

Andrews University
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THE ISSUES OF THE GREAT CONTROVERSY
WHICH REQUIRE BLOOD RECONCILIATION

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Introduction

In an attempt to determine the question as to what were the issues in the great controversy which brought about the death of God's Son we are dealing with a question that is directly tangent to that of the meaning and significance of atonement; though it is not the purpose of this paper to examine the question of the atonement itself but rather to address the question of the justification of God, or more specifically to attempt to determine what were the issues which required blood for the reconciliation, and why did an omnipotent God not respond in a different manner – one that would not have cost Him so much. John Murray in his book Redemption Accomplished and Applied¹ has asked the question this way; "Why did not God realize the purpose of his love for mankind by the word of his power and the fiat of his will? If we say that he could not do we not impugn his power? If we say that he could but would not, do we not impugn his wisdom?"² The question can be pressed further; why did the Great Creator of all things and people become as one of His created? Why did He subject Himself to the atrocities which occur to a humanity who had by choice separated themselves from their Creator and His loving care after He had made ever provision to enable them to have faith in Him and to know His love and concern for them? And, if He felt a necessity to become one of the family of humanity, why did He have to die, and if He must die, why must He die the death which occurred?

There are those who suggest that salvation could have been brought about by other means but that God selected this particular one because "this is the way in which the greatest number of advantages concur and the way in which grace is more marvelously exhibited".³ Those who hold this position feel that there is nothing inherent in the nature of God or in the remission of sin that makes blood reconciliation anything indispensable.

Mrs. White addresses the question of human beings understanding the issue under discussion by saying "They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love. Here is a mystery of which they find no explanation. And in their uncertainty and doubt they are blinded to truths plainly revealed in God's word and essential to salvation. There are those who, in their inquiries, concerning the existence of sin, endeavor to search into that which God has never revealed; hence they find no solution of their difficulties; and such as are actuated by a disposition to doubt and

¹ John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961).

² Ibid., p. 11.

³ Ibid., p. 12.

cavil seize upon this as an excuse for rejecting the words of Holy Writ. Others, however, fail of a satisfactory understanding of the great problem of evil, from the fact that tradition and misinterpretation have obscured the teaching of the Bible concerning the character of God, the nature of His government, and the principles of His dealing with sin.

“It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin to make manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil.”⁴

By the word justice reference is made in theology to 1 – the nature of God; 2 – the integrity or righteousness of man lost by virtue of his sin; and 3 – the proper relationship which should exist between men. When used in this way “justice is defined as that virtue that disposes a man to give to every other man those rights belonging to him.”⁵ When the justice of God is referred to in this paper we mean the aspect of God’s character which causes Him to always act in harmony with His law – Mrs. White puts it this way; “What is the justice of God? It is the holiness of God in relation to sin.”⁶ It is this attribute of justice which gives stability and trustworthiness to God’s love. “A love that could change we might love, but we could not trust it, however immense. It is the holiness within love that is the ground of such trust in it as makes religion. It is this holiness that enables us to meet the love of God with faith, and not merely with gladness; to trust it forever and not only welcome it at a time.”⁷ Christ’s primary concern was not simply to reveal the forgiving love of God, but the holiness of such love.⁸

The divine plan for dealing with sin, as revealed in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, has four important aspects – the arise of the conflict, development of the issues, and clarification of the issues by way of demonstration, and the resolving of the conflict – that is, the destruction of all that is evil.

This end goal – the destruction of evil at a future time is that which necessitates the concept within theology which is known as the justification of God, or the vindication of God. Mrs. White speaks to this relationship when she writes. “The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan’s deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the

⁴ Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1911), p. 492.

⁵ Van A. Harvey, A Handbook of Theological Terms (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 134f.

⁶ M. S. 145, 1897 quoted in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol., VII, 951.

⁷ P. T. Forsyth, The Cruciality of the Cross (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1957), p. 71.

⁸ Ibid., p. viii.

principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force of authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifest in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, 'with healing in His wings'. Mal. 4:2."⁹ By the justification of God is, therefore meant those acts of God which He expressly does and those which he permits in His guidance of the affairs of individuals and nations, which, when observed collectively, clearly demonstrate the issues of the great controversy between Christ and Satan and which reveal the character of God so that He can never again be misunderstood or His righteousness, love, or wisdom questioned or impugned. "God desires from all His creatures the service of love – homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service."¹⁰

When it is suggested that God needs or seeks justification or vindication some people are offended. It seems to suggest to them that Christ's death on the cross may have been the result of something other than, or in – addition – to His loving desire to Redeem us. This synthesis they find foreign. "Few realize how important to God is the vindication and triumph of His saints."¹¹ Peter Forsythe in his book The Justification of God writes that "There is even what we might call a racial egoism, a self-engrossment of mankind with itself, a naïve and tacit assumption that God were no God if He cared for anything more than He did for His creatures. We tend to think of God as if man were His chief end, as if He had no right to a supreme concern for His own holy name, as if His prodigals were more to Him than His only begotten Son in whom He made the worlds and has all His delight. We think and worship as if the only question was whether God loves us, instead of whether His love has absolute power to give itself eternal and righteous effect."¹² In Patriarchs and Prophets it is expressed thus; "But the plan of redemption has a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might

⁹ Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), p. 22.

¹⁰ G. C. 493.

¹¹ Edward Heppenstahl, Our High Priest (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1972), p. 122.

¹² P. T. Forsyth, The Justification of God (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1957), p. 11.

regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate¹³ the character of God before the universe.”¹⁴

Not only is God being vindicated in the working out of the issues of the great conflict but God’s law, the reflection of His character, is also being revealed as ‘holy, just and good’.¹⁵

Gottfried Quell states “That God posits law, and that He is bound to it as a just God, is a fundamental tenant in the OT knowledge of faith in all its variations. The element of unity in the faith of all the righteous in Israel, whether prophets, priests, lawgivers, or men of less distinctive sociological type, is the acknowledgement of God’s law ordering all life both great and small and forming a basis for hope.”¹⁶ Isaiah expresses this relation between God’s law and the hope of the nation when he writes “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, ...; he will save us.”¹⁷ The character of the law and its blessedness to those who possessed it was noted by Moses; “And what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”¹⁸ The New Testament also has this same understanding. (See for example, Matt. 5:17, 18; Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:12; James 4:12, etc.

When the controversy and its issues have been set forth “The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to the angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before the universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law.”¹⁹

¹³ Note: The vindication of God is the vindication of His own righteousness; the vindication of man is on basis of his having claimed Christ’s righteousness.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), p. 68.

¹⁵ Romans 7:12.

¹⁶ Gottfried Quell, “The Concept of Law in the OT”, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, II (1964), 176.

¹⁷ Isaiah 33:22.

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 4:7, 8, 2.

¹⁹ For parallel passage see D. A. 746.

The centrality of the law to the issues of the great controversy, and the fact of its presence in the heart of all who choose to serve God, requires a brief analysis as to what constitutes law that it can be so very important.

Webster²⁰ gives several definitions of law. The most simple is “The general expression of will enforced by power.” More specifically certain facts are associated with the presence of a law; 1 – a lawgiver or authoritative will; 2 – subjects to whom the law is given; 3 – a command or expression of this will; 4 – a power enforcing the command. Therefore to speak of laws of nature or mind is a contradiction in terms if we think of them as not having an ordering will behind them.

When we bring the forensic concept of law into the milieu of divine revelation we shift from an abstract concept to the concrete – the Law of God. This law has two forms; the elemental law and the positive enactment. “Elemental law is law inwrought into the elements, substances, and forces of rational and irrational creatures.”²¹ This elemental inwrought law in irrational beings is known as natural law; in the material universe it is known as physical law and in rational beings it is known as moral law. Moral law is in each being and its presence implies all four of the points which are characteristic of law. We contain the physical law, which tells us to do good and avoid evil through our consciences, but which doesn’t tell us what is good or what is evil. This elemental law can be summed up thus: 1 – It is an expression of the nature of God; of His character in relation to rational beings; 2 – it is in us without our choice – but we can silence its voice to us; 3 – all men bear witnesses to the existence of that law; 4 – those men who have received the written (positive) law recognize this elemental law as being in harmony with it.

The positive law is the expression of God’s will for man published in ordinances and addressed to man in the condition in which he is.²² It constitutes a definition of what God declares to be good, in its admonitions, and what He declares to be bad, in its prohibitions. This means the Law of God is the expression of His character, and as such is a revelation of His love and holiness.²³ This positive law is 1 – never arbitrary: arbitrariness denotes ignorance; 2 – it is eternal, it is a manifestation of the essential nature of God; 3 – not negative: God asks – requires – a positive adherence to it. Back of each law is a real requirement. Therefore it is spiritual; 4 – It is not partial: it is to all of man. The law does not deal

²⁰ “Law”, Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, 1963.

²¹ Henry Clarence Thiessen, Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p. 239.

²² Signs of the Times, April 15, 1886, quoted by Dr. Dederen.

²³ P. P. p. 52.

with only a part of man's nature but with every aspect of man, because it is from God and reveals and represents the whole nature of God. 5 – It is not limited in its scope by man's consciousness of it. We can't do away with God's dominion by denying it or refusing to submit to it. 6 – It is not local or confined to place. No moral creatures can escape from God or from himself. 7 – It is not changeable or capable of modification – except when so expressed in God's word because it reflects His character and He changes not. Any expression of God's will lasts as long as the condition which called it forth lasts.²⁴

In summary, God's law is both built into the creatures that He has created and explicitly expressed. It is in principle always the same as it reflects the character of the Great Lawgiver who never changes; but in formula it is expressed in various ways so as to meet the specific needs of man in the condition he is when God addresses him. This means that each formulation of the law by God is another revelation of His character and His will for man. It also follows that for man to live in a way that doesn't follow the expressions of God's will as set forth by Himself causes estrangement between that man and God.

We can now see why in any controversy involving a challenge to the authority of God, or questioning His intent toward and for His creatures, His law would be attacked; the character of God cannot be questioned without the direct expression of His character also being questioned. It is also now clear that any actions on the part of God which served to reveal the truth of His character or the make clear the nature of the one making the accusations against Him and His acts, would at the same time reveal the nature of the law which He had formulated. Thus any discussion of the charges against, or the resolving of a conflict involving the lawgiver must of necessity simultaneously deal with the laws He formulated which are the expression of the aspects of character which is involved in the controversy; if the whole nature and character of the Giver is being questioned then also all His laws are questioned and with the condemnation or vindication of the lawgiver, His laws are condemned or vindicated. Finally, if the issue at hand is to conceal the real character of the lawmaker to enable one to present him differently, His law must also be concealed, changed, or made to appear changed.

As we take up now the direct discussion of the issues which required God to reveal himself as Scripture records, we can anticipate there will be the issues; explicitly stated and implicitly revealed in acts. There will be moves made by those involved to better reveal the issues, or to make them obscure, according to how the contestant feels the observers will react to his position, finally a direct

²⁴ Taken from Dr. Dederen's lecture and Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 218ff.

confrontation and then progression toward an ultimate end of the conflict, and central to all this will be the expression of the One under attack – His law.

Chapter One

Peter Forsyth comments “War makes at least one contribution to salvation – it is sins apocalypse”.²⁵ In war man is revealed at his worst, generally; he is seen to be vastly different than His creator. Dr. Forsythe then asks, “If man is a failure – is God too?”²⁶ When man, Christian man and Christian nations, are seen as being so un-Christlike is it reasonable to believe in God’s government of the world and His destiny for it?²⁷ Albert Bledsoe believes it is. He feels we are looking in the wrong direction when we ask this question. He notes “that although God is infinitely willing to secure the existence of universal holiness, to the exclusion of all sin, yet such a thing is not an object of power, and therefore cannot be produced by omnipotence itself.” “Sin is that which his soul abhors, and which all the perfections of his nature, his infinite power and wisdom, no less than his holiness, are pledged to wipe out from the face of his creation. He does not cause, he does not tolerate sin, on account of its happy effects, or on account of the uses to which it may be turned. The only word he has for such a thing is woe; and the only attitude he bears toward it is one of eternal and inexorable vengeance. All the schemes of men make light of sin; but God is in earnest, infinitely and immutably in earnest, in the purpose to root out and destroy the odious thing, that it may have no place amid the glory of his dominions.”²⁸

In considering in more detail God’s justice in relationship to the sin problem we will begin within the milieu of the origin of evil.

“Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with God’s will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Christ the Word, the only-begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father – one in nature, in character, and in purpose, - ‘By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, ...whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers’ (Colossians 1:16); and to Christ, equally with the Father, all heaven gave allegiance.

“The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from

²⁵ Forsyth, J. of G., p. 19.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁸ Albert Taylor Bledsoe, A Theodicy: or Vinidication of the Divine Glory (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1853), p. 352.

all His creatures the service of love – homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.”²⁹ “So long as all created beings acknowledge the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God.”³⁰ But one of God’s created beings became proud of himself, because of his wisdom and beauty. He was one of the cherubs that covereth the throne of God. His name was Lucifer and it is said of him that he was perfect in all ways from the time of his creation by God until he lifted up his heart against the One who had made him and given him all he possessed.³¹ Mrs. White states “Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position ...he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator.”³² He said in his heart. “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.”³³ Instead of seeking to love impartially and be an agent of revelation to his fellow angels, a responsibility he could fulfill due to his closeness to God, he sought to turn their service and loyalty to himself. By acting thus he was coveting the power and glory which were the particular prerogative of the Son of God.³⁴ As time passed and Lucifer continued to cherish these desires to have that which belonged to another – God’s Son – the desire became stronger and stronger until 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’.³⁵ He then began to work actively, though subtly to gain the support and loyalty of the other angels, who were quite confused by the presence of conflict and the sophistry of Lucifer. God called a council and explicitly declared the position the Son was to have in heaven. God was not willing that any of His children should be deceived concerning His loving desire for them to be happy and free.³⁶ When Lucifer left the council meeting of the hosts of heaven he began again to seek to turn the loyalty, allegiance, and service of the angels to himself. He sought to accomplish this aim by suggesting that God’s laws for the angels were capable of improvement. He pointed out to them that he would make the necessary improvements if he could have the opportunity, but that he would first

²⁹ G. C. p. 493f.

³⁰ P. P. p. 35.

³¹ Ezekiel 28:11ff.

³² P. P. p. 35.

³³ Isaiah 14:13,14 quoted in P. P. p. 35.

³⁴ P. P. p. 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁶ P. P. p. 36ff.; G. C. p. 494ff.; Ellen G. White, The Story of Redemption (Washington D. C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1947), p. 13ff.

have to attain to his true and exalted position; but he would then secure freedom for all.³⁷ He claimed that changes in the laws and order of heaven were necessary for the stability of the divine government, and that these proposed changes did not constitute sedition for he himself was perfectly loyal to God.³⁸ The Father of all worked with this erring son. "Lucifer himself had not at first been acquainted with the real nature of his feelings; He did not see whether he was drifting. But such efforts as infinite love and wisdom only could devise, were made to convince him of his error. His disaffection was proved to be without cause, and he was made to see what would be the result of persisting in revolt. Lucifer was convinced that he was wrong. He saw that 'the Lord was 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."³⁹ But Lucifer chose to continue his opposition; when the angels suggested he should be quickly reconciled to God he would point to the longsuffering of God and declare it was an evidence of his own superiority and an indication that he would prevail and the Father would accede to his terms. "He persistently defended his own course and full committed himself to the great controversy against his Maker.⁴⁰ Thus Lucifer became "the adversary of God and holy beings and the destroyer of those whom Heaven had committed to his guidance and guardianship. He would never again acknowledge the supremacy of Christ.⁴¹ He promised to all those who would enter his ranks and support him as he attempted to gain the honor that he felt should have been given him by the Creator, that he would provide them with a new and better government.⁴² As the loyal angels continued to seek to turn the rebellious from their course, many were inclined to seek God and forgiveness, but Lucifer declared to them that they had gone too far; that he knew the law of God and that the Father would not forgive them.⁴³ The rest of the rebellious were stopped from seeking to be reunited with their fellow angels by "pride, love for their leader, and the desire for unrestricted freedom."⁴⁴ Lucifer accused the loyal angels of indifference to the good of the heavenly hosts. He made God appear as severe and unforgiving⁴⁵ by subtle arguments. He cast doubts upon the plainest statements of God. "It was necessary for his (Satan's) plans to be fully developed, that their true nature and tendency might be seen by all. ...He had artfully presented his side of the question, employing sophistry and fraud to secure his objects. ...By

³⁷ P. P. p. 37.

³⁸ ibid., p. 38.

³⁹ ibid., p. 39.

⁴⁰ ibid., p. 40.

⁴¹ ibid.

⁴² ibid.

⁴³ ibid.

⁴⁴ ibid., p. 41.

⁴⁵ D. A. p. 22.

disguising himself in a cloak of falsehood, he had gained an advantage. All his acts were so clothed with mystery that it was difficult to disclose to the angels that true nature of his work. Until fully developed, it could not be made to appear the evil thing it was; his disaffection would not be seen to be rebellion. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character or see to what his work was leading."⁴⁶ Lucifer's desire for supremacy was in opposition to the laws of heaven, hence he misrepresented God's government, sought to make false the word of God, and claimed that God was unjust when he placed the angels under laws. He claimed God was seeking only His own exaltation by His form of government and that God was thus responsible for his speaking out and the resulting discord; that when the truth and perceptiveness of his claims were recognized all heaven would realize the good he was seeking to promote. Because of this claim by Lucifer to be seeking the good of all and to improve God's law, God permitted him to demonstrate the nature of his claims. Satan had claimed from the beginning he was not in rebellion.⁴⁷ God does not force anyone to serve Him; He seeks to be loved, which love finds its foundation in an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom and kind justice.⁴⁸ God knew that to let Lucifer work out his plan of rule would effectively show "what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made."⁴⁹ God allowed Lucifer to speak to the angels while His love and mercy sought to reconcile them with His law and Himself; but ultimately there was war in heaven, which caused each angel to take his stand on the issue, and the rebellious were cast out of heaven. "Not a taint of rebellion was left in heaven. All was again peaceful and harmonious as before."⁵⁰

"Even when he was cast out of heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since only the service of love can be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of heaven and of the worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the

⁴⁶ D. A. p. 41.

⁴⁷ P. P. p. 42.

⁴⁸ G. C. p. 541.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 499.

⁵⁰ S. R. p. 19.

immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question.”⁵¹ Any final action by God that would have left any doubt or fear in the minds of any of His created would have been “as evil seed that would yield the better fruit of sin and woe”.⁵² Even when Lucifer was cast out of heaven and had caused man to fall he declared God’s unjust restrictions were the cause of man’s fall as they were the cause of his own.⁵³

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God they broke His law for His word is the expression of His will. By disregarding His will for them they opened a great gulf between themselves and God. “Sin brought separation between God and man.”⁵⁴ “The wages of sin is death.”⁵⁵ “The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man satisfy its claims.”⁵⁶ Since the divine law is as sacred as God who made it, and exalted it equal to Himself,⁵⁷ it is necessary for one who was equal with God, to make the broken law whole, if transgressors were to have any hope of life. “None but Christ could redeem man from the curse of the law and bring him into harmony with heaven.”⁵⁸ As the controversy developed the inhabitants of the other worlds watched with ‘deepest interest’ what was going on at planet Earth after the fall of Adam and Eve.

God’s revelation of the nature of sin began almost immediately. When Cain sinned so violently, perhaps no one would have questioned God had He slain Cain; but “In sparing the life of Cain, God had demonstrated to the universe what would be the result of permitting sin to go unpunished.”⁵⁹ The influence of Cain, spread to those who were near him, both through his example and his teaching, produced the state of affairs that demanded the destruction of the world by the flood.⁶⁰ This development of conditions on the earth illustrated to the inhabitants of other worlds “the results of the administration which Lucifer had endeavored to establish in heaven, in rejecting the authority of Christ and casting aside the law of God.”⁶¹ The flood itself served to reveal proleptically the ultimate

⁵¹ P. P. p. 42.

⁵² Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), p. 72.

⁵³ G.C. p. 500.

⁵⁴ P. P. p. 67.

⁵⁵ Romans 6:23.

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⁵⁷ S. R. p. 19.

⁵⁸ P. P. p. 43. Note: such passages as Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:9-18; 9:9-14, 22-28, teach very plainly that the efficacy of Christ’s work is contingent upon the unique constitution of His person. Murray, op. cit., p. 14.

⁵⁹ P. P. p. 325.

⁶⁰ Ibid.,

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 79.

destruction of evil; it was a revelation of the principle that when evil is clearly seen to be evil – God will destroy it; there is no more reason for Him to let it exist.

Lucifer had said “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God”, but the Son of God “thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:....”⁶² When Christ came to this earth He was mistreated and unappreciated; “Heaven marked the insult and mockery that He received, and knew that it was at Satan’s instigation. They marked the work of counter agencies going forward; Satan constantly pressing darkness, sorrow, and suffering upon the race, and Christ counteracting it.”⁶³ All the time of Jesus’ active ministry, from His experience in the wilderness until the crucifixion “Satan’s wrath beat upon Him;” but all these difficulties only served by contrast to show the loveliness of Jesus’ character.⁶⁴ The experiences inflicted on Jesus in the trial in the wilderness, “The daring blasphemy of his demand that Christ should pay him homage, his presumptuous boldness in bearing Him to the mountain summit and the pinnacle of the temple, the malicious intent betrayed in urging Him to cast Himself down from the dizzy height, the unsleeping malice that hunted Him from place to place, inspiring the hearts of priests and people to reject His love, and at last to cry, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” – all this excited the amazement and indignation of the universe”.⁶⁵ It is easy for us to understand that all the unfallen worlds along with heaven were witnesses to the controversy, and that they had a great and intense interest in the closing scenes of the conflict.⁶⁶

When Jesus was on Calvary He prayed “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”. This prayer, in the midst of His suffering, filled all heaven with wonder.⁶⁷ They had been observing for four thousand years how Lucifer and his angels, and fallen man reacted when treated as Jesus was being treated, and the Spirit of the Son of God was not one of self-seeking or revenge, but trust in God in spite of being cumbered with fallen human nature. When Jesus was dying and He cried, “It is finished”, Satan and his cause was forever doomed. “The great controversy which had been so long in progress was then decided, and the final eradication of evil was made certain.”⁶⁸ All this was made possible by the love and patience of God – a patience that allowed Satan’s own works to reveal his true nature and the

⁶² Phil. 2:6, 7. Cf. D. A. p. 22.

⁶³ P. P. p. 69.

⁶⁴ D. A. p. 759.

⁶⁵ G. C. p. 501.

⁶⁶ D. A. p. 759.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 760.

⁶⁸ G. C. p. 503.

results of his type of government. God had demonstrated that He loved others more than Himself. This demonstration was for the angels and the unfallen worlds in addition to the inhabitants of this world. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits in Jesus; if He had yielded to Satan in the least to escape the torture, Satan would have triumphed, but Jesus held fast to His faith and His submission to God.

Satan “had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, and had declared that, while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice. Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make; for ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.’ 2 Corinthians 5:19. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled Himself and become obedient unto death.”⁶⁹ Jesus’ death fully answered the question as to whether the Father and the Son had enough love for their fallen creatures to exercise self-denial and sacrificed. Satan’s charges now were seen as revealing his character as a liar, while the events of Calvary revealed him to a murderer also. The inhabitants of heaven and all the universe saw now that “the very same spirit with which he had ruled the children of men who were under his power, he would have manifested if permitted to control the intelligences of heaven. With one voice the loyal universe united in extolling the divine administration.”⁷⁰ Before Jesus died the character of Satan was not clearly revealed to the angels or the unfallen worlds. He had stood next to God and “had been the highest of all created beings, and had been foremost in revealing God’s purpose to the universe.”⁷¹

“Yet Satan was not then destroyed. 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. He must choose whom he will serve.”⁷²

⁶⁹ G. C. p. 502.

⁷⁰ P. P. 70.

⁷¹ D. A. p. 758.

⁷² Ibid., p. 761.

In this brief setting forth of the milieu of the origin of evil in relationship to the justice of God we have considered the rise of evil and the action and counteraction of Lucifer and God in the major developments and some reasons why Christ came and died. We now move to the third step in this study, the role of the law in the great controversy. While it is true this issue is an integral part of the conflict in all its stages, for the sake of clarity we have chosen to discuss it separately, though briefly.

Mrs. White writes that from the very beginning the great controversy had been upon the law of God. "Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, That His law was faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed."⁷³ By attacking the law which is the expression of the will of its maker, and thereby a reflector of His character, Lucifer had hoped to overthrow the authority of its Author. Therefore as the controversy developed it would be shown whether the law of God was holy, just, and good or defective and subject to change.⁷⁴ "Satan grew bold in his rebellion, and expressed his contempt of the Creator's law. This Satan could not bear. He claimed that angels needed no law but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right; that law was a restriction of their liberty; and that to abolish law was one great object of his standing as he did."⁷⁵ Therefore it was to be shown that "The transgression of God's law in a single instance, in the smallest particular, is sin. And the non-execution of the penalty of that sin would be a crime in the divine administration. God is a judge, the avenger of justice, which is the habitation and foundation of His throne. He cannot dispense with His law, He cannot do away with its smallest item in order to meet and pardon sin. The rectitude and justice and moral excellence of the law must be maintained and vindicated before the heavenly universe and the worlds unfallen."⁷⁶ When the law was broken death was the penalty, and God was in a position where "He must either inflict punishment or assume it".⁷⁷ "The death of Christ was to be the convincing, everlasting argument that the law of God is as unchangeable as His throne."⁷⁸ "Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; but mercy does not set aside justice...God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption."⁷⁹ All that Jesus suffered while He was here on earth, furnishes "sufficient and thrilling demonstration that God's justice, when it punishes, does the work thoroughly. The fact that His own Son, the surety for man, was not spared, is an argument that will stand to all eternity before saint and sinner, before the universe of God to testify that

⁷³ P. P. p. 69.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ S. R. p. 18f.

⁷⁶ 7BC p. 951.

⁷⁷ Forsyth, C. C. p. 98.

⁷⁸ 3BC p. 1166.

⁷⁹ C. A. p. 762.

He will not excuse the transgression of His law”.⁸⁰ Thus we see that Jesus came to this earth and died not only for the redemption of man but “to magnify the law and make it honorable. Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God’s law is unchangeable. Could its claims have been set aside, then the Son of God need not have yielded up His life to atone for its transgression. The death of Christ proves it immutable.”⁸¹

It is easy to understand now, that the same law which from the first was the center of contention, and which was of sufficient value to God that He would take the penalty of transgression to Himself rather than let the sinner die, or abrogate the law, and die Himself, will be honored as the law of liberty. All those who have observed the developments of the controversy have seen God’s high valuation of the law vindicated in His willingness to pay the penalty of violation Himself, and they have also seen the law vindicated by comparing the works of violation with the effects of obedience. “The law of God, which Satan has reproached as the yoke of bondage will be honored as the law of liberty.”⁸² “The history of sin will stand to all eternity as a witness of that with the existence of God’s law is bound up the happiness of all the beings He has created.”⁸³

That the justice of God plays a prominent part in the great controversy is probably obvious to all but we will review it in some of its aspects anyway.

As has been noted, the law of God has been a central point of attack by Lucifer since the beginning of the rebellion in heaven. “...Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that Justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned.”⁸⁴ Such a claim obviously implies a certain understanding on Satan’s part about God’s relationship to the law and anyone who transgressed it. He obviously felt that every sin must be punished and that if the law were really a perfect representation of truth and righteousness any act of God that would remit the punishment would reveal Him to be less than a God of truth and justice; ‘truth’ had declared death the penalty of transgression, and justice required the transgression be

⁸⁰ 3BC p. 1166.

⁸¹ G. C. p. 503; compare Gal. 2:21; 3:21.

⁸² G. C. p. 504.

⁸³ ibid., p. 671.

⁸⁴ D. A. p. 761f.

punished. He in this manner recognized the justice of His own exclusion from heaven, and sought to guarantee by logic that fallen man would remain shut out from God's favor. God could not be just and yet show mercy to man, he argued, unless, of course, God would accept him too. "But even as a sinner man was in a different position from that of Satan. Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory.... Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent, will. This choice was final. But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character He might be drawn back."⁸⁵ Since the service of love is that which God desires, a revelation to fallen man of 'the height and depth' of His love could be the basis of winning man's affections; if the way for such a demonstration could be found it could also redeem man, and recover the dominion he had forfeited, and carry a power to convince of God's justice and benevolence, thereby forming the basis of man's love to God.⁸⁶

"In all the dealings of God with His people there is, mingled with His love and mercy, the most striking evidence of His strict and impartial justice."⁸⁷ The history of Israel gives examples of God's justice. At the time of the Golden Calf God declared that "justice must be visited upon the traitors. "Yet mercy was revealed when forgiveness was extended to all who of their own free choice would repent. The only ones punished were those who persisted in rebellion."⁸⁸ Even among those who refuse to repent of their rebellion against God His justice is vindicated; "Though their confession did not spring from true repentance, it served to vindicate the justice of God in His dealings with them."⁸⁹

When at the incarnation the Son of God became a man, it was His object, as the Christ, "to reconcile the prerogatives of justice and mercy, and let each stand separate in its dignity, yet united. His mercy was not weakness, but a terrible power to punish sin because it was sin; yet a power to draw to it the love of humanity. Through Christ, justice is enabled to forgive without sacrificing one job of its exalted highness."⁹⁰ Justice demands that sin cannot be merely pardoned. When the Father allowed His son to become man's Redeemer, to die in man's stead, the penalty was exhausted and a pardon provided.⁹¹ In the cross heaven saw God's abhorrence of the principles of rebellion – in His willingness

⁸⁵ ibid.

⁸⁶ G. C. p. 498.

⁸⁷ P. P. p. 469.

⁸⁸ ibid., p. 525

⁸⁹ ibid., p. 393.

⁹⁰ 7BC p. 936.

⁹¹ 6BC p. 1099.

to go to Calvary rather than let sin occupy even one corner of His creation – and a revelation of His justice. The penalty of the law fell upon Christ, One who was equal with God, in whom God Himself was; “...man was free to accept the righteousness of Christ and by a life of penitence and humiliation to triumph, as the Son of God had triumphed, over the power of Satan. Thus God is just and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.”⁹²

God will ultimately exercise His power and authority to put down all rebellion, “yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the Character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.”⁹³

⁹² G. C. p. 503.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 541.

Chapter Two

We have reviewed some background issues in Theodicy in the introduction; we have noted in Chapter One, briefly, the origin of evil – the who, where, what, why, how, - and the response of God; we quickly studied why Christ came and died, the role of the law in this controversy, and finally, we presented some statements that focused on the role God's justice plays through all the issues and actions of the great conflict between Good and evil. In doing this we have made a preliminary decision as to the issues involved, and here attempted to present them in a context that would make their existence understandable; we have also attempted to keep them in their proper time-setting. We are now ready to set forth in a list the issues in the great controversy which required blood reconciliation. They will be divided into five subject-divisions for sake of clarity;

Satan

1. Reveal Satan's character and the character of his followers.
2. Reveal that Satan and his followers are not as powerful as Christ and His followers.
3. Show the nature of Satan's rebellion.
4. Reveal the truth regarding Satan's charge.
5. Make clear what he would have done if allowed to rule in heaven.
6. Demonstrate the total change in Lucifer since his creation was in no way chargeable to God or His government.

Sin

1. To show where sin leads, its nature, how far it will go, and its consequences.
2. Demonstrate the thoroughness of the punishment of transgression.
3. Show sin is irreconcilable with God or His law.
4. To make clear there is no reason for sin.
5. Show sin can never be excused.
6. To destroy sin.

Justice

1. To show that while God is longsuffering justice means that ultimately the penalty of transgression must be met.
2. That though God's justice can never excuse sin He is never severe or unforgiving.
3. To reconcile the prerogatives of justice and mercy and let each stand in its own dignity, united.
4. To make clear that while mercy does not set aside justice, love can unite them into forgiveness.
5. To reveal God is a just judge.

Law

1. To reveal the necessity of expressed guidelines - law.
2. To show that God's law is necessary to the happiness of God's created beings.
3. To bring beings into accord with God's law.
4. To show the perfectness of God's law as a revelation of His character.
5. To reveal the law is unchangeable and eternal.
6. To show the close relationship between God's law and Himself.
7. To demonstrate disagreement with God's law is rebellion against God.
8. Show the law is holy, just, and good; what it prohibited is shown to really be evil.
9. Make clear that because the law reveals sin it is the law of liberty.
10. To set forth the limitation of the law – it can't pardon or save.
11. To reveal the all-encompassing nature of the law.
12. To show us the death penalty for transgression is just.
13. To magnify the law and make it honorable.
14. To demonstrate the motive behind the Law of God – Love.

To Reveal God and win His creatures love and trust

1. To show God's word is true.
2. To demonstrate God is not seeking His own exaltation.
3. To show that God wants our love so much He will sacrifice even Himself, but that He never forces us to love Him.
4. To reveal the greatness of His love in full.
5. To enable His creatures to have an intelligent appreciation of His character, wisdom and justice.
6. To cause us to take a stand on the issues.
7. To demonstrate God's abhorrence of evil.
8. To secure the whole universe to Himself forever.
9. To make certain the ultimate destruction of His opposers.
10. Reveal the love that exists between the members of the Godhead.
11. To draw a contrast so all could see the difference between Christ and Satan – in actions to others, and in what they sought for themselves.
12. To demonstrate necessity of faith and submission to God.
13. To show God is trustworthy.
14. To make clear true greatness is in service, humbleness, and obedience.
15. To show God's love great enough to practice self-denial – even to sacrifice Himself.
16. To restore free will to man and guarantee freedom of choice to him by giving sufficient evidence of His character to enable man to make an intelligent decision.
17. To elevate the moral worth of man to God by uniting humanity to divinity.
18. Repurchase the lost possession.
19. To demonstrate that love and righteousness are the basis of all God's words and acts.
20. To show obedience is central to happiness.

21. To reveal God to man who didn't know His love in full.
22. To awaken love by expressing love.
23. To gain the confidence of His creatures so that He can destroy evil and have the result be seen as an expression of love.

Chapter Three

“The evils that men do live after then’; unless they are understood they may recur.”⁹⁴

Christianity is concerned with God’s holiness. In this paper we are concerned with the issues that required blood reconciliation, and in addition, with understanding how the death of Jesus met those issues so that they will not recur. The first thing we have learned is that the skeptics dream of a world without sin that was the result of the divine omnipotence is based on false premises; that the absence of sin is founded on mutual trust, love, and omniscient justice and mercy; that love is only awakened by love and can’t be commanded, even by Omnipotence.⁹⁵ That while the cross is the unveiling and manifestation of God’s love and justice it is also a call to repentance and conversion from being at variance with God, and a promise of eternal joy to those who respond.⁹⁶ As such we have found the cross to be God’s revelation of His character, His response to the charges He didn’t really care, except to receive; not to give. The cross answers the question of how far God was willing to go to demonstrate with how much love He loved; something human beings hate to do, - give proof – type demonstration of love to one whom they feel should know they love them. For God to condescend to make such a demonstration shows the ultimate surrender to the situation by God – a situation for which He was in no way responsible – to win back some of his beloved; even though He knew He wouldn’t win them all, thus we can easily agree with Markus Barth when he writes; “...Through sacrifice God gives to man what man has not deserved and what he cannot give to or secure for himself.”⁹⁷ Peter Forsyth adds “The cross does not in the New Testament exhibit God as accepting sacrifice so much as making it. And it is never in the New Testament represented as the extremity of suffering, but as the superlative of death; it is not the death of agony but the height of surrender; and that again is represented as the triumph of eternal life.”⁹⁸

Thus we learn that God’s holiness is inseparable from the idea of judgment. “Without the final judgment that magnifies God, no true end of sin can be realized.”⁹⁹ In this final judgment man’s justification is dependent on the established and proclaimed righteousness of God Himself.”¹⁰⁰ Mrs. White writes, “The judgment scene will take place in the presence of all the worlds; for in this judgment

⁹⁴ Ulrich E. Simon, A Theology of Auschwitz (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1967), p. 9.

⁹⁵ Bledsoe, Op. cit., p. 354.

⁹⁶ G. C. Berkouwer, Sin (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 60.

⁹⁷ Markus Barth, Was Christ’s Death a Sacrifice? (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), p. 26.

⁹⁸ Forsyth, C. C., p. 92.

⁹⁹ Heppenstahl, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁰⁰ Barth, op. cit., p. 34.

the government of God will be vindicated, and His law will stand forth as ‘holy, and just, and good.’”¹⁰¹ The fact of so much time passing between the beginning and ending of the controversy over the law articulates the importance of the law; that in spite of the complexity of the challenge the moral law will be vindicated. We also see that while man doesn’t merit the reward he receives he does merit the punishment meted out – the penalty of the law – if he fails to be ready.¹⁰²

It is also shown at the cross that God’s wrath does not shove aside His love but rather that it is directed against that which frustrates the revelation of His love.¹⁰³ The Father and Son were willing to go through Calvary that the eternal and invincible love which was their true nature, might be revealed to all. It is this same love that gives total security to God’s people.¹⁰⁴ It is this love demonstration which has vanquished the accuser; and assures us that while he can still make tribulation he can never make desolation.¹⁰⁵

Thus we have seen that there was something inherent in sin that demanded the life of God’s Son; that transgression does, justly result in death. If man was to have a Savior Christ must die, but the broader, deeper significance of the cross is its uncontestable declaration of God’s love and justice. That God didn’t ‘give’ His Son to die as a way but that the Father and Son together went through Calvary as the only way the results of sin could be met. “The cross of Christ is the supreme demonstration of the love of God (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:10). The supreme character of the demonstration resides in the extreme costliness of the sacrifice rendered.”¹⁰⁶

The traditional, argument that it is inconsistent for anyone to believe both that the world is the creation of a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good, and yet contains evil,¹⁰⁷ is clearly shown to be false. God Himself proclaims His character; “The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty”.¹⁰⁸

By the unfolding of the issues in the controversy, God demonstrates the principles which are expressed in His law and acts, and is seen by all to be the God of justice and love He claims to be. “His

¹⁰¹ 7BC p. 986.

¹⁰² L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 75.

¹⁰³ Berkhouwer, op. cit., p. 399.

¹⁰⁴ Murray, op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁰⁵ Forsyth, J. of G., p. 223.

¹⁰⁶ Murray, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁰⁷ Terence Penelhun, “Devine Goodness and the Problem of Evil”, Religious Studies, II (Oct. 1966), p. 95-107.

¹⁰⁸ Ex. 34:6,7 quoted in G. C. p. 500.

justice will be acknowledged by the whole world, . . . God carries with Him the sympathy and approval of the whole universe as step by step His great plan advances to its complete fulfilment. He will carry it with Him in the final eradication of rebellion. ...When the prince of this world shall be judged ... the whole universe as witnesses to the sentence will declare, "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."¹⁰⁹ Revelation 15:3. This universe full of created beings will never again question God's love and righteousness, nor will they ever again be turned away from their allegiance to God. He has demonstrated to them, to their full satisfaction that He is what he claims to be.¹¹⁰ The issue as to who will rule in the earth is also settled; God's dealing with Satan has vindicated Him as has the character of His people, developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Thus the history of the great conflict will be a "perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression and to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments".¹¹¹

Jesus' death on the cross provides salvation, makes heaven accessible to men, and "before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in Their dealings with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and results of sin."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Rev. 15:3.

¹¹⁰ c.f. G. C. p. 500.

¹¹¹ G. C. p. 491

¹¹² P. P. p. 69.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul:
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart:
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever:
the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”
Psalm 19:7-9.

“And they sing ...saying, Great and marvelous are they works,
Lord God Almighty; just and true are they ways, thou King of saints.”
And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the
sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be
unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”
Revelation 15:3, 5:13

“His work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of
truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.”
Deut. 32:4.

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