconnected doctrines, but are living truths, that involve eternal interests that center in Christ. In him is the complete system of divine truth.”²⁷ This is because “The Bible contains a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy.”²⁸ This is also because, “The story of a crucified and risen Savior is the great central theme of the Word of God.”²⁹

No wonder that, “To-day Satan endeavors to keep hidden from the world the great atoning sacrifice, which reveals the love of God and the binding claims of His law. He wars against the work of Christ.”³⁰ In utter contrast, God desires all truth to be Christ-centered and Calvary-centered. “This is the vital, all-absorbing truth on which God would have men in all ages fix their attention. He would have the death of His Son the great center of attraction.”³¹

On the basis of this mandate, I propose that we examine our 27 fundamental beliefs and ascertain how they reveal Christ and the cross. For it is precisely in Christ’s mission, and specifically in His death, that He reveals that God is love. Some years ago I asked the world renowned evangelical theologian, Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, if the cult view that some other denominations have of Seventh-day Adventists could be overcome by placing our 27 fundamental beliefs in a logical,

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orderly and Christ-centered arrangement. He concurred. I believe it is time to do this.

2. Secondly, we need to consider the arrangement of our 27 fundamental beliefs. Before Seventh-day Adventists are ready to make a contribution to the theological world by presenting the cosmic controversy, we need to rearrange our 27 fundamental beliefs. The cosmic controversy should be the world view within which all the doctrines are unfolded. Thus, it seems to me, it would be to our advantage to place the cosmic controversy as our first fundamental belief. This is because it is our world view, or better put, it is the biblical world view. It has primary importance as the context within which all other doctrines should be unfolded. So many Christians have a “my salvation” world view. There is little, if any, time given to the larger picture beyond and behind the plan of salvation.

Consider the present arrangement of the 27 fundamental beliefs as given before the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*,³² and still remain in that book. They are a list of 27 beliefs in a chain-link, with no apparent connection. The order of the 27 is not chronological. Would it not be more effective if it were? For example, for Christ as Redeemer (FB 4) comes before creation (FB 6), and creation is presented before the cosmic controversy (FB 8). Then there is the loose arrangement of beliefs that would better be placed together. For example, there are three on Christ but scattered between 4, 9, and 23. The experience of salvation (FB 10) and Christian behavior (FB 21), far distanced in the 27 can be brought together.

3. Thirdly, we need to think through the reasons for the fundamental beliefs. They are not merely found in Scripture to give knowledge. They have a practical purpose, and that purpose is discerned in the biblical world view. This is why the cosmic controversy needs to be placed up front before the rest. The cosmic controversy broke the unity of the universe, introducing sin and its severance of relationships with God and other created beings. This began in heaven and continues on planet earth. Broken relationships

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are the tragic result of the cosmic controversy, not only during life, but for most people, in everlasting destruction. The function of the Godhead, Scripture, and the Church is to restore broken relationships with God and fellow beings. So the plan of salvation is more than personal salvation. It has to do with the restoration of community with God and fellow created beings. Thus the fundamental beliefs provide not only *information*, but also *inspiration* to change lives.

A Suggested Arrangement of the 27 Fundamental Beliefs

Doctrine of God (Theology)

Cosmic Controversy	Angels break relationship with God; cause mankind to do the same. FB 8.
Trinity	Perfect relationship. FB 2.
Father	Father gives to restore relationship. FB 3.
God's self-revelation	Scripture given to restore relationship. FB 1.

Doctrine of Man (Anthropology)

Human Creation	Humans created for relationship with God and each other. FB 6.
Human Fall	Human nature is in broken relationship with God and mankind. FB 7.

Doctrine of Christ (Christology)

The Son	Christ came to earth to restore broken relationships. FB 4.
Life, death & resurrection	Christ came to earth to restore broken relationships. FB 9.
Intercession	Christ ministers to earth to restore broken relationships. FB 23.

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Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)

Holy Spirit	To restore relationships now and for heaven. FB 5.
Experience of Salvation	To restore relationships now and for heaven. FB 10.
Christian Behavior	To restore relationships now and for heaven. FB 21.

Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)

The Church	The Community of restored relationships. FB 11.
Baptism	Public declaration of relationship with Christ. FB 14.
Lord's Supper	Celebration of restored relationship with Christ. FB 15.
Unity in the Body	Relationship of members to each other and to Christ. FB 13.
Stewardship	Manifestation of restored relationships. FB 20.
Marriage and Family	Manifestation of restored relationships. FB 22.

(Unique to SDAs, with law as background to Sabbath, and spiritual gifts as background to the Gift of Prophecy)

Remnant and Mission	End-time truth and restoration of relationships. FB 12.
The Law	To preserve relationship with God and mankind. FB 18.
The Sabbath	Resting in Christ as essence of relationship. FB 19.

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Spiritual Gifts/Ministries	To work for restoration of human relationships. FB 16.
The Gift of Prophecy	To restore relationship with Christ and mankind. FB 17.

Doctrine of Final Things (Eschatology)

Second Coming	To restore relationship to face to face communion. FB 24
Death and Resurrection	All saints enter relationship with each other forever. FB 25
Millennium	Loss of eternal life seen as rejection of relationship with Christ. FB 26.
New Earth	Sin and sinners gone; redeemed and God with rest of universe live together in unbroken relationship. FB 27.

This new arrangement is under six major sections, going in concentric circles around Christ and Calvary at the center. Thus all of our beliefs would convey the solution to broken relationships found in Christ and Calvary. This would take them beyond being vehicles for information. It would make them channels for affecting practical life, and restoring a relationship with God and mankind.

The 27 beliefs would then unfold as a story, as follows:

1. The cosmic controversy biblical world view.
2. A look at God, the One who has been called in question by Satan's charges.
3. The creation of mankind and their joining the cosmic controversy.
4. Christ comes to reveal what God is like and to save humans.
5. The meaning of salvation is explored.
6. Those being saved together form the church.

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7. The church moves through history to final events, and the resolution of the cosmic controversy.

Insights into the Cosmic Controversy

Lucifer at the Throne. Come with me to heaven. We are gathered around the throne of God. The Father is there. Christ is there. Lucifer is there. Christ is the One through whom the Father has created all things, and this includes Lucifer (Heb 1:1-2; Col 1:16-17). What is it like to gaze on God in His throne room?

Isaiah exclaimed, "I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty'" (Isa 6:1-5). God is holy. Even unfallen seraphs cover their eyes. As John D. W. Watts says, they cover their "eyes in deference to God's glory."³⁴ All they can do is cry out "Holy, holy, holy." They are in awe of His majesty, His magnificence, His holiness. Gazing at Him, their whole being is absorbed in willing response to the awesome self-revelation of God. They cannot help it. This is their joy to praise the only One who is worthy of such adoration. To be in His presence calls forth worship.

Ezekiel saw the throne. It moved with the speed of lightning (Ezek 1:14). Four living creatures moved with the throne. "When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they lowered their wings. Then there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. Above the expanse over their heads was what

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looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. . . . This was like the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown. . . .” (Ezek 1:24-28). Like Isaiah, Ezekiel was overcome by the awesome presence and majesty of a holy God.

In utter contrast Lucifer is spoken of as having “pomp” at the throne (Isa 14:11). No prostration here. No falling down in adoration and worship. No overwhelming sense of the majesty and holiness of God. Rather he is full of his own pride. How tragic that pride could come into the heart of one who had once worshiped like Isaiah and Ezekiel, and who sang the praises of his Creator. But not now. Pride robs one of the vision of God's majesty and power. Self snatches the sacred from view. Pride enthrones a puny self in place of the Almighty God. “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . . For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isa 14:12-14, KJV). Here was a pompous bid to become his own majesty, to become his own king, to become his own god. It was a daring, blasphemous, blind bid to unseat God from His eternal throne, upon which He had sat for an eternity before creating Lucifer.

Ellen White says, “Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. The Scripture says, ‘Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness,’ [Ezekiel 28:17]. . . . Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator.”³⁵

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The great controversy is Satan's hatred of Christ. God and angels pled with Lucifer. But he "allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and became the more determined. To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels."³⁶ Satan struggled. "Unutterable love thrilled his entire being," but "again he was filled with pride in his own glory. His desire for supremacy returned, and envy of Christ was once more indulged. The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as God's special gift, and therefore called forth no gratitude to his Creator. He gloried in his brightness and exaltation and aspired to be equal with God."³⁷ "Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself."³⁸ Satan wanted to be worshiped in place of Christ.

Note the words describing Satan before his probation closed. Notice how far he had gone in his shameful rebellion. They are found in *Patriarchs and Prophets* pages 37-38. He was envious and jealous of Christ, he was proud of his own glory, he desired supremacy, he diffused discontent, he insinuated doubts, he used subtle deceptions and wiles, he misrepresented, he was artful, he distorted God's purposes, put them in a false light, misconstrued, was cunning, crafty, excited opposition to God's law, and he secretly fomented discord and rebellion. What a treacherous traitor and downright liar! He knew the truth about Christ. He had stood nearest to Him at the throne. He had experienced His extravagant love.

In unerring and relentless love God convinced Lucifer of his error. His disaffection was shown to be without a cause. He was shown the results of his revolt. "Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong. He saw that 'the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works' (Psalm 145:17); that the divine statutes are just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had

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not at that time fully cast off his allegiance to God. Though he had left his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office. . . . He nearly reached the decision to return; but pride forbade him. It was too great a sacrifice for one who had been so highly honored to confess that he had been in error, that his imaginings were false, and to yield to the authority which he had been working to prove unjust."³⁹ "Long was he retained in heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission."⁴⁰

In blind disdain Lucifer refused to come back. Then follow terrible words. "He would never again acknowledge the supremacy of Christ;"⁴¹ "he was determined never again to acknowledge the authority of Christ."⁴² No wonder it is the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Satan rebelled against His Creator—the One who gave Him life. Its like rebelling against one's mother. He wanted to take His place to receive the worship and adoration and praise Christ had been given. He thought that he, a mere creature, had the right to oust His Creator and receive adulation from created beings, as if he were the eternal Creator. That's how blind and dumb the devil is! He was devoid of the Holy Spirit and spiritual discernment. He was out of control, a loose canon, a horrible counterfeit.

Satan claimed to offer a superior government, superior freedom, and a life free from the restrictions of the law. "Therefore God permitted him to demonstrate the nature of his claims, to show the working out of his proposed changes in the divine law. His own work must condemn him."⁴³ The cosmic controversy is a demonstration interlude between the eternal peace of the past and the eternal peace of the future. It's a time when Satan demonstrates his claims and in which Christ demonstrates the character of God. The very fact that He had worked so untiringly with Satan since his rebellion, and had even given him a chance to come back and be reinstated in his office at the

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throne, shows how extravagant and wondrous is the limitless love of God! When Satan rejected such love there was sadly no more that God could offer him. He became the devil through failing to accept Christ's love.

Christ on Earth. Whereas Lucifer wanted to usurp Christ's throne for his own glory, Christ left His throne to save sinners on planet earth. Paul says about Jesus Christ; "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped [in contrast to Lucifer] but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Phil 2:6-8). Oh wondrous Savior! What utter condescension! What magnificent glory!

What did Jesus give up? He gave up the throne. He left the adoration and worship of angels and came to this world as a little helpless baby boy. Being a helpless human thrust Him into a "fearful risk."⁴⁴ Yet the wise men from the east, who were not of the Jewish faith, came under the leading of the Holy Spirit to bring gifts and to worship Him. Not so Satan. This was his opportunity. Fancy Christ coming as a mere babe! Satan was a powerful, brilliant, shining angel, and his enemy. Christ whose throne Satan wanted to usurp (Isa 14:13-14), the mighty Michael who had thrown him out of heaven (Ezek 28:16; Rev 12:7-8), was now a mere child. Satan gloated at the prospect. The battle had never been so tilted in his favor as now. Victory seemed assured. Satan worked through Herod to put Christ to death soon after birth (Matt 2:13), but the scheme back-fired. The Holy Spirit, who gave Christ birth, led Joseph and Mary with the child to flee to Egypt, and the gifts from the wise men paid for the journey and the stay (Matt 2:13-18).

Consider Jesus as presented in *The Desire of Ages*. "He possessed a dignity and individuality wholly distinct from earthly pride and assumption; He did not strive for worldly greatness, and in even the lowliest position He was content." "Of the bitterness that falls to

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the lot of humanity, there was no part which Christ did not taste.”⁴⁵ “He did not retaliate when roughly used, but bore insult patiently.”⁴⁶ “He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the saving remedy to every soul.”⁴⁷

“Yet through childhood, youth, and manhood, Jesus walked alone. In His purity and His faithfulness, He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him. He carried the awful weight of responsibility for the salvation of men. He knew that unless there was a decided change in the principles and purposes of the human race, all would be lost. This was the burden of His soul, and none could appreciate the weight that rested upon Him. Filled with intense purpose, He carried out the design of His life that He Himself should be the light of men.”⁴⁸

We cannot even begin to imagine the enormous responsibility that rested upon His young shoulders. As a child and as a lad He was carrying this load. And Satan did everything to cause Him to stumble and become disqualified. How would you like to live with that burden? How would you cope if one sin would cause you to lose your eternal future with God. That’s what He faced. No wonder He prayed entire nights!

Consider the temptations in the wilderness before He launched His public ministry. “When Jesus entered the wilderness, He was shut in by the Father’s glory. Absorbed in communion with God, He was lifted above human weakness. But the glory departed, and He was left to battle with temptation. It was pressing upon Him every moment. His human nature shrank from the conflict that awaited Him. For forty days He fasted and prayed. Weak and emaciated from hunger, worn and haggard with mental agony, ‘His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.’ Isa. 52:14. Now was Satan’s opportunity. Now he supposed that he could overcome Christ.”⁴⁹

Satan arrives as a bright angel from heaven with a message from God. He claims that God is satisfied with Christ’s willingness to enter

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the bloodstained path. Christ has passed the test. The fast could now end. Just as Abraham did not have to sacrifice his son, so Christ was freed from His future sacrifice. "If you are God's son, make these stones bread." Notice the doubt. Just as in Eden he had said, "Did God say you would die?" casting doubt upon God's word, so now he said if you are God's son, casting doubt upon the words of the Father forty days before when He said at the baptism, "This is My beloved Son" (Matt 3:17).

Then Satan had another ploy. As an assumed heavenly angel he says, "One of the most powerful of the angels. . . has been banished from heaven. The appearance of Jesus indicates that He is that fallen angel, forsaken by God, and deserted by man. A divine being would be able to sustain his claim by working a miracle."⁵⁰ So make the stones bread.

Skipping to the third temptation, we read: "Placing Jesus upon a high mountain, Satan caused the kingdoms of the world, in all their glory, to pass in panoramic view before Him. The sunlight lay on templed cities, marble palaces, fertile fields, and fruit-laden vineyards. The traces of evil were hidden. The eyes of Jesus, so lately greeted by gloom and desolation, now gazed upon a scene of unsurpassed loveliness and prosperity. Then the tempter's voice was heard: 'All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine.'⁵¹ What incredible gall! Here was the one who had once worshiped Christ as His Creator; now he is asking Christ to worship him! This was more than wanting created beings to worship him instead of Christ. This was wanting Christ Himself to join them. This was asking Christ to accept the original rebellion, and participate in it. This exposes what Satan desired all along. He wanted to be worshiped by His Creator.

Christ refused. For His "mission could be fulfilled only through suffering. Before Him was a life of sorrow, hardship, and conflict, and an ignominious death. He must bear the sins of the whole world. He

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must endure separation from His Father's love."⁵² Jesus lived on earth as a dependent human. We knew what it was to be hated, ridiculed, misunderstood, laughed at. Satan threw his full fury at Him. The greatest evidence of a cosmic controversy is the fact that this perfect man, who was also God, had to meet temptations. Satan dogged his every footstep.

Christ in Gethsemane. In Gethsemane Christ's wilderness experience is magnified. Now, for the first time, He, who knew no sin, became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). "Now He seemed to be shut out from the light of God's sustaining presence. Now He was numbered with the transgressors. The guilt of fallen humanity He must bear. Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us all. So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father's love. Feeling how terrible is the wrath of God against transgression, He exclaims, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.'"⁵³

"He felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequences of man's sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression. Christ was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. His suffering can best be described in the words of the prophet, 'Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.' Zechariah 13:7. As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. He saw what justice meant. Hitherto He had been as an intercessor for others; now He longed to have an intercessor for Himself."⁵⁴

Christ knew that the issues in the great controversy were at stake here. "With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He

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became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God. . . . The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life. Behold Him contemplating the price to be paid for the human soul. In His agony He clings to the cold ground, as if to prevent Himself from being drawn farther from God. . . From his pale lips comes the bitter cry, 'O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.' Yet even now He adds, 'Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'⁵⁵

"The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering. This longing Christ felt to the very depths of His being. . . . The One who had always had words of sympathy for them was now suffering superhuman agony. . . ."⁵⁶ During that awful night the disciples could hear "the strong cries of the sufferer." When they saw Jesus they could hardly recognize Him. "His face was so changed by anguish. . . . Again the Son of God was seized with superhuman agony, and fainting and exhausted, He staggered back to the place of His former struggle. His suffering was even greater than before. As the agony of soul came upon Him, 'His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.'" He was "wrestling alone with the powers of darkness." "He was like a reed beaten and bent by the angry storm." Jesus "fell prostrate, overcome by the horror of a great darkness. The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour. . . . The awful moment had come—the moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity."⁵⁷ Three times His humanity shrank from the sacrifice ahead. But He remained committed to the human race, whatever the price He must pay. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

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Christ on the Cross. “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.”⁵⁸ He had spent his entire life talking about the Father’s mercy and pardoning love. But now, as our Sin Bearer, He could not see that gracious and forgiving Father. “The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this 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. Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father’s acceptance of the sacrifice. He 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.”⁵⁹

“Christ the sinless became sin for man. He bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father’s face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out.”⁶⁰ “Sin, so hateful to his sight, was heaped upon him till he groaned beneath its weight.”⁶¹ “He bore the sins of the world, and endured the penalty which rolled like a mountain upon his divine soul.”⁶² Troubled within and reviled without, He expired amidst derision. Oh, “Look to Calvary until your heart melts at the amazing love of the Son of God!”⁶³

Both in Gethsemane and Calvary Christ felt separated from His Father and His love, He felt agonizingly alone. He suffered the horror of hell—eternal separation from God as a guilty man. No not as a guilty man, but as the representative of the whole race of guilty

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humans! It was crushing out His very life. It was discouragement and despair all wrapped up in one, and compounded because He was the substitute for the entire race of sinners! In Gethsemane Satan tried to get Christ to believe that He would be forever separated from His Father. On the cross Jesus thought that this would truly be the case. There is an apparent intensity involved from Gethsemane to the cross, which makes the eternal separation seem so real. Now He could not see beyond the tomb, even though before He spoke of His resurrection (Matt 12:39-40) and coming in the second advent (Matt 26:64; John 14:3). Now He bore the sins of all mankind and His very life—His future with His Father—was being crushed out. In His agony He cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me” (Matt 27:46). It was as if Christ said, “Father if I will never be with you again in order to save mankind, if it means that I will perish forever so that the redeemed can live with you *in my place*, then so be it.” And He plunged into the abyss and perished! How utterly incredible! How infinite and eternal was His giving for mankind!

The mournful cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46), were wrung from the parched lips of Christ dying in our place. He plunged into hell—into God-forsakenness to restore relationships now and heaven for us. Yet it is true that “God himself was crucified with Christ; for Christ was one with the Father.”⁶⁴ What magnificent, incomparable and amazing love God has for mankind! What stark contrast to the selfish, deceptive, tyrannical works of Satan against the human race! At Calvary Christ “reinstated man in the position from which Satan had hurled him through temptation and sin.”⁶⁵

You see, only Jesus knew what it was like to live with the Father. They had been together from eternity. He knew that at God's right hand there are pleasures forevermore (Ps 16:11). Here at Calvary He was giving up that greatest joy in order to save you and me. What a startling, staggering and forever defining contrast with Satan. *The devil aimed to take Christ's place. Jesus plunged into death so that*

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we could take His place. You see, it wasn't that He was unwilling to give it up. Calvary forever proves that. "In the contest between Christ and Satan, during the Savior's earthly ministry, the character of the great deceiver was unmasked. Nothing could so effectually have uprooted Satan from the affections of the heavenly angels and the whole loyal universe as did his cruel warfare upon the world's Redeemer. . . . The pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God, while all heaven gazed upon the scene in silent horror."⁶⁶ "When Christ cried out, 'It is finished,' the unfallen worlds were made secure. For them the battle was fought and the victory won. Henceforth Satan had no place in the affections of the universe."⁶⁷

For "At the cross of Calvary, love and selfishness stood face to face. Here was their crowning manifestation. Christ had lived only to comfort and bless, and in putting Him to death, Satan manifested the malignity of his hatred against God. He made it evident that the real purpose of his rebellion was to dethrone God, and to destroy Him through whom the love of God was shown."⁶⁸

While Christ ever lives to intercede for His followers (Heb 7:25), while He rebukes their accuser Satan (Zech 3:1-4), "Daily He suffers the agonies of the crucifixion. Daily men and women are piercing Him by dishonoring Him, by refusing to do His will."⁶⁹ Who can ever measure the depths of His suffering? It is too great for humans to comprehend. Ellen White says, "The plan of salvation is too high to be fully reached by human thought. It is too grand to be fully embraced by finite comprehension."⁷⁰ Even "through the eternal ages new truth will continually unfold to the wondering and delighted mind." No wonder the cross will be the science and song of the redeemed throughout eternity!⁷¹

Final Events

According to Revelation 12 Calvary was the final, moral casting down of Satan (Rev 12:9-11). He was exposed as the murderer of

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Christ. "The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken."⁷² Then, why didn't the second advent take place soon after Calvary? "The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan's existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness."⁷³ His end-time ruling of planet earth as an assumed Christ and His final battle against Christ after the millennium would further expose his real mission to created beings. But these further exposures do not add anything to what happened at Calvary. Consider the following analogy:

Have you ever stood by the face of a mountain? You may scale it, and find more above the ridge. And that can be repeated several times. Up close to the mountain a climber really cannot take in the whole view of the mountain range. So it was at Calvary. The cross is the ultimate exposure of Satan and revelation of God. But up close to it, the full impact of what happened there could not be fully comprehended. In one sense, that will take all eternity.

When we come to final events we must ask, Why doesn't the second advent take place at the close of probation? For by probation's close God's saints will have finished the gospel commission and are translation-ready. But they must remain a little longer, through the worst time of trouble, to allow time for Satan to accomplish what he has all along wanted to do. He will then take over as the ruler of the world, and he will do it in the guise of being Christ. The utter mess that he will make of the demonstration will expose him still further, and the patience of the saints during that time will be in stark contrast to Satan and his people. They will make a demonstration that God is able to keep them and bring them through this final exodus (Jude 24) even as He did through the escape from Egypt (Exod 14-15). In the following remarks we will examine the end-time events in the light of the cosmic controversy.

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Satan is angry with the end-time church and seeks to destroy it (Rev 12:17). This is more fully shown in Revelation 13, with the whole world led into counterfeit worship, and a Sunday law and death decree enforced upon those who don't comply (Rev 13:11-17).

Consider Satan's strategy. If he can wipe out the saints, then he will have won the world—in spite of Calvary. So he throws everything he can at the saints. He gets them to look to *what* is coming instead of to *Who* is coming, to look to the *crisis* instead of to the *Christ*. From the inception of the cosmic controversy it has always been his consummate craft to deflect attention away from Christ. He doesn't care where the attention is placed—whether on him, our personal problems/sins, or our fears of end-time events—just so our Saviour is forgotten and our bond with Him is weakened.

America Causes World to Worship the Papacy (Rev 13:12). This could happen more easily with the collapse of communism. Now there is one super power. America may be moving to take its final role in world affairs. Events which may lead to this climax are happening quickly in America. The Christian Coalition is influencing politicians. Best selling author Philip Yancey, in his recent book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, says, "I worry about the recent surge of power among U.S. Christians, who seem to be focusing more and more on political means. Once Christians were ignored or scorned; now they are courted by every savvy politician."⁷⁴ Dominionists in America want to enforce Sunday keeping with a death decree.⁷⁵ This is a part of the desire to reestablish Old Testament laws and make America a theocracy. Even now all the world wonders after the beast and will be caught up in a false worship (Rev 13:3). Satan will come as Christ and reign over the world. This is what he has always wanted to do—to take Christ's place and rule.

Satan is preparing the world for this counterfeit. Never before have so many angels come to human beings. Never before have so many messages allegedly from Mary come to the human race. Pope John Paul II worships Mary. He has seen her in vision and follows her

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bidding. Never before have so many channeled books been on bookshelves. Channeled Bibles confuse and mislead the masses. Psychics are blatantly claiming to know the future, and multitudes seek them instead of Christ.

Good News about Coming Events (Rev 14). This is a special chapter for Seventh-day Adventists. It presents the three angels messages, which are the symbol of our mission. We want to look at the following segments: scene on Mount Zion (vss. 1-5); the three angels' messages (vss. 6-13); the other three angels' actions (vss. 14-20); and to compare Revelation 14 and 19.

1. Scene on Mount Zion. In Revelation 14:1, the translated saints are pictured standing on Mount Zion with Christ. In the OT Mount Zion was the place of deliverance (Isa 11:9-12; Joel 2:32; Mic 4:6-8). In the NT it says, "you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God" (Heb 12:22). So now Mount Zion is in heaven and remains there during the millennium. Then the New Jerusalem, or Mount Zion, will come to the earth made new (Rev 21:1-3). Mount Zion seems to be the name given to the mount on which God's throne is placed. It is the mount on which Satan wished to establish his throne. The translated saints are pictured there after the second advent, either during the millennium, or beyond in the new earth. Because they will follow Christ wherever He goes throughout eternity (Rev 14:4). I believe it refers to this eternal dimension. So we are given insight into the eternal experience of those who live through final events.

Scripture says, "they sang a new song before the throne" (Rev 14:3), which further supports the fact that Mount Zion is God's throne. It says that "No one could learn the song except the 144, 000 who had been redeemed from the earth" (Rev 14:3). Notice it does not say, the 144, 000 who have endured the great time of trouble. It says the 144, 000 who have been *redeemed*. The emphasis is not upon what they will do during final events, but upon what they received during final events. They were redeemed!

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What is this new song? “None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience—an experience such as no other company have ever had.”⁷⁶ They alone had passed through the great time of trouble, and thus lived after the close of human probation. No other group has ever done that. What do they sing about? Revelation records their song. It is called the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. It gives glory to God, just as the message of the first angel (Rev 14:7). It says, “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed” (Rev 15:3-4). This is the song of their experience. They worshiped God when all the world worshiped the beast (Rev 13:3-4, 12-15). They witnessed what God did to these false worshipers, and what He did for them as those who worshiped Him. The final test has to do with worship. For it is the final outworking of the cosmic controversy during which Satan and his angels refuse to worship God anymore.

This song is called the song of Moses and the Lamb. The song of Moses was sang after the mighty deliverance at the Red Sea (Exod 15:1-21). The Song of Moses brings glory to God. “Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea” (Exod 15:6-8). Not one word is mentioned about what the Israelites did. That's because they didn't bring about the deliverance. They were the recipients of the deliverance. Had not Moses told them, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (Exod 14:13-14).

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What about the Egyptians? “The enemy boasted, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them’” (Exod 15:9). They reflected the spirit of Satan who said, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds. I will make myself like the Most High” (Isa 14:13-14). These were boastful words in the heart of one in the presence of God. The Egyptians likewise boasted in the presence of the Shekinah glory with Israel (Exod 14:19-20).

It is true that the final exodus, as it were, will be through the great time of trouble. But Daniel 12:1 puts this future into proper perspective. “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered” (Dan 12:1). The greater the trouble—the greater the deliverance! Note that the 144,000 do not even mention the trouble, just as Israel after the Exodus did not mention the ordeal of going through the Red Sea. The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb are songs about God’s deliverance. And if they are singing about this in the millennium and beyond in the new earth—then *it must be worth going through!*

It is called the Song of the Lamb. He is the focus and the subject of worship. Christ, or Michael, is the One who delivers them, and Michael has never lost a battle. He was the One who threw Satan and his fiends out of heaven (Rev 12:7-8). He will banish them again in the end time and deliver His people. Isaiah speaks of this day. “Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and

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rain” (Isa 4:5-6). Ellen White comments on this passage, saying, “In one of the most beautiful and comforting passages of Isaiah’s prophecy, reference is made to the pillar of cloud and of fire to represent God’s care for His people in the great final struggle with the powers of evil.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, “Jesus is the only refuge in these perilous times.”⁷⁸ I have developed this theme more in a recent book, entitled *Christ our Refuge* (1996).⁷⁹

2. Why the Three Angels Follow this Scene. The three angels message follow the Mount Zion scene because they show the focus of the end-time saints who will be translated. The messages, as we will see, are Christ-centered. Therefore they are opposite to Satan, who is self-centered. I will confine my remarks on the three angels messages to their relation to the experience that the end-time saints will have, and about which they will sing throughout eternity. In other words, the three angels messages answer the question, “How can I be in that translated group? What preparation should I be making now?”

To answer these questions, we will not take up the historical dimension of these messages. Our interest is simple: how do they prepare the end-time saints to go through the end-time trouble? The focus of the first angel’s message is Christ the Creator. Reverence Him. Give Him glory. His judgment hour has come. Worship Him (Rev 14:7). The first angel’s message says, especially in the judgment hour, look to Christ. And in that focus, Paul says, By beholding we are becoming changed (2 Cor 3:18). Put all this together and the first angel’s message says: In this judgment hour look to Jesus and be changed.

How far does that change go? Enter the second angel’s message. Babylon is fallen (Rev 14:8). Babylon reminds us of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). This was a rebellion of the post-deluvian peoples who said, “We will build a tower to save ourselves from the next flood. You got our forbears, but you won’t get us!” This defiance represents self-dependence, a type of self-salvation. Put the two messages together and this is what you have: By beholding Christ we

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are becoming changed, so that self-dependence crumbles.

Enter the third message. It has to do with the image to the beast, or a union of church and state in America that mirrors the union of church and state in the Vatican. What is this as an experience? It is trying to be religious (church) through one's own secular (state) strength. Apart from Christ all effort is secular, even if one is trying to be religious. Now let's put the three messages together: *By beholding Christ I am being changed, so that I no longer depend upon myself, even to the extent that I no longer try to be religious through my own strength. Here is a picture of total dependence upon Christ*, the same kind of dependence that Israel had in the Red Sea, the same kind of dependence that the saints will have in the end-time. This is completely opposite to the self-dependence of the Egyptian army, the Babel builders before them, and Satan and his angels in the beginning.

In other words, the cosmic controversy impacts the experience of each person. The genuine people of God will rest fully in Christ (the deeper meaning of the final Sabbath rest test)⁸⁰ and will depend upon Him alone, because they are looking to Him alone. In marked contrast Satan and his angelic and human followers depend solely upon themselves. It is from these latter forces that Michael will deliver the end-time saints. So that our victory in passing through last day events is due to Christ and never to ourselves. This is why we should not fear end-events. We should not look to the crisis but to the Christ. Satan knows this. He knows that if he can deflect attention away from Christ, then he will get people in the end. So he will cause the saints to become preoccupied with the crisis and thereby lose sight and sense of Christ.

3. The Other Three Angels. There are six angels in Revelation 14. The first three have a message; the second three have a mission. The three with a mission are depicted in connection with the second advent. The first of these angels says to Christ "Take your sickle and reap" (vs. 15), and He harvested the saints (vs.16). The second angel

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has a sharp sickle (vs. 17), as does Christ (vs. 14). The third angel says to the one with a sharp sickle “Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe” (vs. 18). “The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath” (vs. 19). Clearly this is the destruction of the wicked. Here is a destroying angel coming in judgment, just as the destroying angel came at the Passover, just before Israel left Egypt.⁸¹ The Exodus from Egypt is a local type of the global exodus from this world at the second advent of Christ.

4. Comparison of Revelation 14 and 19. Both Revelation 14 and 19 portray second advent scenes and describe the climax of the cosmic controversy in human history. There is a remarkable difference in the presentations. In Revelation 14 Christ comes seated on a white cloud, and is “‘like a son of man’ with a crown of gold on his head” (Rev 14:14). The Greek word for crown in this verse is *stephanos*, or a laurel wreath of victory that an Olympiad received after winning a game. Here Jesus is pictured as a fellow human being, who has won the cosmic controversy through His life and death. He comes solely to harvest His saints in this chapter. The angel does the work of destroying the lost.

In complete contrast, in Revelation 19, Christ comes seated on a white horse. He comes to judge and to make war. He comes with many crowns on His head (vss. 11-12). He comes with the armies of heaven on white horses (vs. 14). He comes with a sharp sword to strike the nations. He comes to rule with an iron scepter. He comes treading “the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty” (vs. 15). He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords (vs. 16). The Greek word for the multiple crowns He wears is *diadem*, worn only by those of royal lineage. Here is a portrayal of Christ as the divine, eternal God coming in vengeance against the enemies of His people. Here is Michael coming to deliver His people.

“Then I saw the beast [Catholicism] and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on

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the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet [Apostate Protestantism] who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf” (vs. 19. See Rev 16:12-16). With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image (see Rev 13:11-15). The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh (vss. 19-21).

The Cosmic Controversy Ended

After the close of the millennium all the wicked are raised from their graves. “Every eye in that vast multitude is turned to behold the glory of the Son of God. With one voice the wicked hosts exclaim: ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!’ It is not love to Jesus that inspires this utterance. The force of truth urges the words from unwilling lips.”⁸² Then Christ descends upon the Mount of Olives. The New Jerusalem descends and Christ, His saints and angels enter it.

Satan then prepares for his final attempt for supremacy over Christ. “He claims to be the prince who is the rightful owner of the world, and whose inheritance has been unlawfully wrested from him. He represents himself to his deluded subjects as a redeemer, assuring them that his power has brought them forth from their graves, and that he is about to rescue them from the most cruel tyranny. The presence of Christ having been removed, Satan works wonders to support his claim.”⁸³

The wicked are those who have “devoted all their skill and knowledge to the exaltation of themselves.”⁸⁴ They look at their numbers compared to the number of those inside the city and declare that they can overcome the city. Time is spent in organizing the greatest army ever to march. Instruments of war are made. The greatest kings and generals of all history are engaged with Satan in

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this final attack on Christ. They surround the city. Then Christ appears again to them, seated on a throne high above the city. Christ is surrounded by the redeemed.

All humanity are alive at the same time. Those surrounding the city glory in their pride and numbers. What about the redeemed. Ellen White says, "As the redeemed have beheld the power and malignity of Satan, they have seen, as never before, that no power but that of Christ could have made them conquerors. In all that shining throng there are none to ascribe salvation to themselves, as if they had prevailed by their own power and goodness. Nothing is said of what they have done or suffered; but the burden of every song, the keynote of every anthem, is: Salvation to our God and unto the Lamb."⁸⁵

Then the coronation of Christ takes place. Above the throne, flung across the heavens, is replayed major moments of the cosmic controversy. Christ, His life of sacrifice, His death—all are seen in vivid detail. The heavens form a gigantic three dimensional screen and all created beings stand absorbed. "And now before the swaying multitude are revealed the final scenes—the patient Sufferer treading the path to Calvary; the Prince of heaven hanging upon the cross; the haughty priests and the jeering rabble deriding His expiring agony; the supernatural darkness; the heaving earth, the rent rocks, the open graves, marking the moment when the world's Redeemer yielded up His life."⁸⁶

All created beings will on this day be Christ-centered and will gaze on Calvary—even though briefly. But it will be enough for all to know that Christ is just in the cosmic controversy. Each will have witnessed Calvary, and they cannot help but see the extravagant mercy and profligate grace of Christ. The wicked "witness the outburst of wonder, rapture, and adoration from the saved; and as the wave of melody sweeps over the multitudes without the city, all with one voice exclaim, 'Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints'; and falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of life."⁸⁷

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“Before the vision of Calvary with its mysterious Victim, sinners will stand condemned. Every lying excuse will be swept away. Human apostasy will appear in its heinous character. Men will see what their choice has been. Every question of truth and error in the long standing controversy will then have been made plain. In the judgment of the universe, God will stand clear of blame for the existence or continuance of evil. It will; be demonstrated that the divine decrees are not accessory to sin. There was no defect in God’s government, no cause for disaffection. When the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed, both the loyal and the rebellious will unite in declaring, ‘Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name. . . for Thy judgments are made manifest’” (Rev 15:3, 4).⁸⁸

Satan stands among those looking at the coronation of Christ and the great scenes of Calvary. Satan “recalls his constant efforts to oppose the work of Christ and to sink man lower and lower. He sees that his hellish plots have been powerless to destroy those who have put their trust in Jesus. As Satan looks upon his kingdom, the fruit of his toil, he sees only failure and ruin.”⁸⁹ “In his last great effort to dethrone Christ, destroy His people, and take possession of the city of God, the arch deceiver has been fully unmasked. Those who have united with him see the total failure of his cause. Christ’s followers and the loyal angels behold the full extent of his machinations against the government of God. He is the object of universal abhorrence. . . . His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence.”⁹⁰

The Verdict in the Controversy

Through Isaiah God invites, “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. . . Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of

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me, In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength” (Isa 45:22-24). The appeal is, Why not respond now and be saved, instead of waiting to respond when it is too late. Paul observes that this universal acknowledgment happens at the final judgment. “For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. It is written: ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘Every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God’” (Rom 14:11).

What causes this unanimous vote for Christ? Do created beings judge God? Is this what it means when it says, “the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7). As we have seen above, the final scenes of Christ’s life will be replayed. In all its terrible detail, across the heavens, will be shown Christ’s crucifixion for all mankind. The swaying multitude will take in the scene. They cannot look anywhere else. They remain riveted to the drama as it unfolds. Too late they gaze at Christ and at Calvary instead of to self and other things. Too late they stand absorbed in the supremely central Person and act of the cosmic controversy. Too late they realize that God has done everything to save them. The fact of their being lost is due only to their rejecting His death for them. It is then that every knee will bow and confess the justice of God. Even Satan and his angels join in this confession. Though coming from unwilling lips, they cannot help but confess. The evidence is overwhelmingly clear. They cannot escape it. There is no other option. Calvary has forever demonstrated to the universe that God is just. Satan stands fully unmasked.

This confession by all intelligent created beings is not a case of their sitting in judgment on God. That would be no different from biblical critics sitting in judgment on Scripture. Rather, it is a confession that issues out of the self-revelation of God in the life and death of Jesus Christ. It is also a response to the unmasking of Satan. His assumed role as Christ has been utterly exposed, before the second advent and again after the millennium. It is in these attempts to take the place of Christ, and to battle openly against Him, and to

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take the city that Satan is seen for what he has always been since the inception of the cosmic controversy.

So the actions of both Christ and Satan have revealed their characters. It is this self-revelation of each which convinces the onlooking universe. They cannot help coming to the verdict they do because the evidence is so overwhelming. The contrast between the authentic Christ and the counterfeit Christ is so startlingly different. There is an infinite qualitative distinction between the two. Christ was willing to die for the lost world, and never live again so that they could live in His place. Satan was only willing to take Christ's place and rule as a tyrant over his followers. Christ is other-centered. Satan is self-centered. But more than anything else, the greatest evidence of the distinct difference between them—the uncrossable dividing line—is seen at Calvary. There Christ perished for His created beings. There Satan as a created being took the life of His Creator.

“Never will evil again be manifest. Says the word of God: ‘Affliction shall not rise up the second time.’ Nahum 1:9. The law of God, which Satan has re-proached as the yoke of bondage, will be honored as the law of liberty. A tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested before them as fathomless love and infinite wisdom.”⁹¹ All unfallen and redeemed beings will delight to study the cross forever. “The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. 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. . . . 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.”⁹²

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The Controversy and Adventist Christians

In light of what we have considered above, we now ask the question: What is an Adventist Christian? The answer is simple. An Adventist Christian is one who loves Jesus and therefore hates Satan. An Adventist is one who is Christ-centered in all he or she does. This means Calvary is ever kept in mind. Calvary is the guarantee of sins forgiven, of present acceptance and of future assurance. With Paul, an Adventist declares, “For to me, to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). The prayer of an Adventist is, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal 6:14).

Satan boasts in himself, even in the presence of God at the throne. In utter contrast Adventists fall down and worship Christ and boast only in His death for them at Calvary. Their cry is, “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Rev 5:12). This is the essence of the first angel’s everlasting gospel—to give glory to Him (Rev 14:6-7). This is why Adventists should have no fear of final events. Because, for them, *the final event was Calvary* (Rev 12:8-11). There Jesus triumphed over Satan. So they look forward to the ultimate effect of that victory for them in the final events when Jesus will deliver them and destroy their enemies (Dan 12:1). They have no fear of the *coming crisis* because they depend alone in their loving relationship with the *coming Christ*. They revel in the assurance He has promised: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Heb 13:5), for “I will be with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:20). And throughout eternity the end-time generation will “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev 14:4). Our destiny is to be with Jesus and praise Him for His infinite gift of salvation. To do that now is to be an authentic Adventist Christians.

No wonder God has admonished His end-time people, “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let

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the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross."⁹³ It is precisely this that separates the redeemed from the lost. It is precisely this humility at Calvary that is so Christ-like, and so different from Satan. This is the place where the cosmic controversy was seen for what it is, and the place where it was forever decided. It is in this place, in our love for Christ and His substitutionary death for us, that makes us a true Adventist Christian.

Our greatest need is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. "When the Spirit of God, with its marvelous awakening power, touches the soul, it abases human pride. Worldly pleasure and position and power are seen to be worthless. 'Imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God' are cast down; every thought is brought into captivity 'to the obedience of Christ' 2 Cor 10:5. Then humility and self-sacrificing love, so little valued among men, are exalted as alone of worth."⁹⁴ The Spirit of Christ within the Adventist life makes the person like Jesus. This is where the cosmic controversy is won for each Adventist, where the self-sacrificing love of Calvary is applied to the life in forgiveness and transforming power to love Christ with all the heart and to be His channel of unconditional love to other human beings.

Endnotes

* Biblical citations are from the NIV, unless otherwise noted.

1 Some books on world views include, Gordon H. Clark. *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952). Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989). Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988). James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, (New York: Scribner's and Sons, 1904). W. Gary Phillips and William E. Brown, *Making Sense of your World from a Biblical Viewpoint*,

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Chicago: Moody Press, 1991). Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and its Transformation*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1953). James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984). Chapters on world views are found in William H.A. Halverson, *A Concise Introduction to Philosophy*, (New York: Random House, 1981) "The Christian World View," pp. 21-66), James L. Garrett, Jr., *Systematic Theology, Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), "Natural Theology: Worldviews," 1:70-84. For world views in theology see *Paradigms and Progress in Theology*, eds., J. Mouton, A.G. van Aarde and W. S. Vorster, (Human Sciences Research Council, 1988).

2 Naturalism includes Atheism, Physicalism, Humanism, Existentialism and Hedonism 2. Transcendentalism includes Pantheism, Animism, Panpsy-chism, Panentheism and Polytheism. 3. Theism includes Deism, Finitism and Traditional Theism. See W. Gary Phillips and William E. Brown, *Making Sense of Your World from a Biblical Viewpoint*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), pp. 41-67.

3 Richard M. Davidson, "Saints, Celestial Slander," *Perspective Digest: A Publication of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 1 #1, 1996, pp. 31-34.

4 See an illuminating book by Brian D. Ingraffia, *Postmodern Theory and Biblical Theology: Vanquishing God's Shadow*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University, 1996), where the author documents that Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida are examples of postmodern thinkers who oppose the God of Scripture. They set up the god of their own thinking as better than the God of revelation. This has been Satan's strategy from the beginning, so that the eschatological Christ of Satan's impersonation will be accepted as the authentic Christ. Throughout the cosmic controversy Satan's attack has been consistently against Christ.

5 "His death has now answered the question whether there was self-denial with the Father and the Son." Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 9, 1886.

6 Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 16, 1900.

7 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 57.

8 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, August 27, 1902.

9 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1893.

10 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 499.

11 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, June 18, 1894.

12 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, February 5, 1894.

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- 13 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 37.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, January 16, 1896.
- 15 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.
- 16 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, March 7, 1895.
- 17 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 33.
- 18 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.
- 19 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 223.
- 20 Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 29, 1891.
- 21 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 315.
- 22 Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 23, 1890.
- 23 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 188.
- 24 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, March 28, 1895.
- 25 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 4, 1889.
- 26 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 23, 1894.
- 27 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 17, 1895.
- 28 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 11, 1908.
- 29 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 24, 1908.
- 30 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 30, 1901.
- 31 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, February 22, 1899.
- 32 *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988). Although there are headings given to six major sections, the order of the fundamental beliefs remains the same. I view this as a step in the right direction, but it overlooks the needs to rearrange the 27 in a different order for the reasons presented in this article.
- 33 For those who desire more on the above suggestions, see my article in *Ministry*, July 1996.
- 34 John D. W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary, Isaiah 1-33* (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), Vol. 24, p. 74.
- 35 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35.
- 36 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 36.
- 37 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 37.

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- 38 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 21.
- 39 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 39.
- 40 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 496.
- 41 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 40.
- 42 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 40-41.
- 43 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 42.
- 44 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 49.
- 45 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 88.
- 46 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 89.
- 47 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 91.
- 48 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 92.
- 49 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 118.
- 50 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 119.
- 51 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 129.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 685.
- 54 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 686.
- 55 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 687.
- 56 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 687.
- 57 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 688-693.
- 58 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.
- 59 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.
- 60 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 540.
- 61 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, November 25, 1889.
- 62 Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 5, 1887.
- 63 Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 10, 1892.
- 64 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, March 26, 1894.
- 65 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, March 26, 1894.
- 66 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 501.
- 67 Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 12, 1901.
- 68 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 57.
- 69 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, January 28, 1903.
- 70 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889.
- 71 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19-20 and *The Great Controversy*, p. 651.
- 72 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.
- 73 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

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74 Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), p. 246.

75 G. Bahnsen's book, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley, NJ: Craig, 1979) says, "The Christian is obligated to keep the whole law of God as a pattern of sanctification and . . . this law is to be enforced by the civil magistrate where and how the stipulations of God so designate" (p. 45). Compare stoning to death for Sabbath-breaking, Number 15:32-35. In commenting on Bahnsen's above statement, and others, Douglas E. Chismar and David A. Rausch, in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, rightly express their concern ("Regarding Theonomy: An Essay of Concern," *JETS*, Vol. 27, Sept. 1984, p. 315). Gary North, another dominion leader says, "I am calling for international theocracy. . . for this international theocracy is exactly what the Bible requires. . . Every nation is as much under God's sovereign rule as every individual is. The goal of the gospel is to subdue every soul, every institution, and every nation under God" (Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Principles for International Relations*, (Fort Worth, TX: Dominion, 1987, pp. 56-57). H. Wayne House and Thomas Ice, in their book, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse? An Analysis of Christian Reconstructionism*, (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1988), state that Reconstructionist' positions include "Application of the death penalty for virtually all of the capital crimes listed in the Old Testament law, including adultery, homosexuality, fornication, apostasy, incorrigibility in children, blasphemy, and perhaps Sabbath-breaking, along with murder and kidnapping" (p. 40).

76 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 649.

77 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 283.

78 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, April 20, 1876.

79 Norman R. Gulley, *Christ Our Refuge* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1996).

80 Developed in my recent book, *Christ Is Coming* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 321-366.

81 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 279.

82 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 662.

83 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 663.

84 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 664.

85 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 665.

86 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 667.

87 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 668-669. The wicked have no negative vote. Ellen White says, "The cross of Calvary would be looked upon by the unfallen worlds, by the heavenly universe, by Satanic agencies, by the fallen race, and every mouth would be stopped" (*The Signs of the Times*, July 12, 1899.)

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- 88 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 58.
89 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 669.
90 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 670.
91 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 504.
92 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889.
93 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.
94 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 135.
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