

A Book on

How the serpent
deceives the whole
world

BOOK TWO



GOD ON TRIAL

Have we been lied to?

Is God a Killer?

OSWALD AND DENICE GRANT

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INTRODUCTION

As human beings, we are all prone to ask, “Does God exist? If so, what is He like?” This book is not so concerned with answering the first question as with exploring the second. If you have picked up this book, we will take for granted that you have already decided God exists, and we will focus mostly on the nature of God.

We cannot find out what God is like without delving into a theme that runs throughout the entire Bible—the theme of the war between God and the Devil. This is an extremely complex and fascinating story unfolding in the universe behind the scenes of our everyday lives. Whether we are aware or not, this ongoing drama is affecting each human being personally, and has direct relevance to our lives, regardless of our religious orientation.

We are about to take you on a quest. We invite you to come with us to unearth a story of cosmic proportions. This is not fiction; it is real. It is a story of a Father, a Son, a mighty angel—the Father and Son’s consummate creation—and the human race. This is a tale of rebellion, betrayal, defamation, propaganda and even tragedy. But it is also a narrative of redemption, hope and the ultimate eradication of evil and death. This is the story of God, His Son Jesus Christ, the fallen angel Lucifer—and of you and me.

The fundamental purpose of this book is to examine the behind-the-scene workings of this story in light of the two Trees that stood in the midst of the Garden of Eden: the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Our hope is that through the study of these two trees the reader will gain a deeper understanding of the issues involved in the great controversy between God and Satan. As we do that, we will uncover a series of lies which have kept all of us unnecessarily estranged from God.

We will learn what Lucifer used to be, what caused him to turn away from God, and the fundamental reason for his rebellion. We will reveal

his cunning and deception and how he has managed to separate us from God through a death principle that is so deceiving that even the angels of heaven were taken captive by its sophism. We will see the role God's Son has in bringing us back into a fearless relationship with God. We will also show how we ourselves have been unwittingly involved in this drama, and what we must do in order to end the war.

As one sets out to find answers about God, one inevitably stumbles upon the theme of a war. Take this verse from the Book of Revelation for instance:

And **war broke out in heaven**: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who **deceives the whole world**; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Revelation 12:7-9, emphasis added).

There is a wealth of information here. A war broke out in heaven; the protagonists, Michael and His angels, were at war with the antagonists, the dragon and his angels. What was this war about?

A dragon is a powerful symbol and an emblem of power. In Greek, the word "**dragon**" is *drakon*, "a fabulous kind of serpent (perhaps as supposed to fascinate)" (Strong's Concordance). The Greek word for "**serpent**" is *ophis*, "through the idea of sharpness of vision); a snake, figuratively, (as a type of sly cunning) an artful malicious person, especially Satan)" (Strong's Concordance). The Greek word for "**Devil**" is *diabolos*, "a traducer, specifically Satan, false accuser, slanderer" (Strong's Concordance), and the word Satan is *satanas*, "the accuser" (Strong's Concordance).

All of these words apply to Lucifer, and help us understand him better. He is indeed fascinating and remarkable, but also sly, cunning and malicious. He is a false accuser and a slanderer.

Our world is permeated with images of the serpent and dragon. From logos (e.g. The American Medical Association) to video games, movies, tattoos, etc. The "serpent" and the "dragon" symbols abound in our world. This is not unrelated—"that serpent of old" mentioned in the Book of Revelation "deceives the whole world."

The serpent was "cast out" of heaven "to the earth" with "his angels." In the Book of Genesis we pick up another thread—the war that had begun in heaven moved to a specific place on earth, the Garden of Eden, where the serpent resurfaced. The Garden is the first earthly crime scene; thus, it is an extremely valuable piece of evidence. It gives us more information

regarding the war that originated in heaven and the real issues behind it.

There were two trees in Eden: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. These were symbols; representations of two kingdoms. Through them we learn the foundational issues involved in the war between God and the Devil.

God is the Creator and giver of life—His is the Tree of Life principle. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was associated with the serpent. God said this Tree would bring death into being. Adam and Eve ate of it—the result is, the earth has become a battleground, the theater of this war. As God had predicted, death has become an everyday occurrence here. But who is responsible for death: God, or Satan and his Tree of Knowledge?

This war is not yet over. It has progressed through the ages down to our day, and you and I are in the middle of it. This story, so intimately connected with human history, unfolds in the Bible through a series of symbols; these, the Bible itself explains. In fact, it is essential that we do not interpret them in our own conventional wisdom. By doing so we may reach an entirely wrong conclusion.

The apostle Paul instructed his young charge, Timothy, to rightly divide the word of truth:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth** (2 Timothy 2:15, emphasis added).

Paul's admonition is for all of us. As we delve into this study, it will become obvious that God's enemy has given us a false picture of God's character. And he has done this in such a clever way that he deceives all—"the whole world." We must "rightly" divide "the word of truth" in order to come to a correct understanding of these things.

No one likes to think that they are being deceived, especially those who believe they have the truth. And yet if the Bible says that the dragon deceives the *whole world*, each one of us ought to take heed and not exclude ourselves from that number. If we are being misled, wouldn't we like to know how?

In this book we will rely mostly on the Bible. But we will also quote from an author who has more insight into the war between God and Satan than any other we have come across.

Ellen Gould White (EGW), a woman with merely an elementary education, went on to become, according to Roger Coon's research (as of 1983) at the Library of Congress, the fourth most-translated modern author, preceded only by Lenin (222 languages), Georges Simenon (a

Franco-Belgian mystery writer—143) and Leo Tolstoy, (122 languages).

Ellen G. White's writings were translated into 117 languages in 1983 and by 1996 she had already increased to 140, possibly making her the second most translated author of all time. Following her, in Coon's top ten list, were Karl Marx, William Shakespeare, Agatha Christie, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, Ian Fleming (James Bond), and Ernest Hemingway.

Consider one of her statements regarding Satan's deceptions:

The principles of Satan's working in heaven are the same principles by which he works through human agents in this world. It is through these **corrupting principles** that every earthly empire and the churches have been increasingly corrupted. It is by the working out of **these principles that Satan deceives and corrupts the whole world from the beginning to the ending.** He is continuing this same policy-working, originally begun in the heavenly universe. He is energizing the whole world with his **violence with which he corrupted** the world in the days of Noah {4BC 1163.8, emphasis added}.

What does this text reveal about Satan's deception? First, it tells us that he has "corrupting principles." Second, it tells us that his "corrupting principles" are the "same policy-working" he began in heaven. This indicates that Satan's "corrupting principles" are at the center of his rebellion against God, which started in heaven. It also reveals that he brought these principles to earth, and it is with them that he is deceiving us, the whole world, "from the beginning to the ending."

What is the meaning of the word "corrupt?" Essentially, "corrupt" means to change something from a pure, unaltered form into an impure, altered state. To corrupt something is to change it from its correct or original form, thereby making it less valuable. In this case, whatever "principles" Satan corrupted, rendered them not only less valuable, but lethal—they brought death into existence.

So then what are the "corrupting principles," the "policy-working" Satan began in heaven with which he has been corrupting "every earthly empire" and even the "churches"? What is he deceiving us about "from the beginning to the ending" and how is he doing it? What does "violence" have to do with it? The answers can be found in the Garden of Eden. Have we ever considered that perhaps the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil has something to do with it?

Ultimately, the focus of Satan's attack is God. Satan has painted God as a harsh, stern, vindictive, retributive, tyrannical, punishing, arbitrary and murderous tyrant. That picture of God is as far from the truth as possible. What Satan has done is project his own character attributes and "corrupting principles" onto God—and we must not be fooled by this ruse. The Devil knows

that if we come to know the truth about God, he is likely to lose this battle for our hearts and minds, and we just might fall in love with the Creator.

Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” When we look to Jesus we can see the true God, and then we can be His true witnesses.

‘You are My witnesses,’ says the Lord, ‘And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me’ (Isaiah 43:10).

‘I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; Therefore you are my witnesses,’ says the Lord, ‘that I am God’ (Isaiah 43:12).

‘Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are my witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one’ (Isaiah 44:8).

Satan is the enemy of God and man. He has lied to us about God. But not all is lost—we can still know God as He truly is. And this knowledge will deliver us from the enemy’s power. So what do you think—is this worth investigating?

As we embark on this exploration we ask that you keep your mind open. Perhaps you have never heard this war told from this point of view. Or perhaps you yourself have studied this extensively and have already formed strong opinions on this topic. We are not asking that you take everything we say as the final word. Like you, we are struggling to find answers. All we ask is that you simply weigh this evidence.

This is the ultimate “who done it” case because it is God Himself who is on trial in this trial that is taking place in the courtroom of each of our hearts. It is our hope that a comprehensive analysis of the crime scenes and evidence will provide the reader with an overall picture of the issues in this trial, while at the same time answering some very specific questions. What emerges will shed great light on the characters of both God and Satan, and on the nature of Satan’s rebellion. Our aim is to exonerate God of all false accusations and lies His enemy has brought against Him, because the question is, *have we been lied to? Is God a killer?*



1

WHO IS GOD?

There are many descriptions of God in the Scriptures but the two most succinct ones are found in 1 John 4:8 “God is love” and 1 John 1:5 “God is light.”

Do these words help us to understand God? The answer can be yes, or no, depending on what we understand them to mean. As with everything, we tend to define terms according to our own individual human experiences and ideas. This we must not do.

When studying about God it is very important that first we go to the Scriptures, the word of God. Secondly, that we let Scripture define its own words and terms. When we do the contrary, we may run into trouble and come to conclusions that are completely opposite to what was originally intended. For instance, words such as “sin,” “iniquity,” “lawlessness,” and terms as “the wrath of God” or “God’s strange act”—all such terms are Scripture *terms*, and we must allow the Scriptures to define them.

We also must keep in mind as we read the Scriptures that there is a “grand central theme” running through the Bible — the great controversy, the war, the polemic between Michael and “the great red dragon,” and that this warfare has had a direct impact on how we see God and which side of this war we ourselves are standing:

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of **its grand central theme**—of God’s **original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption.** He should understand the **nature of the two principles that are contending for the supremacy,**

and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into **every phase of human experience**; how in **every act of life** he himself reveals the one or the other of the **two antagonistic motives**; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now **deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found** {CT 462.1, emphasis added}.

Notice this statement: “He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for the supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy to the great consummation.” What are these “two principles contending for supremacy”? How do they enter “into every phase of human experience”? How are they “antagonistic” towards each other? Have we missed something about this great controversy? From this quote it appears that these two principles are the central issue here, so we are going to explore them in detail as we progress. We will start with God and His principle, which is one of the “two antagonistic motives” mentioned above.

How do we define the very words used to explain God? What is love? What is light? What do these words mean according to the Bible?

In the New Testament the word “love” comes from the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* has been translated in some Bible versions as “love” and in others as “charity.” *Agape* is the word that Jesus, Paul, and other New Testament writers used when referring to a particular kind of love—a love peculiar to God. This love is completely different from the types of love most of us are familiar with. We will study this word soon, but for now, we want to dwell on the fact that God *is* love—God *is* *agape* love.

As we examine the statement “God is love,” we notice that the Apostle John’s syntax is very telling. He says, “God *is* love.” He does not say, “God *has* love.” To *be* love is very different from to *have* love. This is a significant distinction, and John’s use of the language indicates he is trying to bring to our attention that love, *agape* love, is God’s *very essence*, and not merely one of His attributes.

Agape love is the very essence of God’s being. Thus, it is also the eternal *moral* law by which He rules His entire creation. God’s law of love is His supreme, unchangeable law from eternity past. Why is that?

God is the Creator of all things and therefore He is *above* all things. As the Creator, He has the right to not only construct the *hardware* of His creation but to determine its *operating systems* and set its parameters, the *rules* by which it operates. Whatever God creates reflects who He is—His creation expresses His heart and mind and reveals His character. Since

agape love is His very essence, there is nothing greater than *agape*. Therefore, nothing can surpass the absolute supremacy of God's law of *agape* love. God imbued all His creatures with the ability to live eternally—but that is possible only when they *conform* to *agape* love.

Some of us are confused by the distinction between God's essence and His attributes. If His essence is *agape* love, then what are His attributes? God's attributes are a *reflection* of His love; they are the different ways in which His love becomes visible. His attributes are the outworking of His character, His essence, His law of love; thus, they must *always* be in harmony with His essence of *agape* love.

The Bible says that God is immutable, unchangeable. Malachi 3:6 states "For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore, you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob;" and Hebrews 13:8 reads, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Immutability is one of God's attributes. These verses tell us that God always acts and reacts according to His character of *agape* love. Thus God's character is singular, not dualistic.

Since God does not change, this means that He must always remain true to His character of love, *even* when faced with evil. If God is immutable then He can never operate *outside* the parameters of love. That means His law of love also does not change. And since God is eternal, so is His law of love. These are the ultimate truths about God.

One could say God is *pure agape*. But saying "pure *agape*" is redundant because by definition *agape* is pure, unadulterated, uncorrupted, unmixed. In the Bible, God's purity and *singleness* of character is defined by the word "holy." In both the Hebrew and Greek languages, this word means to be clean, morally clean, without impurity. Biblically speaking then, this is the opposite of the word "corrupt," the very word that characterizes Satan's principles.

Only God is holy. His character is single, unadulterated and without mixture. Thus, as a God of *agape* love, the Creator *cannot* use *opposing*, or *mixed* principles—that would be an oxymoron. In other words, God cannot be one way one moment and a different way the next, or He would be inconsistent, unreliable, untrustworthy, and changeable. God does not have a split personality in which good and evil are mingled. "Purity" sets God apart from all of us who have "eaten" of the mixture contained in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

This idea of purity is also expressed in the Bible through the metaphors of light and darkness. The Scriptures say:

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

The words “light,” “purity” and “holy” all express the same thing about God: that His character is constituted of a *singular* motive, which is *agape* love.

Most of us would agree that God is immortal, indestructible, and omnipotent. The Hebrew Tetragrammatons YHWH and JHVH mean “self-Existent” or “Eternal.” We tend to take this for granted and don’t usually question it. But have you ever wondered why God is immortal?

Jesus said something very interesting that might shed some light on this:

...every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand (Matthew 12:25).

According to Jesus, if a kingdom is divided “against itself” it will be “brought to desolation”—it will come to an end. If God is immortal, then it is logical to conclude that His kingdom will never be brought to desolation. Thus we can also conclude that since God’s kingdom will never be brought to desolation His kingdom must not be “divided against itself” in any way. Could it be then, that this is where God’s secret of immortality lies? Could it be that God is immortal because His kingdom is not “divided against itself”?

This is an extremely important concept. “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all,” means that in no way whatsoever is He divided between light and darkness, that is, He never operates by a *contradictory* duality. He is light only, at all times and in all circumstances. As we proceed, it will become evident just how important it is to understand what “divided against itself” means. For now, we will simply say that God’s *undivided-ness* is what constitutes His perfection, as the word “perfection” is biblically defined (we will shoe later on what this word means according to the Bible). Again, we must not define words by our own interpretation, but allow the Scriptures to define them.

To summarize then, being “holy,” “pure,” “clean,” “light,” “undivided” and having absolutely “no darkness at all,” are different ways to describe God’s single, uncorrupted character of *agape* love. And these are just a few of the ways the Bible uses to draw our attention to this fact.

So we ask ourselves, why is God so focused on drawing our attention to this facet of His character? Could it be that this is the vital key to truly understanding Him and seeing His beauty?



2

LOVE IS “HEAVEN”

Have you ever wondered what life could have been, had Adam and Eve not opened the floodgates of evil upon the earth? Or have you imagined what it would be like to live in a world in which there was absolutely no pain, destruction or death?

It is hard for us to imagine heaven, given we have never seen or experienced anything like it. But whatever heaven is, we know “it is heaven!”

We often use this phrase to qualify a wonderful, positive, absolutely delightful experience. If a friend said, “I went to Fiji for Christmas, and oh, it was absolute heaven!” we need hear no more. We would know exactly what he or she meant, and even though we wouldn’t know the precise particulars of their vacation we would know they had a peaceful, relaxed and thoroughly enjoyable time.

The next question we then ask is this: what makes heaven *heaven*? Take a look at this verse from the Book of Psalms:

You will show me **the path of life**; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11, emphasis added).

This is a description of heaven, isn’t it? “Life,” “fullness of joy,” “pleasures forevermore”—a paradise. It sounds like our friend’s Fiji vacation, doesn’t it? And what makes heaven a place where there is “fullness of joy” and “pleasures forevermore”? If your answer is the “presence” of God you are absolutely right! What else could it be?

The Psalmist talks about the “presence” of God—but he also mentions the “path of life.” In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses contrasted the “path

of life” with “the path of curses,” describing the latter in blood-curdling language, leaving nothing to the imagination. Where, how, and by whom did this other destructive “path” originate? Did it have its origin in God, who shows us “the path of life,” or in someone else?

If God is love, and if love is His very essence, His perfect character, His benchmark singular principle for the governance of every aspect of life—can He also be involved in death? If love is the governing law that God utilizes even in the most infinitesimal events in the universe—it is a reflection of His very character—then can He also be involved in the darkness that causes pain, suffering, misery and destruction?

If God is love, then God created everything out of love, by love, for love, through love and in love. The Bible’s message is that God is love, and that His love is life. God’s love is “the path of life.”

Take a look at the following verses from the Book of Proverbs, where Solomon connects the commandment, the law of God, with “the way of life:”

For the **commandment** is a lamp, and the **law** a light; reproofs of instruction are **the way of life** (Proverbs 6:23, emphasis added).

The **law of the wise is a fountain of life**, to turn one away from the snares of death (Proverbs 13:14, emphasis added).

Paul states the same principle in the following verse:

For the **law of the Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus has made me free from **the law of sin and death** (Romans 8:2, emphasis added).

Paul not only points to God’s law as being the law of life, the “law of the Spirit of life,” but he reveals that there is another law present in the world—“the law of sin and death.” What is “the law of sin and death,” and where did it come from, and with whom did it originate? Now we know where death comes from: “for the day you eat of it you shall surely die,” (Genesis 2:17). So does this law also belong to the God of love and life?

We must understand how sacred the law of God is:

The law of God is as sacred as God Himself. It is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom. The harmony of creation **depends upon the perfect conformity** of all beings, of everything, animate and inanimate, to the law of the Creator. God has ordained laws for the government, not only of living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything is under fixed laws, which cannot be disregarded. But while everything in nature is governed by natural laws, man alone, of all that inhabits the earth, is amenable to **moral law**. To man, the crowning work of

creation, God has given power to understand His requirements, to comprehend the justice and beneficence of His law, and its sacred claims upon him; and of man unswerving obedience is required {PP 52.3, emphasis added}.

God's law "is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom." God's law is what the Bible refers to as "righteousness," God's ways, His idea of what is *right*. "Righteousness" can also refer to God's justice.

In Hebrew, "righteousness" means "rightness, rectitude, moral virtue," (Strong's Concordance). God's justice, His "rightness, rectitude, and moral virtue," is always in harmony with His *agape* love. Thus, His justice is always kind, gentle, impartial, unconditional, merciful, equitable, freedom-giving, peaceful, nonviolent and loving. It is never harsh, punitive, cruel, partial, conditional, arbitrary, controlling, forceful, or violent.

There is, however, a counterfeit "justice" in the world, a "rightness, rectitude, and moral virtue" that is *contrary* to God's righteousness. This counterfeit uses all these negative methods listed above; this is the "justice" the world by and large knows and operates by—but this is *not* the justice of God, according to the Scriptures.

God's law of *agape* love is an expression of who He is—therefore it is impossible to separate God from His law of *agape* love.

When man, beguiled by Satan's power, disobeyed the divine law, God could not, even to save the lost race, change that law. God is love, and **to change the law would be to deny Himself**, to overthrow those **principles with which are bound up the good of the universe** {Messenger June 7, 1893, par. 6, emphasis added}.

Notice that God's law contains principles "with which are bound up the good of the universe" and to change this law would be to "deny Himself."

So we have established that God's law is the law of love. But how is His law articulated? Is it a written code, many pages long, which must be carefully studied before it can be understood? Is it anything like the legal documents we all encounter nowadays, filled with fine print and unintelligible jargon?

No—His law is much simpler than that, and yet of much more consequence. His law is a *moral* law—and this is extremely significant. The moral law resides in the *heart* of each intelligent being God creates; it is this moral law that *guides* our every thought and action, because the heart is the seat of our *judgment*. What we mean is that all our decisions, which are based on our *moral judgments*, come from our hearts. To use a modern concept, God's moral law is the "software" that comes with every "device"

He creates—a *software* that ensures optimum functionality.

We are getting closer to answering the question we posed earlier—what was it that made heaven a *heaven*? Wasn't it the fact that in heaven God's will (His law) was done by all, in that all lived by His moral law of love? Wasn't heaven a *heaven* because all intelligent beings emulated His character because they *willingly* conformed to His *agape* love? It was by the *corporate* use of the law of *agape* love that harmony, peace and life were able to exist in heaven, and thus make it a place of pure joy.

Some might be thinking that we are taking off in a legalistic path; please continue reading—this is not the case. There is an appropriate, accurate biblical stance on the significance of the law. Whether we realize it or not we are all living by a *moral law*—“the law of the Spirit of life,” or “the law of sin and death.” These are two moral laws, the moral law of life or the moral law of death. We must be able to distinguish between these two antagonistic principles, which operate by antagonistic *motives*.

The heavenly conditions of bliss we pictured in our minds were possible for one reason and one reason only: because from eternity past God ruled the universe with the law of love, “the law of the Spirit of life.”

Can you imagine an existence where love is the constant state of affairs? Where every interaction is done with other people's greatest good in mind? A place where there is no yelling, no lying, stealing, hurting, destruction, deception, cheating, no need for crying? Instead, there is kindness, care, concern, and utmost respect? Well, that is heaven—where the moral law of love rules.

But love does not feel like a law; it is not drudgery:

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the **spirit of legality**. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, **the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something un-thought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons.** There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. **Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy.** So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Psalm 40:8 {MB 109.2, emphasis added}.

Being in a state of love means being filled with joy, and when we love someone it is a pleasure to be with them. Love evokes all sorts of positive and wonderful thoughts and feelings, and if used as a guideline for our lives, it is not cumbersome to follow. Love's greatest joy is to make another happy. If absolutely everyone was filled with God's love, the world would be a peaceful place because His love, which is unconditional,

impartial, and freedom giving, is the perfect mechanism for social interaction. Everyone is cared for, and no one left out.

The apostle John said:

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3).

The commandments of God, summarized, is that we love one another. There is nothing “grievous” or burdensome about loving one another. Hopefully we have all experienced love to a certain degree. Those in a loving relationship do things for each other freely, out of joy, not duty. This law of love cannot be forced upon us—it must be freely accepted and adopted. Neither can we enforce this law upon others—not even on our children. All must accept or reject it for themselves. Love never operates by force and is not *enforceable*. By definition, love and freedom go hand in hand. If they don’t—then we are dealing with something other than love.

Before Lucifer’s sin, heavenly beings had never known anything contrary to the joyous, happy and harmonious state-of-being they enjoyed under God’s law of love. Their relationship with God and each other was filled with this pure joy. Their complete devotion to God and their peers was an expression of free will. It was a love *exchange*—God loved them, they loved Him, and they loved each other. They saw no evil in each other.

The residents of the universe certainly didn’t follow God out of fear. On the contrary, at that time there was absolutely no such thing as fear. How do we know this? Consider the following passage from 1 John 4:18:

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

There is so much to explore in this verse, but for now it suffices to bring to our attention the fact that if God is love, indeed “perfect love”—*agape* love—then a universe with a God of perfect love would have to be free of fear. Fear, therefore, is an intruder, and did not originate from God.

Fear and love are both motivators, powerful ones, in fact. Imagine a world in which the sole motivation for every thought and action was love. Could it even be possible? Yes: this was the condition of things prior to sin. All were motivated by love alone and all things worked in perfect harmony. God’s universe of *agape* love was flawless, His government of love, a paradise.

Yet one day, Lucifer challenged that standard. He saw a flaw in it, and as a result he began a war against God’s government of love:

There is a grand rebellion in the earthly universe. Is there not a great leader of that rebellion? Is not Satan the life and soul of every species of rebellion which he himself has instigated? Is he not the first great apostate from God? A rebellion exists. Lucifer revolted from his allegiance and **makes war on the divine government** {4BC 1163.4, emphasis added}.

It is hard to imagine such a thing, Lucifer making “war on the divine government,” waging war against God’s perfect system of love. Someone should have told him, “If it isn’t broken, don’t fix it.”

When he started his war on God, Lucifer brought in confusion about God. His attack on God’s perfect system of love was targeted directly at the very heart of God because that is where God’s system of government came from—it came from His heart of love. The moment Lucifer attacked God’s government, God’s heart was put on trial. God’s message to us, at this time in the history of the world, is to listen to the only True Witness who can reveal His true heart of love.

Most of us realize that we are living near the end of earth’s history, and as such, we are living in the period of the Laodicean church of Revelation chapter three. To us, the Laodicean church, God says:

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14).

Laodicea is beckoned to listen to the True Witness. Nowhere else in the Bible are the words “True Witness” directed to anyone—only to Laodicea. This is because Laodicea is the church that is living during the time of God’s trial—the trial that will exonerate Him of all Satan’s false accusations. The time of Laodicea is also the time of the three angel’s message, which is the hour of God’s judgment:

“Fear God and give glory to Him, for **the hour of His judgment has come;** and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14:6, emphasis added).

God’s hour of judgment is good news for us, because as we look at the evidence in this trial it will become very clear that all the accusations of Satan the accuser are false. It will be seen that the divine government of love is not only perfect, but also the only viable way for living beings to exist.



3

AGAPE LOVE

Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law,
(Psalm 119:18).

The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold
and silver (Psalm 119:72).

Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law
is truth (Psalm 119:142).

Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them
to stumble (Psalm 119:165).

Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment
of the law (Romans 13:10).

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your
neighbor as yourself” (Galatians 5:14).

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall
love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well (James 2:8).

The law of God’s government is the law of *agape* love, but what exactly is
agape love? How does the Bible define this *divine* type of love?

Agape is beautifully described in 1 Corinthians 13, the famous chapter on love:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not
proud. Does not act unbecomingly, it does not seek its own, is not easily pro-

voked, does not take into account a wrong suffered. Keeps no accounts of evil. It does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth. Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. *Agape* love bears up under anything and everything that comes. It is ever ready to believe the best of every person. Its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything without weakening. *Agape* love never fails, never fades out or becomes obsolete; it never comes to an end (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8, taken from various versions).

What a beautiful description of God! He is so unique, so different from anything we've known! This passage tells us that God is patient and kind. He is not arrogant or rude or envious, does not insist on His own way and is not easily offended. He keeps no record of wrongs—this is vital in our understanding of God because we tend to think of Him as a stern judge looking down disapprovingly at us. God does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. He bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things. His love never ends. These are the foundational truths about God.

These words tell us that divine love is not focused on self but on others. It is *unconditional*. It has no selfish agenda when doing “good” things *to* or *for* others. *Agape* love takes action for the betterment of others even if at one's own expense, and even to the extent of dying for them. This is *agape* love.

These words also tell us that there is no boasting, no pride in God. This is significant, because He, of all beings, has the most glorious things of which to boast! Consider the universe, the earth and all its life forms... Anyone capable of dreaming, planning, and bringing to life such magnificent and intricate creatures would have every reason to boast. And yet, God is humble, not self-seeking but lovingly gives of Himself. We could say that He is self-sacrificing, but the term “self-sacrifice” implies acting out of duty rather than love, and could even encourage penance-oriented thinking. To Jesus, giving His life for us was not an act of self-sacrifice, but rather an act of *willingly* giving up everything in order to save us from an awful end; everything He gave us was given as a gift—offered out of love. To someone who puts others before himself, giving is a natural impulse and not a sacrifice. To such a person, a sacrifice would be to take care of his own needs first, before others'.

Where else in the Bible is this type of love defined? The best example and definition of God's love is Jesus Christ. *True* love, divine love, is revealed in His words, His life, and His death. Thus, we could use each of the above descriptive expressions from 1 Corinthians 13 to portray Jesus as well.

As we look back at His life we see that He was patient and kind. He was not jealous and did not boast. He was not arrogant or rude, did

not insist in His own way and was not easily offended. Jesus kept no record of wrongs. He did not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoiced in the truth. He bore all things, believed all things, hoped all things and endured all things—even a death on the cross, the most painful and humiliating death. His love never, ever ended—not even while *on* the cross.

Jesus is not only the *greatest* but also the *only* living demonstration of *agape* love the world has ever seen. He is the *visible* expression of *agape* love. He lived to bless others; to give, to heal, to encourage, lift up, to empower, to renew, and to be their *servant*, doing good and never causing harm. What makes Jesus' love most unique is that He did all this so that He could be with us. He did it "for the joy" of reuniting us with the heavenly family, so that we could spend an eternity together:

...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who **for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2, emphasis added).

Jesus' teachings in The Sermon on the Mount are a revelation of the principles of God's government of *agape* love. God had given the law to Moses on another Mount—Mount Sinai. Moses took that law and interpreted it through Satan's stern, harsh, punishing, cruel and destructive sense of justice. Jesus goes back to the Mount, and gives us the law again—but this time the law is full of grace and truth.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

The personification of the law, Jesus teaches us to love; He teaches us even to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute us. If we love only those who please us, how different are we from the world's type of love? Wasn't Jesus defining *unconditional* love in these statements?

Notice why Jesus told us to love our enemies—"so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for HE makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:44, 45; emphasis added). Wasn't Jesus redefining what love is by showing us God's essence of unconditional, impartial *agape* love in those words?

First Corinthians thirteen ends by saying, "and now abide faith, hope, love, these three; the greatest of these is love." Faith and hope mean nothing if they are not founded on the God of *agape* love. If our faith

and hope are founded upon a god who is not *agape* love, they will crumble to pieces. If our faith is directed towards a god who is not “light in whom there is no darkness at all,” toward a god who has a divided character, then our faith is misdirected. We may call it “faith,” but because this faith is based on a false concept of God, it is a false faith. It is a faith directed toward a false god. The Bible actually calls this faith “unbelief.” The worship of false gods does not merely mean bowing down to a molten image:

In rejecting the truth, men reject its Author. **In trampling upon the law of God, they deny the authority of the Law-giver.** It is as easy to make an idol of false doctrines and theories as to fashion an idol of wood or stone. **By misrepresenting the attributes of God, Satan leads men to conceive of Him in a false character.** With many, a philosophical idol is enthroned in the place of Jehovah; while the living God, as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, and in the works of creation, is worshiped by but few. Thousands **deify nature while they deny the God of nature.** **Though in a different form, idolatry exists in the Christian world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah.** **The god of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists, the god of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phoenicia** {DD 29.1, emphasis added}.

These are clear and direct words. There is no mincing here. In essence, if we don't see the God that Jesus revealed, we are, in reality, worshipping Baal, the arbitrary, dual god of *both* beneficence and wrath. It is as simple as that. More than anything, the world needs Jesus' revelation of God.

The Son of God declared in positive terms that **the world was destitute of the knowledge of God; but this knowledge was of the highest value,** and it was **His own peculiar gift, the inestimable treasure which He brought into the world.** In the exercise of His sovereign prerogative **He imparted to His disciples the knowledge of the character of God, in order that they might communicate it to the world....** **Everyone who believes the message of God should lift up Jesus, point men to Christ, and say, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”...** {LHU 36.5, emphasis added}.

Both faith and hope find their realization in the God of *agape* love Jesus revealed to us. In and of themselves faith and hope are actually meaningless. They are fulfilled only when directed at the true God as revealed by Christ, and when they are working through God's *agape* love:

For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, **but faith working through love** (Galatians 5:5, 6, emphasis added).

When we have faith and hope in the true God of love as revealed by Jesus Christ, then we have true faith and true hope.

Take Saul's experience for instance, before he became the apostle Paul. Paul became an example for us in many ways, and his life helps us to see the truth about God.

Before he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus Paul was a fervent follower of God. In fact, he was a Pharisee, and as such he was extremely well versed in the law. As a Pharisee, he was an ardent zealot to the point of persecuting those he believed were threatening the religious status quo. He even aided Stephen's murderers while they stoned him to death:

Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul (Acts 7:58).

This is zeal. But it is misguided zeal. Note what Paul says *after* his conversion:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although **I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man**; but I obtained mercy because **I did it ignorantly in unbelief**. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 1:12-14, emphasis added).

Paul says that he “was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man.” What does he mean by “formerly?” He means that this is what he used to be before he met Jesus Christ on that road to Damascus, before he learned the *agape* love of God through Jesus.

Notice then what he says next: that all those things he did, blaspheming, persecuting and being insolent, all that was done “in unbelief.” Paul was acting in unbelief when he was a persecutor and an insolent man—one who insulted, maltreated, caused injury to others. In fact, the reason he was a blasphemer is that he was doing things in the name of God that were completely *contrary* to God's character of *agape* love—things like persecuting and harming people. This is what made him a “blasphemer.”

But isn't Paul *redefining* the word “unbelief” here, and indirectly, redefining the word “belief” as well? We know that unbelief is the opposite of faith. But if we look at Paul's past, we see that he had a kind of faith, did he not? After all, he was a Pharisee, a strict adherent to God's “law.” And he was persecuting people in the “name” of God; he was doing all this based on his “faith.” But his faith was not built upon the understanding that God is

agape love. Thus his faith was useless and made him “miss the mark,” which by the way, is one of the biblical definitions of the word “sin.”

Missing the mark about God’s character is “the” sin—the most grievous sin there is. In fact, it is out of this sin that all sins are born, as we shall soon see.

In line with *agape* love, Jesus absolved Saul of all condemnation and guilt. In fact, He did not even accuse or condemn him for the cruel things he had been doing. Notice His way of dealing with the violent Saul:

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do” (Acts 9:4-6).

How kindly and gently Jesus interacted with Saul; how tenderly and respectfully He engages with us. Rather than throw Saul’s guilt upon his face and expose his darkness, He appeals to his intellect and heart and asks: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” “Explain to me why you are so angry and violent against those that are following me? What harm have we done to you?”

Saul’s response reveals he did not know this God; his god was not like this. Rather, the god Saul worshipped was much more like the Greek deity Zeus—thunderbolts, fire and brimstone. “Who are You, Lord?” he asked. This was a new God—Saul had never experienced this gentle God before.

Something about Jesus caused Saul to immediately acknowledge Him as his Lord. Immediately he recognized that all his life he had been mistaken about God. And in that one moment of recognition, of repentance in the true sense of the word—*metanoia*, a change of mind—Saul surrendered himself to the true God of the universe. Trembling and astonished he said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?”

Jesus’ grace toward Saul was “exceedingly abundant”—do you see the extent of God’s love here? This is because Christ, in *agape* love, keeps no record of wrongs. Is this the God we have been worshipping? Is this how we regard and treat each other, without accusation or holding of grudges?

Most of us know that Satan, through Adam, brought sin into the world and that Jesus, the “Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world.”

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)!

If we understood the word “sin” in the context of “missing the mark” about God’s character, we would see that the sin Satan brought into the world was a distorted *view* of God—he made Him out to be a harsh, arbitrary killer. Jesus takes *away* the sin of the world—He removes this false view of God by revealing the true God of *agape* love.

This false view was the driving force behind Paul before he encountered Jesus. He missed the mark about the Creator, and as a result he was “a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man.” But there was hope for Paul because he did it “ignorantly, in unbelief”—not knowing the truth. Later, he writes in Hebrews:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

And in Corinthians he says that if faith isn’t working through love, it is nothing:

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, **but have not love, I am nothing** (1 Corinthians 13:2, emphasis added).

Faith is the substance, or the confidence, the assurance of something that is not yet seen—something that is still just a hope. Faith and hope are merely instruments through which we may grasp God’s love.

What do we hope for? A better life, a better world? Do we not hope for God’s love and light to peer through our pain and suffering? Could “things hoped for” be a world where love and peace reign? Aren’t the words “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10) the cry of every human heart that is yearning for love, peace, life and safety, waiting for God’s love to rescue a failing world?

The words “faith is the evidence of things not seen” do not refer to physical sight. The spiritual meaning of this passage becomes clearer when we read John’s words regarding Jesus:

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him (John 1:18).

“No one has seen God at anytime,” suggests that no one had understood the character of the Father prior to Jesus. Why not? Because everyone in this world has only seen God through the lens of Satan’s lies; therefore, our view of God has been twisted. We have missed the mark.

This is precisely why God sent His Son into the world—to reveal to us the *true* God. Only Christ has ever “declared” the true God. What “no

one has seen” and only Jesus “has declared” is the Father—a kind, loving, unconditional, impartial, humble, *nonviolent* God.

The only begotten Son came from the bosom of the Father and as such He is His express image. It wasn't God's *physical* appearance Jesus was declaring—it was His *character*. When He said “he who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9) He was saying, “Do you see who I am? This is what God is like.” Jesus is the visible and tangible revelation of God's essence of *agape* love. He *is* the definition of *agape* love.

So when we see Him undoing the work of the Destroyer, healing all sorts of disease and illness, we see God. When we see Him indiscriminately forgiving sins (which to the Jews of His time was blasphemy, and yet those are the sins which Satan uses to accuse us before God day and night) we see God. When we see Him saying to the adulterous woman “neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8: 11), we see God. When we see Him day in and day out tirelessly working to heal, to uplift humanity from its abject hopelessness, working ceaselessly, in hunger and thirst, to bring us the *unadulterated* knowledge of the true God of love, we see God.

And when we see Him suffering, silently and humbly, in the face of horrifying insults, we see God. When we see Him *unresisting* as He is being ripped apart by the mob, spat upon, and shredded by physical and emotional wounds, and yet pronouncing blessings and forgiveness, we see God. When we see Him hanging on the cross, in relentless love, without one word of cursing or revenge, we see God. This is *singleness* of character. This is an *undivided* heart. This is a heart of *pure agape* love and nothing else.

Jesus is Emmanuel, “God with us.” He is the only true manifestation of God the world has ever seen. By looking at Him we see God. He is the only true way to understand God, the only true “light” about God, the only *truth* about the character of God. He IS God.



4

THE ENEMY

We all know who he is. Lucifer, Satan, the Devil. But the Devil was not always a “devil.” He was an amazing, majestic, brilliant and beautiful creature—“full of wisdom and perfect in beauty,” according to Ezekiel 28:12. His intellect was beyond compare. He was also a consummate musician.

Since his fall, Lucifer’s demonic career has been recorded in human history through legend and myth. He is *Mercurius*, the alchemical *spirit* of the occultists. He is *Hermes* of the hermetic “wisdom,” after whom such words and terms as “hermeneutics” and “hermetically sealed” (sealed as in the sense of *secrecy*—the secrecy of secret cults) were coined.

The Roman historian Plutarch asserts that the gods were grand demons; the Bible also makes the same claim. Thus, through a concept of their own creation—the “gods”—Satan and his fallen angels have attempted to lead the human race into their own ways of thinking. The Devil is *Thoth*, *Seth*, *Isis* and *Osiris* and *Maat* of the ancient Egyptians. He is *Zeus*, *Diana*, *Apollo* and *Artemis* of the Greeks; *Jupiter*, *Minerva* and *Venus* of the Romans, to name just a few. Every culture and age has its gods, but they are all one and the same: the embodiment of the *principles* of the mighty fallen angel Lucifer.

These gods teach the *wisdom* of the gods, and the people who worship them learn *their* wisdom. But the gods were really demons posing as God; even the ancient philosophers and historians knew this. Thus it is that the

gods, through their “wisdom,” pervert the true knowledge of God.

In our modern culture the Devil has gone undercover. He has convinced many, especially those in the so-called civilized world and in particular Christians, that he doesn’t really exist. To some, the very words “Satan” and “Devil” are taboo; they are passé. To the secular world he is simply a fictional cartoon figure. The mystics and New Agers believe that evil is simply a dark *energy*, an abstract concept unrelated to a specific supernatural being, a dark energy that is an inevitable element of cosmic reality.

So... do the Devil and his angels really exist? History says they do. Ancient philosophers and poets say they do. And the Bible says they do.

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Revelation 12:9).

To say he doesn’t exist is to negate the authority of the Bible as an accurate written record of the great controversy—a record inspired by God. To deny his existence is to miss out on the greatest theme of the Bible—that of the war between him and God. And ultimately, to deny his existence is to deny Jesus Christ, who said He saw him “fall from heaven like lightning” (Luke 10:18), and who often talked about him and personally conversed *with* him—in the wilderness, for instance, during the temptations. His existence is “fully established by both the Old and the New Testament:”

The existence of Satan and the agency of evil spirits are facts fully established by both the Old and the New Testament. From the days of Adam to Moses, and through all the succeeding ages to John, the latest gospel writer, **Satan is recognized as an active, personal agent, the originator of evil, the enemy of God and man.** It is true that imagination and superstition have given their own coloring to these facts, and have linked them with legends and traditions of heathen, Jewish, and even Christian nations; **but as revealed in the word of God they are of the utmost solemnity and importance.** The connection of the visible with the invisible world, the ministration of angels of God, and the agency of evil angels, are **inseparably interwoven with human history.** We are told of the **fall of the angels from their purity**, of Lucifer their leader, the instigator of rebellion, of their confederacy and government, of their various orders, of their great intelligence and subtlety, and of their malicious designs against the innocence and happiness of men. We are told of One mightier than the fallen foe, — One by whose authority Satan’s power is limited and controlled; and we are told, also, of the punishment prepared for the originator of iniquity {4SP 331.1, emphasis added}.

The Bible recognizes Satan as “an active, personal agent, the origi-

nator of evil, the enemy of God and man.”

The prophet Ezekiel concurs that he was the “originator of iniquity”—iniquity was started *in him* according to Ezekiel 28. This word “iniquity” doesn’t mean much to most of us. It vaguely conveys some form of evil; perhaps an outdated way of addressing it, but its actual meaning is a blur. And yet this is a most significant word, especially if Lucifer was its “originator.” We will explore this word in the following chapters, and its study will expose the hidden mystery of Lucifer’s power. We will confirm that “iniquity” is indeed the initial evil he originated, and will follow its trail down to the Garden of Eden. But what role did Lucifer play in God’s kingdom of love prior to sinning? What did his name, Lucifer, mean?

Strong’s Concordance defines “Lucifer” as “the morning star.” In Latin, Lucifer means “light bearer.” The Bible also calls him “the son of the morning” (Isaiah 14:12). Before his own fall he was a being filled with light, a powerful biblical metaphor for truth and life. Thus, he was a “light bearer” of truth and life: truth about God, light about the God of life. He was a bearer of light who communicated knowledge about God.

A few passages in the Bible describe him, his beginnings and his demise. They summarize his whole history in a nutshell. Here are just a few verses from these passages, but we encourage the reader to examine them in their entirety. Isaiah chapter fourteen addresses him as the king of Babylon but also identifies him as Lucifer:

“How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
For you have said in your heart:
‘I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.’
Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,
To the lowest depths of the Pit” (Isaiah 14:12-15).

Ezekiel 28 calls him the king of Tyre but connects him to Eden, the Garden of God, before Tyre ever existed:

“You were the seal of perfection,
 Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
 You were in Eden, the garden of God;
 Every precious stone was your covering:
 The sardius, topaz, and diamond,
 Beryl, onyx, and jasper,
 Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.
 The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes
 Was prepared for you on the day you were created.”

“You were the anointed cherub who covers;
 I established you;
 You were on the holy mountain of God;
 You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.
 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created,
 Till iniquity was found in you.”

“By the abundance of your trading
 You became filled with violence within,
 And you sinned;
 Therefore I cast you as a profane thing
 Out of the mountain of God;
 And I destroyed you, O covering cherub,
 From the midst of the fiery stones” (Ezekiel 28:12-16).

Through symbols, the Book of Revelation fills in more details of his history:

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Revelation 12:3-9).

There is a wealth of information here, material for many books. When we mine the significance of these words, symbols, and metaphors, we begin to really understand the what, how, when, and why Lucifer turned against God.

One point we must settle from the very beginning: Lucifer’s attack on God centered on God Himself. It was directed at God’s very essence—at

His character of *agape* love. Since God's essence and His law are one and the same, the attack on God's law was directed at God Himself.

Before Lucifer was banished from heaven, **he sought to abolish the law of God**. He claimed that the unfallen intelligencies of holy heaven had no need of law, but were capable of governing themselves and of preserving unspotted integrity. Lucifer was the covering cherub, the most exalted of the heavenly created beings; **he stood nearest the throne of God, and was most closely connected and identified with the administration of God's government, most richly endowed with the glory of his majesty and power**" {ST April 28, 1890, par. 1, emphasis added}.

Lucifer "sought to abolish the law of God." His reason? "He claimed that the unfallen intelligencies of holy heaven had no need of law, but were capable of governing themselves and of preserving unspotted integrity."

We must keep in mind that this is what Lucifer *claimed*. But what really was his agenda behind this claim? Could he really have deceived a third of the angels with such a claim? How did he expect them to preserve "unspotted integrity" without a moral law? Or did he have *another* moral law, another principle (one which was antagonistic to God's law) hiding, lurking behind these claims?

Lucifer knew that God's government was empowered by His moral law of *agape* love and he knew that every intelligent being has to have a moral code of ethics by which to order their behavior—all must have some moral law, any moral law. He knew very well that law was a necessity, an integral part of God's universe. Knowing this, he would not have simply attempted to get rid of law altogether—that would have been an impossibility. Rather, he devised an *alternative* to God's moral law, a *replacement*; and we shall provide evidence to that effect.

God's government is **moral**, and **truth and love** are to be the prevailing power {DA 759.1, emphasis added}.

God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton {PP 49.1}.

All *intelligent* beings are "free moral agents." Freedom implies choice. Our choices are simple: we can choose either God's moral law or Satan's moral law—there is no other. "The law of the Spirit of life" or "the law of sin and death." The path of life or the path of curses. Light or darkness. Life or death.

Lucifer "stood nearest to the throne of God, and was most closely connect-

ed and identified with the administration of God's government"—he knew God's law intimately. With this in mind, his assault on God's law is surprising, to say the least. How could rebellion have arisen in his mind, a being who lived in a perfect and flawless universe and who "stood nearest to the throne of God," promoting His law? Look again carefully at this passage from Ezekiel quoted above: "How have you fallen from heaven O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!"

Lucifer fell—he fell from a condition that was far superior to the one in which he finds himself now. He fell from heaven, that place of pure joy and perfect harmony where God's will of *agape* love prevails. If heaven is the highest experience one could ever attain, how could he go against it, given he was so brilliant, God's supreme creation? Notice the "reason" for his uprising:

What was it that caused Satan to rebel? **Was there any just reason** that could be assigned for his sin? The place where sin originated has been pointed out, but **the reason for sin cannot be found; for there is no reason for its existence** {ST September 18, 1893, par. 2, emphasis added}.

The **entrance of sin into heaven cannot be explained. If it were explainable**, it would show that there was **some reason for sin**. But as **there was not the least excuse for it**, its origin will ever remain shrouded in mystery {RH March 9, 1886, par. 2, emphasis added}.

There was no "reason," no need, no excuse for Satan to rise up against God and His law. Why? Everything was in perfect order in God's government. God's law was the path of life where there was joy, pleasures and life forever more. The universe was in perfect harmony and there was no such thing as death. If there had been any *reason* for Lucifer to rebel, then there would have been good cause to overthrow God and His law. But there was none. God's government was perfect and all intelligent beings thrived under His love.

Lucifer chose to rise up against God for *reasons* that we cannot fathom—but that he saw a flaw in God's moral law is obvious. He *saw it*, even though it wasn't there; he saw it and he believed he could fix it. But in trying to fix it he only managed to bring death and destruction into being because he created a moral system that separated us from the Creator, who is the source of life. Isaiah says that as he fell, he dragged us along with him, *weakening* us, the nations of the earth. To "weaken" in Hebrew means to "prostrate; by implication, to overthrow, decay:—discomfit, waste away, weaken," (Strong's Concordance). This process of

weakening has been slow but sure. Adam and his contemporaries lived nearly a thousand years, according to the Bible. And they were giants in his day compared to us. The human race has increasingly *regressed* and not *progressed*, as is commonly thought. We have gone downwards in every sense of the word—physically, intellectually and morally.

How did Lucifer bring us to this state? How did he bring decay and death into being? How did he “prostrate” us? By simply trying to abolish the law of God? Yes, he did that, but he did more than that—he introduced a *new* law. And if we follow the “death” trail, we end up at the Garden of Eden, at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God had said of this Tree to Adam: “The day you eat of it you shall surely die,” Genesis 2:17. The law represented by this Tree is the source of death.

He who “weakened the nations” brought into being a new path: the path of curses and death. This path is the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Now, there are two paths for us to choose—two moral laws.

In the Garden we can see two principles “contending for supremacy” for our hearts and minds: the Tree of Life, God’s moral law of love, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Satan’s moral law. And the consequences of these paths are quite serious. We are dealing with life and death here because God said that if we “eat” of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil we will die; but if we eat of the Tree of Life we can have eternal life.

We have a choice to make. Life and death affect each one of us intimately—no one is exempt from this. Isn’t it crucial then, that we know what our choices are? Should we not study this subject? We will find more answers as we discover more about Lucifer, about what iniquity is, and what he has done to us *through* it.



5

LUCIFER'S SIN

We have established that Lucifer rebelled against God. He rebelled against God's government, or to be more precise, against the law with which God ruled His universe—the *moral* law of *agape* love—unconditional, impartial, selfless love.

Lucifer began harboring criticism towards the government of God—again, there was no reason for this, but it happened—and in that process, he became convinced that he had the solution to a problem *he saw* in God's administration. This is how his rebellion began.

Lucifer took the position that as a result of the law of God, wrong existed in heaven and on this earth. This brought against God's government the charge of being arbitrary. But this is a falsehood, framed by the author of all falsehoods. God's government is a government of free-will, and there is no act of rebellion or obedience which is not an act of free-will {ST June 5, 1901, par. 4, emphasis added}.

Lucifer was claiming that there was a problem with God's government, and that problem was God's law of *agape* love. The "wrong" he *perceived* "existed in heaven and on this earth" was God's law of *agape* love. And because God would not alter His law of liberty to conform to Lucifer's new ideas, Lucifer charged Him as being arbitrary. God's law protected everyone's freewill and Lucifer thought this was a problem. He wanted to change that, he wanted to bring in a *forced* obedience, and as God would not go along with his plans, he charged God as being arbitrary, when in fact *he* was proposing the enforcement of an arbitrary system of law.

Lucifer was enshrouded with glory as the covering cherub. Yet this angel whom God had created, and entrusted with power, became desirous of being as God. He gained the sympathy of some of his associates by **suggesting thoughts of criticism regarding the government of God.** This **evil seed** was scattered in a most seducing manner, and after it had sprung up and **taken root in the minds of many**, he gath-

ered the ideas that he himself had first implanted in the minds of others, and brought them before the highest order of angels as the thoughts of other minds **against the government of God**. Thus, by **ingenious methods of his own devising, Lucifer introduced rebellion in heaven** {4BC 1143.1, emphasis added}.

“Thoughts of criticism.” This in itself is a problem. Why? “Thoughts of criticism” began in the mind of the Devil. His was the first mind to engage in such thoughts. He saw something wrong where there was only perfection. There was no flaw in heaven—but he *saw* it. The Pharisees did the same thing when they criticized the disciples for picking ears of corn on the Sabbath day. Jesus’ response was:

But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless (Matthew 12:7).

The Pharisees saw a flaw where there was none. Likewise, Lucifer’s “thoughts of criticism” were directed towards something that gave no cause for criticism—he “condemned the guiltless.” But even more, his “thoughts of criticism” reveal that his mind had already deviated from the law of God because criticism is something foreign to God’s language. Notice what Paul says in his letter to Titus:

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work (Titus 1:15-16).

God is pure, holy, clean, and to Him “all things are pure.” This may be hard for us to understand because we see evil everywhere and in everyone—but God sees only value in us, even in those cases we consider to be the most hopeless. Jesus saw beauty in everyone and He treated them accordingly, without condemnation. It was this ability to see people without condemnation that drew them to Him. It was also this lack of condemnation that changed their hearts and behavior to reflect the potential He saw in them.

Criticism in itself is a symptom that whatever was coming out of Lucifer now was suspect and distorted. His mind was no longer pure. He had become an *unbeliever*—the first unbeliever—and his mind became *defiled*. He no longer knew God as He truly was and he became “abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” He originated *the sin*—not *seeing* and *portraying* God as He truly is.

There was a precise moment when Lucifer first sinned; “the place where sin entered can be specified” {4BC 1163.6}. This means we can pinpoint the specific “place” in time that this happened, and the circumstances surrounding it.

This “place” is described in the Book of Ezekiel. This is the pivotal mo-

ment in which Lucifer changed from being Lucifer to being the Devil—the moment he turned from God’s *agape* love. He then became something that was the very *opposite* of God. So let’s zoom in and see what the prophet says:

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. **You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.** By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned (Ezekiel 28:13-16, emphasis added).

These verses reveal much. They disclose Lucifer’s relationship to God prior to rebelling, and his occupation and role in God’s universe. They show his pre-fall *moral* condition, and explain what happened to his character afterwards. We can also learn much about God here. These words must be “mined,” and as we do, we will find a rich, hidden treasure—especially if we examine the original Hebrew words.

YOU WERE IN EDEN, THE GARDEN OF GOD...

Lucifer was in the Garden of Eden. The Garden, therefore, must have vital, pivotal information for us. Eden pulls together the threads of Lucifer’s rebellion—it exposes what he did. Even though his initial uprising began in heaven, it is in the Garden that we find “iniquity” explained. Where was he in Eden? Was he there before or after “iniquity was found in” him?

We know that he was at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—this was his hangout, his jurisdiction and his claimed territory. He was there in the disguise of a serpent—and since then the serpent, which the Bible often refers to as “creeping things,” has become a symbol of his person, his principles, and his workings on earth. An exploration, even if superficial, of the world’s major pagan religions will reveal that there is a serpent somehow involved in its system of worship.

So what is the principle represented by the Tree which the serpent was “peddling” to Eve? Was this the same “peddling” he did to the rest of the universe? What stake did he have in this Tree he wanted Eve to eat from? The Bible says:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate (Genesis 3:1-6).

This conversation reveals much to us. First, it tells us that the serpent was cunning; in Hebrew, *ârûum* means “cunning (usually in a bad sense):—crafty, prudent, subtil,” (Strong’s Concordance). His questions to Eve reveal that he had a vested interest in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—he really wanted her to eat its fruit! He used all his charisma, cunning and deception to get her to do it, even distorting God’s original words “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” He also proved himself a liar, because God had said “you shall surely die,” and he affirmed the opposite—“you shall NOT surely die.”

Prior to eating of his Tree, Adam and Eve did not know Good and Evil. This means that in all their interactions they knew only *agape*. They saw each other and God through the eyes of *agape* love, through unconditional, impartial selfless love. They were pure, and to them, “all things were pure.” After eating from Satan’s Tree, Adam and Eve began to see each other, and God, through the eyes of Good and Evil—through partial, conditional and self-centered eyes. They began to see evil in each other and following in the footsteps of their new master, they began to criticize each other. The ensuing conversations they had with God confirm this.

To the serpent, everything hinged on Eve’s eating of this Tree. He seduced her with the fruit, claiming it would be in her own best interest: “the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened.”

What was it about this Tree that meant so much to the serpent? What’s its meaning? Why was it next to the Tree of Life to begin with? And why wasn’t it simply called the Tree of Death? Was the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil *just* a test of obedience? Or was it a *symbol* of something highly significant in the context of the great controversy? Should we care, given this took place so long ago? Or should we simply dismiss it as mythology, as some have done?

We cannot dismiss it. Lucifer was there. This is one of our main pieces of evidence. Instead of throwing it away, we must dig, dig, and dig some more until we discover what it means. It is critical that we figure this out. This Tree is every bit relevant for us today as it was for Adam and Eve. Like a snake, it has been lurking, camouflaged under a beneficent and just appearance, hidden from our eyesight but right in front of our eyes. In fact, its true significance is about to be revealed to our generation in a way that has never been done before.

Before sin, Adam and Eve's understanding of this Tree was simply that God had said, "don't eat of it for if you do, you will die for sure." To them, its meaning was indeed simply a test of obedience. Moreover, the *moral system* this Tree represented was in its initial stages; the Tree was just a sapling back then. In our day it has matured and come to full fruition—its fruit is ripe, ready to fall from the tree—no pun intended.

We would like to propose that this Tree represents the *corrupt*—a foundational word—principle Lucifer had conceived while still in heaven. The principle this Tree represents is the "iniquity" that was found in him. In this Tree are embedded all of his deceptions about God. If we don't grasp its meaning, we will be completely taken by the lies of the enemy of God and man. We will explore this Tree extensively, but first we must continue to understand who Lucifer was before he sinned, and why he rebelled against God.

EVERY PRECIOUS STONE WAS YOUR COVERING...

Lucifer was covered by "every precious stone." "Every," means nothing was lacking—God had created him with everything needed for perfection.

"Precious"—*yâqâr*, means "valuable." It can also mean "brightness, clear, costly, excellent, fat, honorable women, precious, reputation" (Strong's Dictionary). In other places in the Bible this word is translated as "dear," "magnificent" and "splendid." In 1 Samuel it is translated as "rare:"

And the word of the Lord was **rare** in those days; there was no widespread revelation (1 Samuel 3:1, emphasis added).

In Proverbs 17:27 *yâqâr* is translated as "excellent:"

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an '**excellent**' spirit.²⁸ Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding (Proverbs 17:27-28, emphasis added KJV).

Given the context of this verse, Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon argues that *yâqâr* means "perhaps 'with a quiet spirit,' to be quiet, to be meek." The New King James Version actually does follow that line of reasoning:

He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a '**calm**' spirit.²⁸ Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive (Proverbs 17:27, emphasis added).

This qualifier—"precious" – indicates that its object, the stones that

covered Lucifer, were indeed very special. Whatever they meant, they gave him an excellent, magnificent, splendid, calm, meek and humble spirit. The iniquity that was found in him rendered him the opposite of meek and humble: he became proud and full of himself.

We see here a creature upon whom God had bestowed exceptional qualities. Ezekiel said of him:

“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (Ezekiel 28:12).

The word “seal” in Hebrew denotes a sense of finality, that of locking something up:

...the ancients were accustomed to put a seal on many things for which we use a lock...From a roll or letter when completed receiving a seal, the signification arises... (Gesenius' Lexicon)

The idea is that when God created Lucifer He put a seal on him that said “you are perfect, I'm done, there is no more I can do here.” Lucifer was top of the line.

...EVERY PRECIOUS STONE...

The word “stone” is quite significant in the Bible. It refers to Jesus as the “cornerstone” (Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 28:16, Matthew 21:42, etc...) and to His followers as “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5). The Hebrew word for stone is *eben*, which means “through the meaning to build; a stone.” (Strong's Dictionary) *Eben* comes from the root word *bânâh*, which means “to build, obtain children, make, repair, set up, surely” (Strong's Dictionary).

Gesenius' Lexicon explains the word *bânâh* thus: “to build, to erect, as a house, a temple, a city, walls, defenses... it signifies to build a house for any one, i.e. to give him a stable abode; and figuratively, to cause him to prosper.”

Another word that grew out of the word *bânâh* is the word *bên*, which means “a son (as a builder of the family name)” (Strong's Dictionary). This last word is used in Isaiah 9:6 to refer to Jesus, the “Repairer of the breach” (Isaiah 58:12). Jesus was sent to repair the breach Lucifer had caused in God's kingdom. He came to rebuild God's name which Lucifer had defamed.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son (*bên*) is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

The idea being portrayed through these words is that prior to sin-

ning, Lucifer was a very special being who had been given “every precious stone”—everything needed in order to fulfill the purpose for which he was created: that of building, or erecting a wall of protection around God’s universal kingdom of *agape* love.

...THE SARDIUS, TOPAZ, AND THE DIAMOND, THE BERYL, THE ONYX, AND THE JASPER, THE SAPPHIRE, THE EMERALD, AND THE CARBUNCLE, AND GOLD...

In trying to understand the meaning of these stones, we are reminded of the high priest’s breastplate in Moses’ sanctuary. God gave Moses very detailed instructions regarding the high priest’s attire because the high priest was a type of Christ. Every detail of his clothes had a symbolic meaning designed to help us understand God and His heart of *agape* love.

A part of the high priest’s garments, his “covering,” was a breastplate (called the breastplate of judgment) on which were set in gold twelve stones (three columns, four rows) some of which were also in Lucifer’s “covering.” The breastplate is described below:

You shall make the breastplate of judgment. Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, you shall make it. It shall be doubled into a square: a span shall be its length, and a span shall be its width. And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; this shall be the first row; the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes (Exodus 28:15-21).

The breastplate was positioned upon the breast, the *heart* of the priest. Thus it was called the “breastplate of judgment” because it is in the heart that judgments—decisions—are made.

Each stone on the high priest’s breastplate was carved with one of the names of Jacob’s twelve sons. Jacob’s sons were to be the *builders* of God’s kingdom on earth. They were given the oracles of God—God’s law of *agape* love—which, if they lived by it, was supposed to build a “safe house” for every human being that chose to seek its security in the midst of the great controversy. These sons (stones) were supposed to be the conduit for a “stable abode” for humanity; they were to guide the world in the *ways of life—agape* love—and cause it to prosper and flourish.

When Jesus came into the scene He appointed twelve apostles. The names

of the apostles are inscribed on the foundations of the New Jerusalem:

Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:14).

Why are the names of the apostles written on the foundations of the New Jerusalem and not the names of Jacob's sons? Perhaps because it was the apostles who disseminated the pure gospel—the pure revelation of God, which they had witnessed in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, they are the “builders”, the “stones” of the New Jerusalem, the city of God. They build it with God's law of *agape* love.

Peter refers to this Old Testament concept of “stones” in his first epistle:

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious. Coming to Him *as to a living stone*, rejected indeed by men, **but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” **Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”** They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, **that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy** (1 Peter 2:1-10, emphasis added).

Jesus is *the* “living stone,” the stone of life. He was rejected by men, but He was “chosen by God and precious.” Jesus is the “chief cornerstone” upon which God's entire house is built. We are also to be “living stones,” and we may be rejected of men but “chosen of God.” As “living stones” we are to proclaim “the praises of Him” who called us “out of darkness into His marvelous light.” We come out of darkness when we believe what Jesus revealed about the Father of *agape* love; then we know that we are God's sons and daughters—we are *His* people and we have “obtained mercy.” As we proceed on our study we will see what this means and how important it is to *obtain* mercy.

Lucifer's covering had only nine stones—gold is a metal. Gold was a “setting,” just as it was in the high priest's breastplate.

Some have interpreted these stones to mean this: Lucifer was indeed the seal of perfection prior to the creation of mankind—every precious stone was his covering. But when God created mankind He added a new dimension to creation, something

He hadn't done yet. The three extra stones in the breast plate represented humanity's three types of relationships: parent/child, sibling, and husband/wife. This is related to the unique procreative ability of human beings (as opposed to angels, for instance, who do not procreate)—we were made in the image of God—we are creators, in that sense. We have not realized our uniqueness or *special-ness* yet. Perhaps some day we will.

There is another instance in the Bible where stones are mentioned. In Ezekiel, the prophet says that God would destroy Lucifer “from the midst of the stones of fire,” Ezekiel 28:16. The meaning of “the stones of fire” is described by the prophet Isaiah, who, when he encountered God face to face, was mortified by his own sinfulness—he felt naked in front of God. But God's reaction was to pour love, grace and mercy upon him through the symbolic “stones of fire.” Hear Isaiah's own words:

“Woe is me, for I am undone!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
The Lord of hosts.”

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, **having in his hand a live coal** which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said:

**“Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged”** (Isaiah 6:5-6, emphasis added).

The “live coal” is a “stone of fire;” it represents God's unconditional *agape* love, His grace and mercy for us, which is not based on our merits, or lack of them. In the Book of Proverbs we see the same symbolism, also in the context of unconditional love:

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;
For so you will heap coals of fire on his head,
And the Lord will reward you (Proverbs 25:21-22).

And the apostle Paul echoes Solomon's words:

Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head” (Romans 12:20).

Fiery stones therefore, are glimmering symbols of God's immense heart of love and mercy. They are emblems of the immovableness (The Rock), and the unconditional nature of His *agape* love—a fervent love that's de-

picted to be as hot as fire and as strong as stones.

This metaphor, of “fire” being God’s love, is also confirmed by another verse in the Bible, where His love is described as “flames of fire:”

For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; **its flames are flames of fire**, a most vehement flame (Song of Solomon 8:6, emphasis added).

Could the nine stones with which Lucifer was covered perhaps be symbolic of the various facets of *agape* love, as delineated in 1 Corinthians 13? It may be a stretch, but worth considering:

1. Love suffers long (bears all things, endures all things – never loses patience)
2. Love is kind (does not behave rudely)
3. Love does not envy others
4. Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up (no pride)
5. Love does not seek its own (is not selfish)
6. Love is not provoked, thinks no evil (of others or toward others – it is pure and thinks only pure thoughts about others)
7. Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth
8. Love believes all things, hopes all things (is extremely positive about one’s future)
9. Love never fails (never, ever stops loving)

If these were the “precious stones” that covered Lucifer, then he was perfect indeed. But why were there nine stones on Lucifer and twelve in the High Priest’s breastplate? Perhaps because with the creation of humanity there came into light three other aspects of God’s character, aspects that always existed, but could not have been *known* before the great controversy, as there was no opportunity for a sinless universe to observe them. These are:

10. Freedom
11. Impartiality
12. Equal access

If there is any merit to this interpretation, then these three extra stones would explain the twelve stones on the High Priest’s breastplate, instead of nine. Freedom, impartiality and equal access are also fundamental attributes of God’s *agape* love, the law by which He operates His government. But their

true meaning can only come alive in the context of sin, as we shall see.

THE WORKMANSHIP OF YOUR TIMBRELS AND PIPES WAS PREPARED FOR YOU ON THE DAY YOU WERE CREATED.

“Workmanship”—*mlâkâh*—means “properly, deputyship, i.e. ministry; generally, employment” (Strong’s Concordance).

A “timbrel” is a percussion instrument, something like a tambourine—a musical instrument. His “pipes”—*neqeb*—mean “bezels (for a gem).” However, Gesenius’ Lexicon also states: “a socket for setting a gem, pala gemmarum (as rightly rendered by Jerome), so called from its hollowness... Others understand it to be a pipe,” from a root that means “to bore through.”

Since this word “pipe”—*neqeb*—appears only once in the entire Bible it is impossible to compare it to another context. Having said as much, these “pipes” could possibly also refer to a flute. Why?

A few verses down in Ezekiel 28:18 we read this of Lucifer: “You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities.” The Hebrew word “defiled” is *châlal*, which means “to bore” but it also means “to play the flute:”

châlal – A primitive root; properly to bore, that is, (by implication) to wound, to dissolve; figuratively to profane (a person, place or thing), to break (one’s word), to begin (as if by an opening-wedge); denominatively (from H2485) to play (the flute): - begin (men began), defile, break, defile, eat (as common things), first, gather the grape thereof, take inheritance, pipe, player on instruments, pollute, (cast as) profane (self), prostitute, slay (slain), sorrow, stain, wound (Strong’s Concordance).

This brings an interesting new dimension to this study, as many of the ancient gods of human history, such as Osiris, Krishna, Pan, Kokopelli, etc were flute players. For those interested in pursuing this line of study you may read the dissertation on Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute*, *Die Zauberflöte and the Moral Law of Opposing Forces* by Denice Grant at the University of Washington’s library (find link at www.grace-unlimited-ministries.org). If there is any merit to this line of inquiry, then Lucifer became indeed the cosmic pied piper.

Lucifer’s heavenly ministry definitely appears to have involved music in some way. The descriptive words “the workmanship of your timbrels and pipes” indicate that he was a musician. And since he was the highest of angels we could assume that perhaps he was the master musician of heaven. Could it be that music was the language of heaven? And that Lucifer communicated God’s messages through music? We don’t know this for a fact, of course; it is only conjecture.

YOU WERE THE ANOINTED CHERUB...

Moving on in our word study we arrive at the word “anointed.” Lucifer was not just *an* anointed cherub; he was *the* anointed cherub. This gives us an indication of his uniqueness and special role amongst the entire angelic host, whose numbers are expressed in Revelation thus:

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands (Revelation 5:11).

This is a vast number, whatever it is, and it gives us a new perspective regarding Lucifer's role prior to his fall, as he was the leader of this vast throng. Knowing this also helps us to understand what kind of influence he had, and how his influence played out in his rebellion.

The Hebrew word “anointed”—*mimshach*—has an interesting connotation. It means “in the sense of expansion; outspread (i.e. with outstretched wings):—anointed,” (Strong's Concordance).

Mimshach evolved from *mâshach*, “to rub with oil, i.e. to anoint; by implication, to consecrate; also to paint.” (Strong's Concordance) Lucifer was created and consecrated for a very specific purpose. What was his position, his occupation and the ministry for which he was created? What did his “outspread,” “outstretched wings,” mean? The next section should answer this question.

...CHERUB WHO COVERS...

A cherub is an angel of the highest order in heaven. Lucifer was a “covering” cherub which made him even higher—the highest order of heaven. The word “covers” in Hebrew is *çâkak*, which means “properly, to entwine as a screen; by implication, to fence in, cover over, (figuratively) protect” (Strong's Concordance).

So we see that Lucifer was a protector, a defender. This explains the outstretched wings—they are a symbol of entwining something “as a screen,” fencing it in, covering over, protecting. Jesus Himself also used the idea of “outstretched wings” as a symbol of protection:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, **as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings**, but you were not willing” (Matthew 23:37, emphasis added)!

Lucifer's task, like the metaphoric “stone”—which builds, protects, and creates a safe environment for all creatures—was to ensure that the

universe was protected. He had been given the sacred office of a guardian. What did he guard, protect, or defend? Whatever it was, it must have been something of great importance to God.

In order to understand this we must move to the earthly sanctuary built by Moses in the desert. The sanctuary was “the copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5), therefore by looking at it we may learn of “heavenly things.” The sanctuary was not necessarily a copy of a heavenly *building*, but of heavenly *things*, because in the Book of Revelation it says “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it,” Revelation 21:22.

If we look at the temple as simply a literal building we will miss out completely on the messages God intends to convey to us through its symbolic meanings. These *things* are the *things* we are looking into at this very moment—God’s character, Satan’s rebellion, and every step of the plan God set in motion to reclaim the human race and to enlighten the rest of the universe: the plan of salvation. Every activity and object in the earthly sanctuary was a reflection of what has transpired and will yet transpire since the beginning of the great controversy, and reveals how God is dealing with this problem. Through the sanctuary we learn that He has been dealing only through the principle which is the foundation of His government: *agape* love.

Thus in the earthly sanctuary we learn of Lucifer’s purpose and position in heaven before his rebellion:

You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, **covering the mercy seat with their wings**, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel (Exodus 25:17-22, emphasis added).

In Moses’ sanctuary there were two covering cherubs. Both of them outstretched their wings over the “mercy seat,” which was stationed in the Most Holy Place compartment. The mercy seat was the lid of the ark that contained the “Testimony,” the tablets of the Ten Commandments. The two cherubs “covered” or stood over the mercy seat and the ark of the Testimony.

The Ten Commandments are a compact version of God’s law of *agape* love adapted specifically for the human race. They embody our relationship with God and

with our fellow human family. In a nutshell then, the Holy of Holies represents the very throne room of God and the Ten Commandments, which is a transcript of His character of love. “Mercy seat” is another way of saying “throne of mercy.” The word “seat” refers to God’s throne. The throne is a symbol of God’s government, and it is called the “mercy seat” because mercy is the foundation of His government.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face (Psalm 89:14).

In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness” (Isaiah 16:5, emphasis added).

Let us therefore come boldly to the **throne of grace**, that we may **obtain mercy and find grace** to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16, emphasis added).

As “the anointed cherub who covers,” Lucifer was one of those two “covering,” “protecting” cherubs that guarded God’s government of mercy. As such, he held one of the closest positions to God in the entire universe—he was a protector, a *keeper* of God’s law of love and mercy. By extension, he was a protector of the universe, a protector of life, because it is through God’s law of love that eternal life is made possible—God’s law is what protects life. God’s law is the perfect mechanism, or system, for coexistence. There was no death in God’s universe. By rebelling against the very thing he used to guard, Lucifer himself brought death into being.

Lucifer’s employment had everything to do with the law of *agape* love. Since *agape* love is the very essence of God’s character, it is also the most vital element of His kingdom. The “keeper of the law” would naturally be deemed the most vital position in heaven. Therefore, Lucifer’s title elevated him to a place of great power and influence in the universe.

Ezekiel says that God Himself placed Lucifer on the holy mountain of God: “I established you” (Ezekiel 18:14). God had given him this most privileged position in the cosmos, right there in His presence—He had created him for that very purpose.

Kingdoms cannot survive without laws. It is through law that order is kept. It is the same in heaven. God has a law upon which depends the survival of the universe. But His law creates perfect harmony and order. God’s *order* is entirely different from this world’s order.

Given these facts, we can conclude that Lucifer was intimately acquainted with God’s law of *agape* love. He knew that the foundation of the law is “mercy.” He was created with the capacity to live by that perfect law, and love and mercy were the only principles that ruled his own character. Thus when we say that Lucifer was in a position of great power

and influence, we must realize that prior to his rebellion, his power and influence were exercised only within the parameters of *agape* love.

We can safely assume that before his rebellion he lived by God's law of love with absolute joy and without reservations. As such, he enjoyed peace and harmony within himself, with God, and with all other created beings. He was meek, he was humble; he had the heart of a servant. He knew nothing else. Thus from the day he was created he fully embraced God's eternal principle of love by which the universe was governed. And, because of *agape*, he did however have freedom to choose otherwise. And one day he did.

That fateful day, Lucifer turned against God and His law. It became a war on God's government, a war specifically targeting the law of mercy which he had heretofore protected.

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought... (Revelation 12:7).

Why? What possible criticism could Lucifer have had against God's law? We have a possible answer, but first let's delve deeper and see what happened in his mind as he rebelled against the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25).

YOU WERE PERFECT IN YOUR WAYS FROM THE DAY YOU WERE CREATED...

We have arrived at the crucial moment; here is where things begin to change. Ezekiel says that Lucifer was "perfect" in his ways. After all he was "the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (Ezekiel 28:12). He was God's supreme creation. There was absolutely no flaw in him, no propensity to evil.

But what does "perfect in his ways" mean according to the Bible? The word *tāmym*—"perfect"—means "entire," perfect, also "complete" (Strong's Dictionary). To be "entire" means to be full, complete, *undivided*. *Tāmym* also means to be morally undefiled, without blemish or spot, upright, integrity, and truth (Strong's Dictionary). This means that Lucifer was morally pure—white, with no black spots whatsoever. There was no contradiction, mixture of opposites, duality, or duplicity in him at all. He was pure and holy as God.

Derek—"ways"—means "a road, figuratively, a course of life or mode of action" (Strong's Dictionary). What is a "course of life" and "mode of action?" Isn't it one's moral, ethical code? And isn't it one's moral code that determines one's character, one's "mode of life?" This means that Lucifer was morally flawless—he had a "per-

fect,” “entire” character based on a “perfect,” “entire” moral law—*agape* love. God’s law is “perfect” and “holy:”

But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does (James 1:25).

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good (Romans 7:12).

The law is “perfect” and “holy” because it is pure, not corrupt; it is unchanging. Thus, Lucifer was not split in any way—his moral make-up was *undivided*. He was driven by unconditional love and he was impartial. He was always the same, unchangeable in all circumstances, just like God is.

All this implies that when “iniquity was found in him” Lucifer ceased to be like God. He went from being “complete,” “entire,” to being fractured, double-minded. The apostle James, whose Bible was the Hebrew Old Testament, knew his Hebrew words well. He also used the word “perfect” in connection with the word “entire”—both in the context of “double-mindedness.”

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be **perfect and entire**, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. **A double minded man is unstable in all his ways** (James 1:4-8 KJV, emphasis added).

Lucifer’s perfection prior to sinning infers that he was “stable” in all his *ways*. But he wasn’t like that on his own; it was God’s law of *agape* love that made him thus. He merely reflected what he saw in the Creator. God creates intelligent beings who are able to reflect what they see in Him. This is a biblical principle laid out in the Book of Micah:

For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever (Micah 4:5, emphasis added).

All intelligent creatures—including us—walk according to their concept of God. Our understanding of God will determine our relationship with others and will even impact our own judgment, for we will be judged by whatever judgment we use. This explains why God is so insistent that we come to know Him as He truly is:

And this is life eternal, that they might **know thee the only true God**, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3, emphasis added).

“For My people are foolish, **they have not known Me**. They are silly children, and they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge” (Jeremiah 4:22, emphasis added).

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, **that we may know him that is true**, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life (1 John 5:20, emphasis added).

To be “entire”—*tâmyym*—also means to be “without blemish.” Elsewhere in the Bible, amazingly, this word is used to describe a spotless, unblemished sacrificial lamb. In the case of the lamb, *tâmyym* means that it had to be completely white, with no black spots whatsoever. This is a metaphor through which we can better understand what God is trying to show us. The pure, entirely white lamb was a symbol that pointed to the coming Messiah, and represented His purity of character—He would reveal a God whose character is pure light (*agape* love) and in whom “there is no darkness (iniquity) at all” (1 John 1:5). This would be the message of the Messiah.

So now we can see where the biblical metaphors of black and white, light and darkness, come from. Moses wrote;

Your lamb shall be without blemish [*TÂMYYM*], a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats (Exodus 12:5; KJV, emphasis added).

The “spotless” sacrificial lamb was a symbol of Jesus, of whom John the Baptist said: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)!

As the “perfect” Lamb, Jesus had a “perfect,” “entire” character. He had absolutely no dark spots in Him. This means that He lived completely by the law of *agape* love and mercy, and never once stepped outside or deviated from it. His character was unconditional, impartial, undivided, unmixed. Jesus’ character was *single* and *stable* in all His ways.

Ezekiel’s description of Lucifer implies that he used to be spotless just as the spotless Lamb of God *is* spotless, who *is* perfect in His ways. Thus, prior to sinning, Lucifer had the same pure, undivided character as Christ.

Evil originated with Lucifer, who rebelled against the government of God. Before his fall he was a covering cherub, distinguished by his excellence. **God made him good and beautiful, as near as possible like Himself** (The Review and Herald, September 24, 1901) {4BC 1163.1, emphasis added}.

The turning point, the thing that caused Lucifer to change from his perfect condition was “iniquity”—“you were perfect in your ways **till** iniquity was found in you.” Whatever it was, iniquity caused Lucifer to become the opposite of Christ. He became conditional, partial, divided, double-minded, mixed

with contradictions and thus unstable in all his ways. In fact, the occultists call Lucifer by the name of *Mercurius* (the “alchemical spirit”), after the metal mercury, precisely because of this metal’s *instability* and *volatility*. Of *Mercurius*, Carl Jung, the renowned psychiatrist and alchemist, said: “he is good to the good and evil to the evil.” This is a sign of an unstable character that changes according to circumstances. This is what Lucifer became once “iniquity was found in him.”

By contrast, Jesus is good to the good, as well as good to the evil. He addressed this in the Sermon of the Mount when He said:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:43-48).

In essence, Jesus is saying: in the past you were told to be conditional and partial—to love your neighbors and hate your enemies. But if you want to be perfect—*tâmym*—as God is perfect, then be good to the good and good also to the evil. Be unconditional. Be impartial. Because this is how God is.

This is what “perfect” and “entire” means. God does not change from good to evil or from evil to good. He is good at all times and in all circumstances. And this is where Lucifer deviated from God; he developed a dual character, a double-mindedness that defiled his entire being.

If we examine how Lucifer deceived Eve we will see this precise theme of *singleness* versus *duality* at work. The Bible tells us specifically how the serpent deceived Eve:

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).

What can we learn from this verse? First, that the serpent *deceived* Eve. Then, that he deceived her by “craftiness”—subtlety, cunningness. The serpent’s cunningness is best described as “sophistry:”

Eve yielded to the **lying sophistry** of the devil in the form of a serpent. She ate the fruit, and realized no immediate harm {Con 14.3, emphasis added}.

...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 to God {DA 761.5, emphasis added}.

“Sophistry” is an interesting word, because it comes from the root Greek word *sophia*, which means “wisdom.” By definition, sophistry is a fallacious, false, deceptive reasoning, based on a false wisdom. Satan’s wisdom is the *knowledge* found in the Garden of Eden in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the Bible, the word *daath*—knowledge—is often equated, through Hebrew parallelism, to the word “wisdom:”

Job speaks without knowledge, His words are without wisdom’ (Job 34:35).

The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of knowledge, *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7).

For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:6 KJV).

Now, we know from the Bible that Satan’s “wisdom” has been ruling the world since Adam and Eve ate of this Tree. Thus, the so-called conventional “wisdom of the world” must come from him and from his Tree, representing his law. Can you see the potential for deception here? Who would question “wisdom” itself?

Satan rejected God and His love. And his new “wisdom,” which we have adopted, has blocked from our view the Creator’s infinite love, which is *His* wisdom. The deceptions embedded in his *sophistry* separated us from the Creator, the only source of life, and this is a *spiritual death*. This spiritual death destined us to die a *physical death*. The spiritual death came first, and the physical death is a *result, a consequence* of the spiritual death. But while it is true that we have been living by Satan’s wisdom, for us there was still hope because we didn’t know the fullness of God’s love, which is *His* wisdom. Likewise, if we are spiritually *reborn* into the truth, physical life follows.

And you, **being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh**, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses (Colossians 2:13, emphasis added).

We cannot accept or reject something we don’t know. For us, there was “hope in a knowledge of God’s love,” in a knowledge of His mercy and forgiveness, and that is what Jesus came to give us. There was hope that by beholding the love of God in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, we “might be drawn back to God.” There was hope that we might see that Satan’s “wisdom” is no wisdom at all, and that God’s love is the ultimate wisdom for the sustainability of life in the universe.

As we mentioned earlier, knowing God is extremely important according to the Bible. Jesus seemed to suggest that eternal life itself is embedded in the true knowledge of God. If we knew God, we would also know that

we have eternal life. Consider His words carefully:

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do (John 17:3-4, emphasis added).

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:14-16).

For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. **And I know that His command is everlasting life.** Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak" (John 12:49-50, emphasis added).

To know God is to know that we have eternal life, because once we know God, we also know that He not only has the power to *give* us eternal life, but He also has the *desire*, the *will* to do it. Jesus knew that God's "command," God's will for us, "is everlasting life."

Going back to 2 Corinthians 11:3, the second thing we can learn from this passage is *how* Satan deceived Eve:

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).

Satan "corrupted" Eve's mind. This implies that at first her mind was pure; but the Serpent was able to *rewire* her mind somehow. What Satan did was, he reprogrammed her mind with a lie—implied by the word "craftiness." The word "corrupted" suggests that he changed something that was pure into something impure (if the reader recalls, he has *corrupt* principles).

But what did he corrupt? He corrupted her *view* of Christ—he corrupted her mind "from the simplicity that is in Christ." He managed to change her understanding of Christ from its correct or original form into an altered, corrupt form—a falsehood. Thus by changing her concept of God's character he changed her character—from then on she *reflected* a false god. Paul's fear was that Satan would also do this to the Corinthians, and ultimately to us.

Let's reason for a second. It was Christ who created the earth. He was the one who would come to meet with Adam and Eve "in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). He met with the couple daily, face to face, and one can only imagine how wonderful those encounters must have been. So in what way exactly did the serpent make Eve think differently about Christ? What exactly did this corruption of her mind "from the simplicity that is in Christ" entail?

The Greek word *haplotes*—simplicity—means "singleness." In fact, "single-

ness” is this word’s primary meaning. Thus, *before* the serpent deceived Eve she used to see Jesus Christ as He truly is, as One who has a “singleness” of character; but after the serpent deceived her she no longer saw Christ that way. Her mind was corrupted to think He was the opposite of “singleness”—a *dualistic* being, having a mixed character, a dark and a light side all at once. In her mind, Christ became “spotted,” “blemished,” “double-minded.”

Hence, if Lucifer stopped being “entire” or “whole” or having a “singleness” of character when iniquity was found in him, then iniquity has to be a divided and a *dividing* principle. It has to be something that *contains* and *causes* a dualism, a mixture of black and white, a mingling of light and darkness—a double-mindedness.

Not surprisingly, this precise mixture of opposites is found in the Garden, and is embodied in the Tree of the Knowledge of *Good* and *Evil*. Here is something that contains and causes a dualism, a mingling of opposites such as black and white or light and darkness. This is why Ezekiel points us directly to the Garden of Eden, because it is there that we can learn what happened to Lucifer, and what he has done in his war against God’s character and law.

Given all that we have seen so far, iniquity then has to be something which is represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This “something” is what caused Lucifer to lose the “singleness” of character which he had before, when he was “perfect” and “entire.” This “something” is what caused him to fall from heaven and the *principles* of heaven; heaven, where there is only *agape*, “simplicity,” “singleness.”

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil has to represent something specific—and whatever it is, it has to be Lucifer’s original sin. This Knowledge of Good and Evil, which the Serpent peddled as “wisdom,” is not *constant* because it contains a *contrary* duality; it is not *stable* as *agape* is stable because it sways back and forth between Good and Evil, and we will talk about this in more detail later on.

God, however, cannot waver back and forth between good and evil because God is *agape* love, and *agape* is constant, unchangeable, incorruptible. Paul addresses God’s *incorruptibleness* in the Book of Romans:

Professing themselves to be **wise, they became fools**, and changed the glory of the **incorruptible God** into an image made like to **corruptible man**, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things (1:22-23, emphasis added).

But after eating from this Tree of duality, Adam and Eve came to *perceive* God precisely as that: inconstant, unpredictable, volatile and contradictory, in other words, corruptible. That is why they hid from Him: because they were afraid of Him—they thought He was coming to bring

harm upon them, that He was coming to punish them. They now saw Him as having a dual character, as a Good and Evil God.

Every parent must remember the first time they punished their little, cuddly, precious child. How that unsuspecting, trusting baby must have been taken completely by surprise by their parents' menacing tones, demeanor and violent actions. What happens the second time a parent comes to punish that child? Does he/she run away, or recoil in fear? What happens to that previously loving relationship, and to the trust that used to be there between parent and child? This is what happened to Adam and Eve. God had not punished them, but because they ate of the forbidden Tree, they opened themselves up to Satan's influence, and he, through the principles embedded in the Knowledge of Good and Evil, *corrupted* their *thinking* and *view* of God. They automatically *assumed* God was coming to punish them.

Lucifer lost his purity, his *entireness* because of iniquity's dualism. This is foundational to our understanding of what happened in his revolt. The iniquity that was "found in him" entailed a departure from that "entire" quality, that singleness of character which the word *tāmtym* implies, and which Jesus revealed in His life and death here on earth. Iniquity transformed Lucifer into a being filled with metaphoric "blemishes," "spots." To use a visual aid, now he looked more like a spotted lamb, having a mixture of black and white patches all over.

So what is the Knowledge of Good and Evil? Let's reason this out. If what had been inside Lucifer prior to sin was God's moral law of *agape* love—Lucifer "was perfect in his ways" and "ways" means "course of life or mode of action" and this is what had made him *perfect*—then what caused him to become imperfect had to be *another* moral law, a moral law that made him "divided" inside—"within." What could iniquity be then, but a *new* moral law—a moral law devised by Lucifer—the moral law of Good and Evil?

This was the initial issue, the foundational cause of the war in heaven. Lucifer turned against God because he felt that he had *better* principles than God—he felt that his new, dual moral law of Good and Evil was better than God's single moral law of *agape* love. As we keep connecting the dots this will become more and more evident.

Satan had "principles" in heaven when he rebelled. These principles are the same principles he uses on earth:

The principles of Satan's working in heaven are the same principles by which he works through human agents in this world. It is through these **corrupting principles** that every earthly empire and the churches have been increasingly corrupted. It is by the **working out of these principles** that Satan deceives and corrupts the whole world from the beginning to the ending. He is continuing this same **policy-working**, originally begun

in the heavenly universe. He is **energizing the whole world with his violence with which he corrupted the world in the days of Noah** {4BC 1163.8, emphasis added}.

What are “the principles of Satan’s working in heaven”? Ezekiel points us to the Garden of Eden. The formulation of Lucifer’s principles, the Knowledge of Good and Evil, began in heaven. His principle was implemented on earth when Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Their choice gave him the right to establish a government on earth based on *his corrupt* principles.

What characterizes his principles? They are “corrupting,” which implies they are impure, mixed, dual. It is “by the working out” of these “corrupt” principles that Satan “deceives.” His corrupt principles are so deceptive that they have managed to take hold of “every earthly empire” and even the “churches”—not to mention one third of the angels as well. Thus, it is through them that Satan deceives the *entire* world:

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, **who deceives the whole world** (Revelation 12:9, emphasis added).

Satan has been deceiving the “whole world from the beginning to the ending” since Adam and Eve ate of his Tree. His work so long done undercover is to be unmasked at this time in the history of the world. We are living at a time when God is calling us to put *Him* on trial:

“Fear God and give glory to Him, for **the hour of His judgment has come**; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14:6, emphasis added).

The apostle Paul points to this trial when he says:

As it is written: “That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome **when You are judged**” (Romans 3:4, emphasis added).

The hour of *God’s* judgment has come. He who “made the heaven and the earth, the sea and springs of water” is to be put on trial so that we can investigate whether He is the Creator and also the Destroyer. Can He be both?

God’s character is *singularly agape* love. *Singularly* means *uncorrupted*. God’s character is not corrupted with any evil. He is simply love. This is the message that Jesus, the “True Witness” (Revelation 3:14) came to give us:

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).



6

INIQUITY

YOU WERE PERFECT IN YOUR WAYS FROM THE DAY YOU
WERE CREATED TILL INIQUITY...

Lucifer was the sum of perfection—till... here is where things began to change. He was perfect until something somehow began to bubble up inside of him. That something was “iniquity.” From this phrase we may conclude at least two things: 1. Lucifer lost his perfection, his *entireness*, once iniquity was found in him, and 2. It was iniquity itself that caused him to lose that perfection and entireness of character. Hence, *iniquity* is the culprit here.

Before we fully explore what happened to Lucifer, we must realize that his entire downfall converges onto this one particular word. Iniquity is the reason for his fall; therefore, *it* is the reason for the war in heaven.

How can we know what iniquity is? We can begin by asking some questions: what does it mean in Hebrew and Greek? How did Jesus use it? What else does the Bible say about it? If we can come to a biblical understanding of this word we will be on the right path to a greater understanding of Lucifer’s rebellion, and we will grasp the true meaning of his Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

INIQUITY – HEBREW

According to Strong’s Dictionary there are ten Hebrew words translated as “iniquity” in the Old Testament. We will list only two of them here:

‘evel; or ‘âvel; and (feminine) ‘avlâh; or ‘ôwlâh; or ‘ôlâh; (moral) evil:—

iniquity, perverseness, unjust(-ly), unrighteousness(-ly); wicked(-ness).

‘âvôn; perversity, i.e. (moral) evil:—fault, iniquity, mischief, punishment (of iniquity), sin.

The Hebrew word “*evil*” is very similar to the English word “evil.” The Complete Word Study defines iniquity as,

a masculine singular noun meaning injustice, unrighteousness. The word refers to anything that deviates from the right way of doing things. It is often the direct object of *asah*... meaning to do... and is in direct contrast to words like righteous... upright... and justice... God has no part with injustice (Complete Word Study).

All ten Hebrew words place “iniquity” in the context of a perversion of morality. Collectively they define iniquity as “moral evil,” “moral distortion” and “moral perverseness;” “to go amiss,” “punishment,” “wickedness,” “unrighteousness,” “violation,” “condemnation” and “disturbance.”

There is also an element of “crookedness” to this word. This is the crookedness that Jesus would set straight. John the Baptist quoted Isaiah’s prophecy of the Savior as one who would do exactly that:

Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth, and every flesh shall see the salvation of the Lord (Luke 3:5-6).

Jesus would put things back into their proper place; He would return all that Lucifer had made *crooked* into its original, *correct* position. Then we would be able to “see the salvation” of God.

Some of the other words for “iniquity” also carry an added element of “nothingness” and “nonexistence.” This is so because iniquity causes those that are thereby deceived to walk into destruction and to go into eternal death, complete annihilation, nonexistence—“in the day you eat of it you shall surely die,” (Genesis 2:17). The Bible calls this “perdition,” and calls those that suffer this end “sons of perdition”—as in the case of Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus. This will be explained in greater detail in another book, soon to be published, on the cross of Christ.

Iniquity then, is a deviation from “the right way of doing things.” We could safely say that “the right way of doing things” is God’s way—not our way or the world’s way, which are both founded upon Satan’s way. God’s way of doing things is the way of *righteousness*. Thus, iniquity does things that are outside of righteousness, and as such it is in direct conflict with God. Iniquity is entirely opposed to God’s righteousness and justice. In fact,

the Bible does often use the word “iniquity” interchangeably with the word “injustice.” Notice the following verses. Speaking of God, they say:

He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and **without injustice** [evil]; righteous and upright is He (Deuteronomy 32:4, emphasis added).

What injustice [evil] have your fathers found in Me, that they have gone far from Me, have followed idols, and have become idolaters (Jeremiah 2:5, emphasis added)?

Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to **commit iniquity** [evil] (Job 34:10, emphasis added).

First of all, these verses clearly connect iniquity with the issue of justice—this is a *legal* issue. From these verses also we come to understand that there is a type of “justice” that is actually *injustice*, and not only that, but downright “wickedness.” One also gets the impression that God is cautioning us to beware, lest we think there is any iniquity or injustice in Him. He is telling us that “all His ways are justice” and there is no “injustice” in Him. He is also making sure we know that He does not “do wickedness” or commits “iniquity.”

Why is there a need for God to distance Himself from iniquity? Why does He tell us to make sure we don’t think He commits iniquity? The need is there because we have been confused about this, and because we have made Him out to be a God of iniquity. Once we understand exactly what iniquity is we will see how we have done just that.

If God’s justice, which is aligned with His righteousness, is directly opposed to iniquity which is injustice (an unrighteous justice), then we must make sure that we don’t misinterpret God’s justice, and make it look like the brand of justice which is aligned with iniquity. This will become clearer when we discuss the word “justice” later on.

Interestingly, iniquity is also somehow connected to “partiality,” to “taking of bribes:”

Now therefore, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity [evil] with the Lord our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes” (2 Chronicles 19:7).

As we proceed it will become clear just how iniquity is related to bribes.

Once, while talking to the Pharisees who already had designs of taking His life, Jesus said:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. **He was a murderer from the beginning**, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it (John 8:44, emphasis added).

What “beginning” was Jesus referring to? Wasn’t it that initial rebellious thought that gripped Lucifer’s mind—the iniquity that was found in him?

And if so, how was he a murderer when he had not yet killed anyone? Could it be that he was a murderer because in the iniquity found in him was embedded a death principle, a moral law that leads one towards death?

INIQUITY – GREEK

In the New Testament there are three Greek words for “iniquity.” They are *paranomia*, which means “transgression,” *adikia*, which means “injustice,” and *anomia*, which means “illegality.” Like in Hebrew, these Greek words exist in the context of law as well as morality. They further mean “lawlessness,” “violation of law,” “illegality,” “transgression of law,” “injustice,” “opposition to law” as well as “moral wrongfulness.”

As we contemplate these definitions we must understand them in relation to God’s law of life, the law of *agape* love. Lawlessness, for example, does not mean “lack of law;” it means a lack of *God’s* law. The Man of Sin, the Lawless One (2 Thessalonians 2:9), does not *do away* with God’s law; he *changes* the law to suit his purposes.

Likewise, iniquity is an impostor, a new law, a spin-off on God’s law that promotes itself as being the real thing. As such, it overrides God’s law in our minds, and as a consequence it causes us to transgress the true law. Consider the following verse:

Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You (Psalm 94:20)?

We will discuss this verse in more detail later on, but the idea here is that iniquity “devises evil by law.” Iniquity is injustice embedded in a law that passes itself off as “justice,” and thus it deceives us.

INIQUITY – AS DEFINED BY JESUS

Paul states that Jesus is the wisdom from God:

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Jesus, then, can give us great insight into this extremely foundational concept called “iniquity.” How did He use and define this word?

Jesus used the word “iniquity” only four times, as listed below. As we go through these verses please keep in mind that it was Lucifer that originated “iniquity” — it was “found in him.” Iniquity was the original thought that arose in his mind as he turned away from God’s moral law of *agape* love.

A. FALSE PROPHETS — MATTHEW 7:15-23

The first time Jesus uses the word “iniquity” was when He warned His disciples to “beware of false prophets:”

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, **‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness [WORKERS OF INIQUITY, KJV] (Matthew 7:15-23, emphasis added)!’**

What are these verses telling us about iniquity? First, we can see that iniquity is the moral law of false prophets. We must be wary of them because they appear good on the outside; they come in “sheep’s clothing.” Inside, however, they are ferocious and violent as wolves. Already we can see that they operate by a contrary duality; they do not have *singleness* of character.

Iniquity is closely intertwined with violence, as we shall soon see. Eventually false prophets reveal who they really are by their violent actions, “their fruit.” Notice the following about the “workers of iniquity:”

Those who claim modern sanctification would have come boastfully forward, saying, “Lord, Lord, do you not know us? Have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?” The people here described, who make these pretentious claims, apparently weaving Jesus into all their doings, fitly represent those who claim modern sanctification, but who are **at war with the law of God**. Christ calls them workers of iniquity, because they are deceivers, **having on the garments of righteousness to hide the deformity of their characters, the inward wickedness of their unholy hearts**. Satan has come down in these last days, to work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. His satanic majesty works miracles in the sight of false prophets, in the sight of men, claiming that he is indeed Christ Himself. Satan gives his power to those who are aiding him in his deceptions; therefore **those who claim to have the great power of God can only be discerned by the great detector, the law of Jehovah**. The Lord tells us if it were possible they would deceive the very elect. **The sheep’s clothing seems so real, so genuine, that the wolf cannot be discerned only as we go to God’s great moral standard and there find that they are transgressors of the law of Jehovah** (The Review and Herald, August 25, 1885) – {5BC 1087.8, emphasis added}.

Again, the one thing that jumps out at us after reading this quote is the fact that

the “workers of iniquity” are *two-faced*—they do not have the singleness of character that the *spotless* Lamb does. They claim sanctification but are “at war with the law of God.” They have on the “garments of righteousness to hide the deformity of their characters, the inward wickedness of their unholy hearts.” They are a *mixture*—on the outside they appear to be like sheep, but on the inside they are ravening wolves. They are impure—*corrupt*. Because they are so deceptive, there is only one way to know whether they are of God or not—they “can only be discerned by the great detector, the law of Jehovah.” Only by going to “God’s great moral standard” can we know whether they are of God or not. If we “find that they are transgressors of the law of Jehovah” then they are filled with iniquity and are definitely false prophets.

Jesus says these false prophets are themselves deceived, because they believe they are worshipping God and doing His will, when in fact they are doing the will of the Devil and being empowered by him. How did they come to be so deceived?

Could it be that the false prophets mentioned in Jesus’ parable are deceived by the very works they do? After all, they prophesy, cast out demons and do wonderful works! Aren’t these works “good?” And yet Jesus is clear: these works are not done in the name of the true God. Inwardly, these false prophets are ravenous wolves, not sheep, and it cannot be that God is behind their miracles because God is not a ferocious wolf.

It is very interesting that Jesus points us to a Tree—a *corrupt* Tree.

Every good tree bears good fruit, but **a bad tree bears bad fruit**. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, **nor can a bad tree bear good fruit**. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them (Matthew 7:17-19, emphasis added).

Think of the two Trees in the midst of the Garden of Eden for a moment. There was a good Tree there—the Tree of Life. This Tree bore only good fruit—life. Thus, it was a good Tree. Deuteronomy 30:15 defines for us what good and evil are:

Behold! I have set before you today **life and good**, and **death and evil**.

According to this definition, life equals good, and death equals evil. The other Tree—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is a puzzle because it is the Tree of the Knowledge of both Good and Evil. If we follow Jesus’ and Deuteronomy’s criteria, this Tree cannot be a good Tree, because it bears a bad fruit—death. But if this is a bad Tree, then how does it have both Good and Evil in it?—“Nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” What is going on here? How do we solve this conundrum?

The answer is: this Tree is a *corrupt* Tree. As such, its claim of *goodness* is false. This Tree is a wolf clothed in sheep's skin. If the Tree is corrupt its fruit will also be corrupt, and it is. This Tree is a mixture of Good and Evil, but its pretense of Good is a lie. This Tree has a contrary duality, a "double-mindedness;" it does not have that singleness that is characteristic of Christ. Thus the root problem of the false prophets is that they are just like this Tree: they are dualistic. Their moral law is not God's pure law of *agape* love; their morality is corrupt, just as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is corrupt. This corruption has no common ground with Jesus, therefore any union with Him and this Tree is absolutely impossible.

B. THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

The next time Jesus uses the word "iniquity" is in Matthew 13:24-30. This is the parable of the wheat and tares. The tares, which look deceptively like the wheat, grow together with the wheat, but they were sown by the enemy, the Devil:

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn'" (Matthew 13:24-30).

Jesus explains the parable in verses 36-43:

Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness [INIQUITY, KJV], and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:36-43)!

He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. What seeds did Jesus sow when He was on earth? He sowed the seeds of the *eternal* gospel, the

good news about the *eternal* Father—these are seeds of the Tree of Life. This was the truth about His Father’s singleness of character—His eternal unconditional, impartial love for every human being.

Jesus came to magnify the law Lucifer had thrown to the ground. He came to destroy death, which the kingdom of iniquity had forced upon us. The “seed” Jesus sowed is the news that God is love, grace, and mercy and that we are His beloved children.

Like the wolves in sheep’s clothing, the tares appear to be true, but are not. Here is deception again. Both onlookers and tares are deceived. We cannot tell them apart, and Jesus cautions us to not even attempt to separate them. We are not able to discern the true worshippers of God from the false, because only God sees the heart. Eventually, all things that offend and that do “iniquity” will be rooted out of His kingdom at the time of “harvest”—“the end of the age.”

C. THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

The third time Jesus uses the word iniquity is in the Book of Matthew. This is His famous rebuke of the Pharisees, who appeared beautiful on the outside, but inside were “full of dead men’s bones” and all uncleanness—a reference to death, which is caused by Satan’s death principle represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He prefaces His rebuke by saying in verses 1-10:

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:1-12).

Jesus points precisely to the root of their problem – iniquity:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like white-washed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” [INIQUITY, KJV] (Matthew 23:28, emphasis added).

According to Strong's Concordance a *hupokritēs* is a "an actor under an assumed character (stage player), that is, (figuratively) a dissembler." A hypocrite is false, two-faced. He appears to be something that he isn't and for this reason he cannot be trusted.

These so-called followers of God have two added characteristics that reveal who they really are: they "impose heavy burdens" on the people and everything they do is "to be seen by men."

What were the heavy burdens the Pharisees imposed on the people? Were they not the multitude of *conditions*, which they claimed had to be met before one could find the favor of God? They promoted a *system of works* that supposedly led to salvation. These works of iniquity are the same doctrines with which Satan has been oppressing the world for millennia. He is the chief oppressor, as described in the Book of Isaiah:

...How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased! The Lord has broken the staff [THE LAW] of the wicked, the scepter [THE LAW] of the rulers; he who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he who ruled [WITH A LAW] the nations in anger... (Isaiah 14:4-6, emphasis added).

By contrast, Jesus' burden, His love, is light, not heavy.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Everything the false teachers do is done in the spirit of pride, "to be seen by men." This is a characteristic peculiar to the iniquity that arose in Lucifer, and is related to the "bribe" component of iniquity, which creates a hierarchy system. Again, we will discuss this in greater detail later on.

These false teachers just love *display*, and like to be called teachers, spiritual leaders. They revel in the fact that they have a following, that their name is a household one. They call attention to their own good works and wisdom instead of pointing the people to the real source of wisdom, Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Since they leave Christ out of the picture, they can't help but to be full of hypocrisy and iniquity, because that is the default of the world.

Jesus taught that we are to do all our good works in anonymity, away from the praise of men. Again, deception is the sad state of these false believers; they think they are following God but aren't.

D. MATTHEW 24 — THE END OF THE WORLD

The fourth and last time Jesus used the word iniquity is in Matthew 24, where again He warned against the deception of false prophets, saying,

...many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness [INIQUITY, KJV] will abound, the love [*AGAPE*] of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:11-12; emphasis added).

“False prophets...” “deceive many...” Have you noticed how “deception” is the common denominator between all these verses? It seems that everyone involved is deceived—including the wolves and false prophets themselves. Jesus is teaching us how we can see through the deception. Only He can take this deception away from us—without Him we are hopelessly misled.

But why is iniquity so deceptive? Because iniquity appears to be right, it seems the right thing to do, the right thing to think, the right thing to believe. In fact, iniquity appears to be wisdom personified, and it is in fact a type of wisdom—but it is the wisdom of Satan. And because it is peddled off as wisdom, it has an awesome power to deceive.

Solomon addressed this phenomenon succinctly in the Book of Proverbs:

There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12, KJV).

So rooted is iniquity in the human psyche that its deceptive power stays strong till the very end of earth’s history, according to Matthew 24. But as right as iniquity appears to be, it is not love, it is not mercy. In fact, Jesus said that because iniquity would “abound” the love (*agape*) of many would grow cold. Thus iniquity also has an amazing ability to neutralize *agape* love, if we allow it. Jesus indicated that iniquity would especially thrive in the last days. This means that deception would also abound.

So let’s look at the overall picture here. If we analyze these four passages, we see that each time Jesus used the word “iniquity” it was in the context of deception—in particular among the professed followers of God. When we consider that even a third of the angels were deceived by Satan’s principle of iniquity, we realize how powerful this principle can be.

Each deceived believer in the verses we looked at had a false façade: what appeared to be sheep were really wolves, what appeared to be wheat was really tares, what appeared to be true prophets were really false prophets. These all appeared

to be something that they were not. They appeared to be good—even did wonderful works—but were fundamentally evil, “workers of iniquity.”

It seems also significant that even though iniquity is rampant in the whole world, Jesus addressed only God’s followers. From this, one would conclude that iniquity appears to thrive especially in religion, or at least in false, or counterfeit religion.

So, if we combine the Hebrew and Greek definitions along with Jesus’ usage of the word “iniquity” we may conclude that:

1. Iniquity has to do with morality: it is moral evil, moral distortion and moral perverseness.
2. Iniquity can mean “to go amiss”.
3. Iniquity is wickedness, unrighteousness.
4. Iniquity involves punishment and condemnation.
5. Iniquity is lawlessness, violation of law, illegality, transgression of law.
6. Iniquity is injustice, opposition to law as well as moral wrongfulness.
7. Iniquity is crookedness, distortion, transgression, a perversion of God’s moral law.
8. Iniquity is extremely deceptive, deceiving not only the onlooker but the actor as well.
9. Iniquity appears to be good, the right thing to think and do.
10. Iniquity imposes heavy burdens upon mankind—a works oriented system of salvation.
11. Iniquity causes people to be two-faced, hypocritical.
12. Iniquity is filled with pride (works to be seen by men).
13. Iniquity destroys *agape* love (the love of many shall grow cold).
14. Iniquity involves corruption (it is not pure).
15. Iniquity involves violence (ravaging wolves).
16. Those that practice iniquity were “sown” by the enemy, Satan.
17. Iniquity will “abound” in the last days.
18. Iniquity leads to nothingness, death.
19. Iniquity will be rooted out at the end of the great controversy.
20. Iniquity involves partiality.
21. Iniquity involves bribes.

These definitions must all be understood within the context of God’s law. For instance, iniquity is a moral distortion of God’s law, which makes it morally per-

verse. Iniquity goes amiss from God's law of love. While it boasts to be good, iniquity is really wickedness, unrighteousness according to God's law—it is a violation of God's principles of righteousness. Iniquity promotes punishment and condemnation, which are contrary to God's law of love. It is "lawlessness," meaning that it is completely devoid of God's law or of the spirit of God's law. It is a violation of the law of *agape* love. This is why iniquity is "lawlessness"—because it is a *transgression of the law of God*. While iniquity boasts of great justice, in God's book its justice is actually injustice, because its justice is in opposition to God's law of mercy; thus, iniquity's type of morality is actually moral wrongfulness according to God's law.

This is why iniquity is crookedness; it is a distortion, a transgression, a perversion of God's moral law. For all these reasons, iniquity is extremely deceptive. It appears to be good, it appears to be the right thing to think and do but it imposes heavy burdens upon mankind and distances us from God.

What is iniquity then? It is a moral law—Satan's moral law, which is a perversion of God's law. Because it is a moral law, iniquity is extremely deceptive. Aren't we all morally inclined? Don't we all think that our morality stems from God? But what if our morality doesn't come from God? What *if* our inner sense of what is right and wrong is based on Satan's deceptions? What *if* we are living by Satan's moral law? Has the very thing we consider "good" and "wise" deceived us?

There are ways we can put our morality to the test. Are we involved in imposing heavy burdens upon man? Do we stress works over love and mercy? Are our hearts filled with love, or with an obsession with what is *right*? Are we double-faced? Are we good to some and mean to others, whom we consider to deserve our contempt? Do we love our enemies or do we hate them? Are we good to the good and the evil, as our heavenly Father is, or are we good to the good and evil to the evil, as Mercurius, the alchemical spirit is? Do we use or condone violence in the name of what is ostensibly right, in the name of good? Do we condemn others? And if so, do we believe they deserve to be punished? Do we believe that violence and meanness is the way to correct evil behavior or that love is a better solution? Are we partial? Are we proud? Do we take bribes? Do we do good in order to receive a reward?

...WAS FOUND IN YOU.

It is extremely important to realize that iniquity was "found in" Lucifer. The Hebrew word for found is *mâtsâ*, which means, "to come forth to, i.e. appear or exist" (Strong's Concordance). This indicates that iniquity had its beginning *in* Lucifer and in him *only*, not in God.

Iniquity first began as a thought in Lucifer's mind. In its embryonic stage, his turning away from God began in the form of a questioning *thought*, which, as time progressed, developed into full-blown rebellion. All the *actions* that followed his thoughts were indeed sinful, but the iniquity that was first found in him was at first just a thought. His subsequent evil actions were simply *reactions* to what had first begun in his thought processes. His actions were the physical manifestation of those thoughts.

This means that initially, iniquity did not demonstrate itself outwardly, empirically. For this reason, it could not at first reveal its full depravity. Its enormous potential for evil and calamity could not yet be fully *observable* by the angels or even by Lucifer himself.

The principle that one's thoughts precede and in fact *predict* one's actions is laid out in Proverbs 23:7: "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." Jesus also confirmed this principle when He said that even lusting in one's heart is adultery:

You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).

It is extremely important that we realize that iniquity began in Lucifer and in him only—why? Because he has deceived us, leading us to believe that the principles of "iniquity" are principles that God Himself uses. As we research further into the meaning of Lucifer's moral law, we will see just the extent of his deception in making us think that God uses the moral law of iniquity.



7

THE ATTACK ON THE LAW

BY THE ABUNDANCE OF YOUR TRADING...

What was Lucifer trading? Does “trading,” in the early stages of his rebellion, refer to the creation of an economic system? Is there any indication of such in the context of these verses we have been studying?

The Hebrew word doesn’t tell us much—*rkullah* simply means “trade (as peddled): merchandise, traffic,” (Strong’s Concordance). What can this merchandise be, in the context of what we have seen so far?

“By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: ... thou has defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick.” **In this place “traffick” is the emblem of corrupt administration** {4BC 1163.7, emphasis added}.

The word “traffick” in this verse is an “emblem,” a symbol of Lucifer’s “corrupt administration.” His administration was corrupt because, as we have discussed, it was ruled by corrupt principles that he had devised in heaven.

There is only one thing Lucifer could have been “peddling” at this stage of his rebellion: his corrupt principle or moral law—iniquity, which, as we saw, is the principle represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Ezekiel’s own choice of words point to iniquity as the *thing* that Lucifer was peddling. Notice how the word “abundance” is used twice in this passage. In verse sixteen Ezekiel says:

By the **abundance** of your **trading** you became filled with violence

within, and you sinned

Then in verse eighteen Ezekiel writes:

You defiled your sanctuaries by the **multitude** of your **iniquities**, by the **iniquity** of your **trading**

The English words “abundance” and “multitude” are translated from the same Hebrew word—*rōb*, Strong’s H7230. *Rōb* is used first to qualify Lucifer’s “merchandise” and then to qualify “iniquity,” the thing that was found in him. Thus we can deduce that iniquity is what is meant by the word “merchandise.” Lucifer peddled his merchandise (a set of corrupt principles which he used in his corrupt administration) to the entire universe. Because God’s *agape* love is a principle founded upon freedom, not only did Lucifer have the freedom to market his new idea, but every intelligent being in the universe also had the freedom to make a decision either for or against it. Other inhabited planets also have the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil:

The Lord has given me a view of other worlds. Wings were given me, and an angel attended me from the city to a place that was bright and glorious. The grass of the place was living green, and the birds there warbled a sweet song. The inhabitants of the place were of all sizes; they were noble, majestic, and lovely. They bore the express image of Jesus, and their countenances beamed with holy joy, expressive of the freedom and happiness of the place. I asked one of them why they were so much more lovely than those on the earth. The reply was, “We have lived in strict obedience to the commandments of God, and have not fallen by disobedience, like those on the earth.” **Then I saw two trees, one looked much like the tree of life in the city. The fruit of both looked beautiful, but of one they could not eat. They had power to eat of both, but were forbidden to eat of one.** Then my attending angel said to me, **“None in this place have tasted of the forbidden tree; but if they should eat, they would fall.”** {EW 39.3}

The words “corrupt administration,” however, have enormous implications. First of all, how did Lucifer even begin to have an administration of his own? Wasn’t he employed in *God’s* administration? Wasn’t he working for God as a light-bearer, as a promoter of God’s law?

From this little bit of information, we get the impression that Lucifer was doing something underhanded, perhaps even using his God-given authority to attempt to secretly change the law in the minds of the angels. We already know he used the power and influence which God had given him, to push his deceptive agenda.

It was a being of wonderful power and glory that had set himself against God. Of Lucifer the Lord says, “Thou sealest up the sun, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.” Ezekiel 28:12. Lucifer had been the covering cherub. He had stood in the light of God’s presence. He had been the highest of all created beings, and had been foremost in revealing God’s purposes to the universe. **After he had sinned, his power to deceive was the more de-**

ceptive, and the unveiling of his character was the more difficult, because of the exalted position he had held with the Father {DA 758.4, emphasis added}.

Lucifer was using his position in order to deceive. It even appears that he was giving out a corrupt version of the law—in effect running a rebel administration right there, in the presence of God, undermining His law. His whole purpose was to get rid of God's law:

From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan's purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator, and though he was cast out of heaven he has continued the same warfare upon the earth. To deceive men, and thus lead them to transgress God's law, is the object which he has steadfastly pursued. Whether this be accomplished by casting aside the law altogether, or by rejecting one of its precepts, the result will be ultimately the same. He that offends "in one point," manifests contempt for the whole law; his influence and example are on the side of transgression; he becomes "guilty of all." James 2:10 {DD 28.1, emphasis added}.

Lucifer used subterfuge and manipulation to gather a following. He cunningly created discontent with God's law and claimed that his proposed changes were all for the good of God's government.

Taking advantage of the loving, loyal trust reposed in him by the holy beings under his command, he had so artfully instilled into their minds **his own distrust and discontent** that his agency was not discerned. Lucifer had presented the purposes of God in a **false light—misconstruing and distorting them to excite dissent and dissatisfaction.** He cunningly drew his hearers on to give utterance to their feelings; then these expressions were repeated by him when it would serve his purpose, as evidence that the angels were not fully in harmony with the government of God. **While claiming for himself perfect loyalty to God, he urged that changes in the order and laws of heaven were necessary for the stability of the divine government. Thus while working to excite opposition to the law of God and to instill his own discontent into the minds of the angels under him, he was ostensibly seeking to remove dissatisfaction and to reconcile disaffected angels to the order of heaven.** While secretly fomenting discord and rebellion, he with consummate craft caused it to appear as his sole purpose **to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace** {PP 38.2, emphasis added}.

How underhanded, secretive and clever were his activities! Notice how his strategy was the same he used in the Garden: he created the problem but then hid himself, making it appear as though he had nothing to do with it.

Lucifer had at first so conducted his temptations that he himself stood uncommitted. The angels whom he could not bring fully to his side, he accused of indifference to the interests of heavenly beings. The very work, which he himself was doing, he charged upon the loyal angels. It was his policy to perplex with subtle arguments concerning the purposes of God. Everything that was simple he shrouded in mystery, and by artful perversion cast doubt upon the plainest statements of Jehovah.

And his high position, so closely connected with the divine government, gave greater force to his representations {PP 41.3, emphasis added}.

From the very beginning, the controversy had been about the law of God. We must ask ourselves: Why was Lucifer trying to change God's law? The only possible reason is that somehow, at some point, little by little he came to regard the law of love as ineffective, faulty. So, he set about to fix it. Notice the following statement carefully:

Satan claimed to be able to present laws which were better than God's statutes and judgments, and he was expelled from heaven. He has made a similar attempt upon earth. Ever since his fall he has put forth efforts to deceive the world, to lead men to ruin, that he might be revenged upon God because he was overcome and thrust down from heaven. **His efforts to put himself and his devices where God should be, are most persevering and persistent. He has taken the world captive in his snare, and many even of the people of God are ignorant of his devices, and they give him all the opportunity he asks to work the ruin of souls.** They do not manifest a burning zeal to lift up Jesus, and proclaim to the perishing multitudes, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" {RH, June 17, 1890 par. 12, emphasis added}!

"Satan claimed to be able to present laws which were better than God's statutes and judgments." Satan was presenting "laws?" What laws? Have we ever heard before that he has a law? Again, notice the following quotes carefully:

God's dealings with rebellion will result in **fully unmasking the work so long carried on under cover.** The fruits of **setting aside the divine statutes** will be laid open to the view of all created intelligences. **The law of God will stand fully vindicated.** Satan himself, in the presence of the witnessing universe, will confess **the justice of God's government and the righteousness of His law** {EP 237.1, emphasis added}.

But how shall the **universe know** that Lucifer is not a **safe and just leader? To their eyes he appears right.** They cannot see, as God sees, beneath the outward covering. They cannot know as God knows. To work to unmask him and make plain to the angelic host that **his judgment is not God's judgment, that he has made a standard of his own** and exposed himself to the righteous indignation of God, would create a state of things that must be avoided {CTr 11.5, emphasis added}.

Satan set "aside the divine statutes" and "claimed to be able to present laws which were better than God's" laws and in doing so he "has made a standard of his own." But we have never heard that he has a law or "a standard of his own." Why not? Because his work has been "long carried on under cover." How has it been carried on under cover? It has been "long carried on under cover" because we have thought that "his judgment" is "God's judgment."

The next question we must ask is this: Why did Lucifer think that God's law was ineffective? Didn't God's law make heaven a paradise? After all,

heaven had only known peace and harmony—from eternity past. What possible fault could there be in something that brought such peace and joy? The next statement reveals something very important:

God Himself had established **the order of heaven; and in departing from it**, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker, and bring ruin upon himself {DD 2.2, emphasis added}.

“God Himself had established the order of heaven;” how? Through His law; and Satan was “departing” from the *order* of heaven. How? Through the laws that he claimed were better than God’s “statutes and judgments.” We just read a few paragraphs earlier:

While claiming for himself perfect loyalty to God, **he urged that changes in the order and laws of heaven were necessary for the stability of the divine government** {PP 38.2}.

“He urged that changes in the order and laws” of God were necessary. Necessary for what? “For the stability of the divine government.” Why was he doing this? Did he really believe that God’s law was ineffective in creating order? Was he attempting to establish a new “order” based on a new moral law? Did he think that “iniquity” was better than *agape*?

The prophet Isaiah says of Lucifer:

For you have said in your heart:
 ‘I will ascend into heaven,
 I will exalt **my throne** above the stars of God;
 I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
 On the farthest sides of the north;
 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High’ (Isaiah 14:13-14, emphasis added).

Lucifer was in the process of exalting his throne above God’s throne. He put himself on equal footing with God, and claimed to have the same authority as the Most High, wanting to be like like Him. But how did Lucifer want to be like the Most High? The Bible says that God is the Lawgiver:

The **scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet**, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people (Genesis 49:10, emphasis added).

(For the Lord is our Judge, **the Lord is our Lawgiver**, the Lord is our King; He will save us) (Isaiah 33:22, emphasis added).

There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another (James 4:12, emphasis added)?

There is one Lawgiver—only one *true* Lawgiver in the universe—He is the Creator. How does the Creator save? He saves by giving us the truth about His character of *agape* love through His law, the law of life. How does He destroy? He destroys by *establishing the order* of things, which as a Creator He has the right to do. If He creates beings who, in order to remain alive must breathe, then in a sense He destroys those beings who choose not to breathe. He does not actively or arbitrarily destroy those who reject His law—their rejection of the law of life, this in itself brings them to destruction. We are destroyed if we reject God's law of mercy, so in this sense God destroys through His law.

Through false philosophy Satan has a widespread influence over many minds that are loyal to God's commandments in sentiment but not in practice. What is the character of 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.” **Here we have the character of the Lord Jesus plainly set forth, and the principles upon which He acts as Lawgiver** {Ms45-1894 (November 1894) par. 9, emphasis added}.

Jesus “acts as Lawgiver.” But Lucifer said, “I will exalt my throne”—a new government, a new set of laws. . . . “I will be like the Most High”—“I will be like the Lawgiver, I will have my own moral law. . . .” He was perfect in his ways till iniquity was found in him—until a set of “corrupt principles” filled his heart. A new law. . . . *A new world order*—an order that was supposedly *better* than God's order. . . . A better law, with the sole purpose of preserving *harmony and peace*. . . . of preserving the *stability* of God's government. . . . astonishing. . . . Who would ever believe this, so absurd it is?

But now we must ask the inevitable question: why did Lucifer think that God's government was unstable? What was his evidence? What made him start thinking that way?

Let's reason for a second. We know from the Bible, that the wisdom of the world is equivalent to the wisdom of Satan. With this in mind, consider the following passage taken from 1 Corinthians:

For the message of the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the

world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the **foolishness** of God is wiser than men, and the **weakness** of God is stronger than men (1 Corinthians 1:18-25, emphasis added).

These verses clearly indicate that there are two wisdoms—"the wisdom of the world" and "the wisdom of God." The worldly wisdom is Satan's wisdom; he is "the disputer of this age." He is also the "god of this age," (2 Corinthians 4:4). Thus it is Satan who informs the world as to what *conventional* "wisdom" ought to be.

The above passage is saying that it is impossible to know God through Satan's worldly wisdom. Why? Because the wisdom of God is utter foolishness and weakness in the eyes of "the world." If this is how the world sees God's wisdom, then could it be that this is also how Satan saw it, and the reason why he rebelled against it?

From the first 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. In attacking the law** he aimed to overthrow the authority of its Author. In the controversy it was to be shown whether the **divine statutes were defective and subject to change, or perfect and immutable** {PP 69.1, emphasis added}.

Lucifer saw *agape* as "faulty," "defective," "subject to change," flawed. Could it be then, that at some point he began to view God's law of love as foolish and weak? Could this be the reason he attacked it?

It would seem that Lucifer came to regard *agape* love as ludicrous and in need of reform or outright replacement. He claimed that God's administration, which was based on the law of *agape* love, could not govern the universe, especially if it was ever confronted with evil. In his mind, order could not exist if it was based solely upon love. As we will see shortly, he introduced force and violence as the power behind his law. Think carefully about this; aren't we conditioned to think the same? Don't we believe we need force and violence in order to impose "order?"

...YOU BECAME FILLED WITH VIOLENCE WITHIN...

While he lived by God's moral law of love Lucifer knew no violence—he was "perfect." But the text is clear: he became "filled with violence" once iniquity "was found in him." These words clearly show that iniquity and violence originated within *him*. It was by the "abundance" of *his* iniquity, *his* corrupt principles that he "became filled with violence within." Since

violence is embedded in iniquity then violence is a direct *result* of iniquity, and all who live by this moral law are also “filled with violence within.”

It is extremely important to realize that iniquity is the *source* of violence. Violence is a *product* of iniquity and *only* of iniquity. If iniquity originated within Lucifer, and violence is its result, it is only logical to conclude that prior to his rebellion, violence did not exist in the universe, *at all*. Violence then, is *entirely* Satanic. Can we then attribute any violence to God? If we did, wouldn't we be saying that He is also Satanic?

Iniquity, Satan's law, is powered by force. Violence is embedded in it. This is a distortion, a perversion of God's moral standard, which is His love, in which there is freedom—the opposite of force. God's law of grace and mercy was applied across the board to everyone because it was *unconditional* and *impartial*. Lucifer began to think that this was not viable. In his mind, one had to take each case separately and deal with it either positively or negatively, according to what the circumstances demanded. He reasoned that not everyone deserved to be treated with the same grace; some should be rewarded and some should be punished.

Lucifer came to believe that if *agape* love was ever confronted with evil, it would be too *weak* to “take care” of it. In his mind, *agape* would fail precisely because it lacked an *arbitrary* system of reward and punishment—a *merit* and *demerit* system. This is why, from Lucifer's perspective, God's law was ineffectual when confronted with evil. And he could prove it. “What do you mean, he could prove it?” you may ask. Look at his own case: he was rebelling against God, and what was God doing about it? Nothing. It appeared that God was letting him get away with murder.

Lucifer claimed his new law would succeed and triumph in the presence of evil precisely because it contained a mechanism of arbitrary reward and punishment. Had he been in command, he would have taken care of such an upstart as himself; he would have done away with the rebel swiftly and efficiently—end of story. Can we see how violence entered? Can we see how he was rebelling against the “order of heaven” under the pretense of helping to stabilize the government of God?

And what was God doing? For all intents and purposes it appeared that He was exactly what Lucifer accused Him of being: foolish and weak. God didn't stop him, didn't put him away, didn't even secretly conduct some kind of brain surgery to erase his evil thoughts—after all God could have done that easily without anyone *ever* knowing. But He did no such thing; rather, He allowed Satan to develop his “system of government:”

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

principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe {DA 759.2; emphasis added}.

God was giving Satan time “to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government,” principles which Satan had claimed “were superior to God’s principles.” No question of God giving Satan time; but He also does not use force:

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan’s government. The Lord’s principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God’s government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power** {DA 759.1; emphasis added}.

“Compelling power is found only under Satan’s government.” “The Lord’s principles are not of this order.” God’s “authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love.” God was not about to change His principles in order to meet this emergency. God stood by His principles of goodness, nonviolence, freedom, mercy and love because He knew they were the only safeguards for life in the entire universe.

Lucifer was trying to introduce a system where there would be “compelling power,” force, violence. *His* authority would therefore necessarily rest upon the *opposite* of God’s principles. Truth, goodness, mercy and love would not prevail in Lucifer’s government. Instead, it would thrive on lies, force, violence, wickedness, cruelty, and retributive punishment—all in the name of “order.”

Lucifer must have pondered that God was foolish in allowing him to pursue his course of rebellion. As time went on and God did nothing to stop him, he became even more convinced that there was a serious flaw with God’s *modus operandi*. Therefore, in his mind, for the good of the universe, *agape* had to go—to him it was a done deal.

Satan had declared that the law of God was faulty, and that the good of the universe demanded a change in its requirement. In attacking the law, he thought to overthrow the authority of its Author, and gain for himself the supreme allegiance. But through the plan of salvation, **the precepts of the law were to be proved perfect and immutable**, that at last only glory and love might rise to God throughout the universe, ascribing glory and honor and praise to Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever {ST December 22, 1914 Par. 5, emphasis added}.

Since Lucifer believed God’s law was “faulty,” he advanced his own law as the *solution* to the problem. The changes he thought were necessary for the stability of God’s government entailed the removal of God’s law, and the implementation of his new law.

No one could yet fathom the effects of Lucifer’s rebellion. Violence and its ultimate consequence—death—were unknown in the universe; they were in

fact yet unknown to Lucifer himself. God warned his covering cherub and tried to dissuade him from proceeding in this dangerous, disastrous path. But instead of turning back, the fallen angel went full throttle ahead.

We, however, know the consequences of his law. We are living in them. We are the theater of operations for this polemic—this war of principles. And as we look at the conditions on the earth, so far, Lucifer’s “new order” is not looking good at all.

What would have happened, had God accepted Lucifer’s proposal to implement his violent law? God would have become like Satan, which is preposterous, isn’t it? Think about it: had God been like Satan, God would have stopped Lucifer’s rebellion right then and there by using some kind of violent action against him. But He didn’t. Why not?

God is not like Satan. This is not who God is. This is not how He does things. This is not His heart, His law. Remember that God is *perfect* love. And remember that Lucifer was God’s masterpiece; God still loved that covering cherub.

Would you destroy your child if he/she stood up against you? What if he/she became a murderer? Would you destroy them then? Or would you do everything in your power to save that child? Would you hope till the very last second that they would turn back? And at the last second... would you still murder them?

Remember the definition of God’s *agape* love: *agape* love is patient, kind... it does not take into account a wrong suffered... it bears up under anything and everything... It is ever ready to believe the best... Its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything without weakening... love never fails, never fades out or becomes obsolete, it never comes to an end... God has never stopped loving Lucifer. He still loves him. He will always mourn the death of this son.

Taking advantage of the freedom provided by God, Lucifer went ahead with his plans to remove God’s “weak” law. And he had an advantage because he knew God had a law. But the angels were in a vulnerable position—they didn’t know. They didn’t realize there was such a thing as “law.”

The angels lived by the moral law of love without knowing it. In fact, before Satan’s rebellion, all created beings lived by God’s moral law of love without realizing it:

...in heaven, service is not rendered in the **spirit of legality**. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, **the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something un-thought of**. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Psalm 40:8 {MB 109.2, emphasis added}.

Lucifer reckoned that if he could convince everyone that iniquity was better than *agape* he would become the new ruler of the universe. But iniquity had made him cunning, and he was too clever to do things out in the open. He knew he would be shunned for aspiring to be superior to God. But if he could convince the angels that his new law was actually coming *from* God... then he might have a chance. As the keeper of the law he was in a strategic position. He could change the law and make it appear as though it were the true one. The angels, joyfully serving God's law of love, would not suspect anything.

Did Lucifer really expect to get away with this? Wouldn't God step in and unmask him? Wouldn't He set things straight for all to see? Wouldn't the Creator call his bluff? Apparently not, because this is exactly what Lucifer did, and he got away with it. So clever was his deception, he took half of the angels at first. Finally, only a third sided with him. But his deception reached farther than the angelic host. It encompassed the entire universe. Consider again the following words:

But how shall the **universe** know that Lucifer is not a safe and just leader? **To their eyes he appears right.** They cannot see, as God sees, beneath the outward covering. They cannot know as God knows. To work to unmask him and make plain to the angelic host that his judgment is not God's judgment, that he has made **a standard of his own** and exposed himself to the righteous indignation of God, would create a state of things that must be avoided {CTr 11.5, emphasis added}.

Not only the angels, but the entire universe was taken in by Lucifer's deceptions. In their eyes his ways even appeared "safe and just." In their innocence, which they had under *agape* love, they could not fathom the consequences of Lucifer's *clever* new law. He even appeared right to them. Only God could foresee the ultimate result of the use of force and violence on the creatures He had so lovingly created.

We might rightfully ask: then why didn't God defend Himself? Why didn't He stop Lucifer? How could He allow this to happen? Did Lucifer have a point after all? Was God indeed foolish and weak? Were His ways flawed? What about all the lives that would be lost by letting Lucifer live? Wouldn't it be better, for the sake of the world, nay, of the entire universe, to destroy one being? Shouldn't God have used the same argument Caiaphas used to indict Jesus:

And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that **it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish**" (John 11:49-50, emphasis added).

Human wisdom would argue that it should have been expedient for God to kill Lucifer, and not that the earth "perish." But as Lucifer's scheme unfolded, God did no such thing—He allowed it to happen.

God did, however, warn Lucifer of the danger of pursuing his course. He showed him cause and effect. His warning had also been for the angels; and yet they all had the *freedom* to do as they wished. In spite of this clear warning, Lucifer stubbornly continued his rebellion.

In heavenly council the angels pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. **God Himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker and bring ruin upon himself. But the warning, given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance.** Lucifer allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and became the more determined {PP 35.3, emphasis added}.

With all this in mind, let's bring this issue right home. Can the harmony of the universe exist on unconditional love *alone*? Is unconditional love sufficient to keep order, harmony and peace on earth? Look at the world around us: could unconditional love bring peace between the nations? Could it solve all humanity's problems?

This is a familiar polemic. That's because we are smack-dab in the middle of it. Love versus force/fear: which is the better motivator and order-keeper?

As you see, this is not an easy question and the answer is fraught with meaning because this is exactly the issue that began the great controversy between God and Satan. How we choose to answer this question will position us either on the side of God or Satan.

Jesus said iniquity would increase in the last days—iniquity, Satan's violent law. Since violence is inherent in iniquity, then violence would also increase. Christ also said that the last days would be like the days of Noah. Not surprisingly, the days of Noah were marked by violence:

"...every intent of the thoughts of his [MANKINDS'] heart was only evil continually..." (Genesis 6:5, emphasis added).

"...and the earth also was corrupted before God and the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11).

The universe saw in the flood "the results of the administration that which Lucifer had endeavored to establish in heaven:"

The holy inhabitants of other worlds were watching with the deepest interest the events taking place on the earth. **In the condition of the world that existed before the Flood they saw illustrated 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.** In those high-handed sinners of the antediluvian world they saw the subjects over whom Satan held sway. The thoughts of men's

hearts were only evil continually. Genesis 6:5. Every emotion, every impulse and imagination, was at war with the divine principles of **purity and peace and love**. It was an example of the awful depravity resulting from Satan's policy to remove from God's creatures the restraint of His holy law {PP 78.4, emphasis added}.

The power of Satan's law is very deceptive—it drives us to do wicked, mean, and violent acts all in the name of *good*, or even in the name of God. The only remedy for this is the restraint of God's law of *agape* love.

...AND YOU SINNED

By the abundance of his trade—by the abundance of iniquity, Lucifer's new moral law—the covering cherub became filled with violence within, and as a consequence, he “sinned.” Iniquity, violence, and sin are inseparable. They are inextricably intertwined. Violence is embedded in iniquity; therefore, those that operate by this moral law are inherently violent. To say that God has a part in any of these is to say that God has a part in all three. If God is violent, then God is also iniquitous and a sinner.

Notice that Lucifer is the first being that ever sinned in God's universe. What is the biblical meaning of the word “sin?” We are going to look at the Hebrew and Greek definitions, and then see how Jesus defines it.

The Hebrew word *châtâ* means “properly to miss; hence (figuratively and generally) to sin; by inference to forfeit, lack, expiate, repent, (causatively) lead astray, condemn,” (Strong's Dictionary).

Properly, “sin” means to miss the mark. The Greek definition of “sin” adds a little more meaning to help us understand this: “to miss the mark and so not share in the prize. To err, especially (morally),” (Strong's Dictionary).

To miss the mark, to err—basically to make a mistaken judgment, to get it wrong. To get it wrong in regards to what? The Greek definition says that it is in relation to morality. Sin then, is to use Satan's moral law instead of God's law. Quoting the Psalmist's words about the children of Israel's rebellion in the desert, Paul paraphrases in the Book of Hebrews:

‘They always go **astray in their heart**, and they have not known My ways’ (Hebrews 3:10, emphasis added).

The KJV states:

They do alway **err in their heart**; and they have not known my ways (Hebrews 3:10, emphasis added).

They “do alway err” or *sin* in their heart, because they have not known God’s *ways*, they have not known His moral law of *agape* love.

Ultimately, Jesus can help us understand this. But before we go there, we must understand that the Bible refers to sin in two ways: as “sin,” singular, and as “sins,” plural. Is there a difference? Yes, because Jesus seemed to be concerned primarily with the singular “sin.”

Two New Testament prophecies about Jesus say that He would save His people from their “sins.” The first was given to Joseph by an angel:

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for **He will save His people from their sins** (Matthew 1:20-21, emphasis added).

The word “Jesus” comes from the Hebrew “Jehoshua,” which in turn comes from two root words. The first is *Jehovah*—“the existing One”—and the second is *yâsha’*, which refers to a word that means to save, to succor, help, rescue. The reason the angel told Joseph to call Him “Jesus” is because “He will save His people from their sins.” He will rescue, come to our help and succor us from Satan’s law, and from the false image of God this law projected onto our minds. We thought this moral law of reward and punishment was God’s moral law when in fact it is Satan’s law. Jesus would show us that God is *agape*, not *good and evil*.

The second prophecy was given to John the Baptist’s father:

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, **to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins**, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us (Luke 1:76-78, emphasis added).

John the Baptist would prepare the path for Jesus to give the “knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins.” Remission means “freedom; (figuratively) pardon:—deliverance, forgiveness, liberty, remission” (Strong’s Concordance). Under Satan’s moral law, sins were not pardoned—they were punished.

Traditionally, in Jewish thought, sins were only pardoned by the offering of sacrifices. John discarded that system and began forgiving sins through baptism. This knowledge of salvation then meant that the people needed to know they were pardoned. They needed to know that they were free from the condemnation of their sins. This is what would save them. This is how he prepared the way for Jesus, because when Jesus began His ministry, He didn’t even baptize; He simply announced “your sins are forgiven.”

Jesus started imparting the knowledge of salvation, the knowledge of God’s

grace, pardon and forgiveness. He began telling the people that all their sins were forgiven. Were—past tense. They had *already* been forgiven. In fact, they had *always* been forgiven. The gospel is an *eternal* gospel—eternal good news.

This was the saving knowledge Jesus came to impart. Notice how He dealt with “sins” and how the Pharisees reacted to it:

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you...” “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ... “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” — He said to the paralytic, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house” (Mark 2:5,7,9,10-11).

To the Pharisees, Christ’s words were blasphemous. They were not happy at all with these new developments. In His words of forgiveness, He was threatening their whole economy—the sacrificial system. The Pharisees kept the people under spiritual and economic bondage by leading them to think they had to *earn* heaven’s forgiveness through animal sacrifices at least once a year. This kept the temple economy going, and the money flowing into their treasury. Now Jesus was undermining their very livelihood by announcing that the whole human race is pardoned and forgiven by God’s government.

The issue of forgiveness of sins is central to the war of principles that is taking place between God and Satan. Satan, whose very name means “the accuser,” believes we all must pay for our sins in one way or another. He demands a pound of flesh. Thus he institutes all sorts of hoops through which we must jump before we are pardoned. But Jesus taught that we are *already* forgiven. He taught that God had *never* imputed our “sins” onto us. This is clear by how the Savior dealt with the people. The adulterous woman was forgiven—point blank. So was Zaccheus. So was the paralytic mentioned above, and the thief on the cross—and everyone else too.

The spiritual leaders of Jesus’ time should have known God’s stance on sins and forgiveness. It was written in their scrolls:

... You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back (Isaiah 38:17).

You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; but you have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities. “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins” (Isaiah 43:24-25).

“I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud,

your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.” Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel (Isaiah 44:22-23).

Jesus, then, didn’t come to *forgive* our sins. He came to *give us the knowledge* that our sins are *already* forgiven. This will give new meaning to the following verses:

For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28).

To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38).

How could Jesus treat sin and sinners so differently? There is only one reason—because He knew and reflected the way the Father was.

Now, there was another sin, which according to Jesus was much more serious than “sins.” This “sin” could lead to death according to the apostle John:

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that (1 John 5:16).

According to John there is “a sin which does not lead to death,” and “there is a sin leading to death.” What does this mean? What is the sin that leads to death? We have to turn to Jesus again for the answer. Notice in the following verses how He seems to be redefining the word “sin:”

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin (John 15:22).

If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father (John 15:24).

And when He [THE HOLY SPIRIT] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me (John 16:8, emphasis added).

Now, we all know that every man born into this world, since Adam ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, is a sinner. Then how can Jesus say things like “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin?” And “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin?”

As we said earlier, Jesus was *redefining* the word sin here. “The” sin He is addressing is this: to not believe the words Jesus speaks or the works He does. In other words, this sin is not accepting Him as the final authority on the character of the Father—when they saw Him, they should have seen the Father in action. But by rejecting Him they were rejecting the Father—“they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.” And the Father had never held our sins against us. Rejection of this truth is the sin that leads to death.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come and convict the world of sin; why? “Of sin because they do not believe in Me.” Jesus is not connecting this “sin” to the “sins” we discussed earlier. This sin has to do with not believing in Jesus, in His words, in His works. This “sin” has to do with not believing the knowledge of salvation Jesus came to impart, through the remission of our “sins.” According to Jesus, if we reject this grace freely given to us, we will die in our “sins.”

Then Jesus said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come”... “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:21,24).

God is love—unconditional, impartial love. He never imputes our sins onto any of us. Remember 1 Corinthians 13—love keeps no record of wrongs. To reject this knowledge, to reject that this is how God is—*this* is the unpardonable sin. But even then we must understand this properly: it is not that God wouldn’t pardon even this—no; but once we reject this good news, there is nothing more God can do to *convince* us that we are absolved, free, forgiven, pardoned. By sending Jesus Christ He did all He could do. There was nothing more He could do or say—that was it.

“Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation” (Mark 3:28-29).

...so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them’” (Mark 4:12).

This is *the* sin. This is “missing the mark.” Not seeing, not perceiving, not understanding that we are covered by God’s love and grace; not seeing, not perceiving, not understanding that we are forgiven... This is the problem of humanity.

And this is what iniquity did to Lucifer. By “missing the mark” one forfeits the prize—the true knowledge of God and in that knowledge, the knowledge that we are forgiven, in fact considered as if we had *never* sinned. *This* is amazing grace!

Lucifer, who became Satan, “the accuser,” went astray from the true

knowledge of God's grace. He created a system of condemnation. Then he led others to join him—and they joined in his condemnation. Jesus came to bring the knowledge of salvation through the “remission of sins”—to tell us that God is not holding our sins against us—we are entirely, completely forgiven, because God is not in the business of condemning:

Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31).

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:38).

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7).

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14).

That “missing the mark” is missing the truth that God is a God of grace is again reinforced when Jesus healed the man that was blind from birth:

“For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.” Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “Are we blind also?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains” (John 9:39-41).

Christ came to reveal God's character of *agape* love to those who did not know it—they were *blind* to it. Those that are blind through ignorance have no sin—“If you were blind, you would have no sin.” But after believing in Him, they now see God as He truly is. If they accept this good news, they are free indeed—the truth has made them free. The apostle John goes on to say:

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20).

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32).

Some think they know God, but Jesus' witness does not agree with their understanding. Thus they reject Jesus' revelation of God—they say “we see.” But what they “see” is not in harmony with what Jesus taught.

Their sin—their “missing the mark”—remains.

If we are already forgiven, then who is it that accuses us? What caused Lucifer to sin was the iniquity that was found in him. Iniquity was his trade, and by its abundance he became “filled with violence within” and he sinned. Iniquity caused him to “miss the mark.” Lucifer no longer saw God as God truly is. Instead he saw Him as one just like himself: an accuser, one who condemns. He saw God as a violent God.

Satan’s law is condemnatory and as a result his character became condemnatory. His condemning character distanced him very far away from God, because God is not an accuser. Condemnation is what transformed a light-bearer, “Lucifer,” into an accuser, “Satan.”

The work of Satan as an accuser began in heaven. This has been his work on earth ever since man’s fall, **and it will be his work in a special sense as we approach nearer to the close of this world’s history.** As he sees that his time is short, he will work with greater earnestness to **deceive and destroy.** He is angry when he sees a people on the earth who, even in their weakness and sinfulness, have respect to the law of Jehovah. He is determined that they shall not obey God. He delights in their unworthiness, and has devices prepared for every soul, that all may be ensnared and separated from God. **He seeks to accuse and condemn God and all who strive to carry out His purposes in this world in mercy and love, in compassion and forgiveness** {COL 167.1, emphasis added}.

God never accuses—it is not in His character to do so. Throughout this whole period of rebellion, He hasn’t even accused Satan, not even once. Michael, “in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” (Jude 9).

The culprit is again, iniquity. This moral law is accusatory and violent, and it can’t help but to lead its adherents astray, away from the true knowledge of God. It is extremely important that we realize that all accusation stems from Lucifer and his law.



8

I WILL EXALT MY THRONE

The predominant belief among students of the great controversy is that Lucifer's original sin was pride. Was pride his original sin or was it something else? The view that pride was his original sin is based on the following verses:

I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High (Isaiah 14:13-14, emphasis added).

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor (Ezekiel 28:17, emphasis added).

What incredible words! What ambition, what presumption, what pride indeed! "I will ascend... I will exalt my throne... I will sit on the mount of the congregation... I will ascend above... I will be like the Most High!"

This was the first time a sinless being had ever rebelled against God. The universe must have been astir—what does Lucifer mean, he wants to ascend into heaven and exalt his "throne" above the stars, the angels of God? This is utterly out of harmony with God, whose heart is humble, meek, unselfish, loving, and eternally joy-giving. Lucifer was completely deviating from this path, which is in opposition to Jesus' humility:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no

reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

There is no question that Lucifer became proud. The texts are clear. But what was involved in his desire for exaltation? What *caused* his pride? Was pride the heart of his problem, or was it a *by-product* of something else?

Lucifer wanted to exalt his *throne*. Now here is something specific we can look at—a throne. What does “throne” mean? Does it mean that he wanted to exalt himself over God in the sense that he wished to *rule* the universe? Did he desire to do away with God’s government so that he could elevate his own? Indeed, it appears that all this is symbolized by the words “I will exalt my throne.” What’s in a “throne?”

A throne is a *symbol*. Literally speaking, it is simply a piece of furniture, the chair upon which a king sits. This chair has become symbolic of a king, his kingdom and his laws. The word “throne” is synonymous with sovereign power, sovereignty, rule and dominion.

A king must have *subjects*—people to populate his geographic realm. He also needs rules and guidelines—*laws* that ensure harmony and peaceful coexistence among his people so that order may exist. The symbol the Bible uses for a king’s laws is the “scepter.” The word “scepter” in the Bible is often interchangeable with the words “rod” and “staff;” but their symbolic meaning is the same—law.

Jacob’s prophecy that the Messiah, the Lawgiver, would come from the tribe of Judah clearly connects the “scepter” with “law:”

The **scepter** shall not depart from Judah, Nor a **lawgiver** from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people (Genesis 49:10, emphasis added).

Other texts associate “throne” and “scepter” with “righteousness,” which is God’s law of *agape* love:

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; **A scepter of righteousness** is the scepter of Your kingdom (Psalm 45:6, emphasis added).

Jesus Himself is portrayed as *ruling* with a “rod of iron:”

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will **rule** them with a **rod of iron** (Revelation 19:15, emphasis added).

“A rod of iron” is the Bible’s way of saying that God’s law is strong—it is

as strong as iron. It does not mean that God rules with force or violence. It is a way of saying that Lucifer's attempt to get rid of God's law will never succeed because His law is an everlasting, eternal law.

As a covering cherub, as a protector of the law, Lucifer was well acquainted with the fact that God ruled the universe through a law. His desire to ascend into heaven and exalt his throne above the angels of God meant he wanted to put God's law aside and implement his own. He developed a desire to be the lawgiver of the universe. He hoped that his method of governance would not only rival but also *surpass* God's law of *agape* love. But his was a "throne of iniquity," not righteousness. Notice what the Psalmist says:

Shall the throne of iniquity, which **devises evil by law**, have fellowship with You (Psalm 94:20, emphasis added)?

This verse tells us something extremely important—the "throne of iniquity" "devises evil by law." What does this mean?

The Hebrew word *yâtsar*—devise—means "to mould into a form; especially as a potter" (Strong's Concordance). The idea is that of squeezing something into a shape. Lucifer squeezed evil into a form, a shape, a framework. That framework is a moral law. Evil is *embedded* in this law—thus the law itself is evil.

The question the Psalmist asks is: Can an evil throne that uses an evil law have any fellowship—*châbar*, to join—with God? And the answer is "no;" it cannot. Jesus, the defender of God's law, "loved righteousness" but "hated" Lucifer's law of iniquity:

You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness [INIQUITY, KJV]; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions (Hebrews 1:9, emphasis added).

Satan wished to **change the government of God, to fix his own seal to the rules of God's kingdom. Christ would not be brought into this desire**, and here the warfare against Christ commenced and waxed strong. Working in secrecy but known to God, Lucifer became a deceiving character. He told falsehood for truth {CTr 208.2, emphasis added}.

Once Lucifer devised his law of iniquity he began promoting it, "peddling" it to the intelligent beings in the universe—this was his traffick, his merchandise, the corrupt principles of his administration.

It must have been something like an election campaign. In fact, the Greek word for "war" used in Revelation 12:9, "there was war in heav-

en,” is *polemos*—polemic in English. Lucifer instigated a massive polemic, which is still wildly raging on, even now, here on earth.

Lucifer’s highest ambition was to “sit on the mount of the congregation” (Isaiah 14:13). What “congregation” is this? We read about it in the Book of Job:

Now there was a day when **the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord**, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it” (Job 1:6-7, emphasis added).

Here is described a congregation of the “sons of God” coming to “present themselves before the Lord.” Satan also came. In what capacity did he come? He came in the capacity of one who *ruled* the entire earth—one who is “going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.”

This gives us an indication of who the “sons of God” were, and in what capacity they came to this meeting. They too came as representatives of other kingdoms scattered throughout the universe. Why did they come to present themselves before God?

“Present”—*yâtsab*—means “to place (any thing so as to stay),” (Strong’s Dictionary). Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon reveals that *yâtsab* also means “to set oneself, to take a stand,” or “to stand up for, to stand by anyone.”

This gives a whole new understanding of this meeting between God, the “sons of God,” and Satan. This “congregation” was a meeting of heads of state. Satan, the adversary and accuser had stood up against God and His law, and the sons of God were *standing up* in God’s *defense*.

Lucifer’s desire to “sit on the mount of the congregation” meant that he desired to be worshipped as the lawgiver. He wanted to eventually rule the universe, “the congregation,” by his own law. This was the foundational reason for his rebellion.

Lucifer coveted a position that only God could fill—the covering cherub did not have the ability to take on the job of lawgiver. The Creator designed His creatures for life—not death. But life is conditional upon their living by the moral law of life—*agape* love. A battery-operated toy functions only when the correct battery is used. If one inserts a different battery the toy may not function properly, or not function at all. Likewise, if we are to have life we must be in harmony with the law of life—God’s law. Lucifer’s law is a law that *destroys* life. We will explain how this works in the chapter titled “Fear.”

But you may say... Lucifer’s heart was lifted up because of his “beauty,” so it was all about pride. Yes, but the text also says that he

corrupted his “wisdom” for the sake of his “splendor.” Is his wisdom referring to his outward appearance, his physical beauty?

What does “wisdom” have to do with physical appearance? Nothing really. But it has all to do with *intellect*. So then the words “beauty” and “splendor” are descriptive of Lucifer’s intellect, which had authored this thing called “iniquity.” He must have thought that his “throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law” was something so brilliant, so wise, that it placed him on an equal footing with God—“I will be like the most high.”

So how does pride come into the equation? The previous quote which said, “In this place ‘traffick’ is the emblem of corrupt administration,” is followed by another statement:

It [TRAFFICK] denotes the bringing of self-seeking into spiritual offices. Nothing in spiritual service is acceptable to God except the purposes and works that are for the good of the universe. To do good to others will redound to the glory of God {4BC 1163.7, emphasis added}.

What does “the bringing of self-seeking into spiritual offices” mean? How is it related to iniquity? We will understand this better if we look at an example.

Take the Pharisees. They were proud and filled with self-exaltation and Jesus characterized them as “workers of iniquity.” Thus they are a perfect example for us to understand this. Through them we should be able to recognize the real cause of Lucifer’s pride:

...the principles cherished by the Pharisees are such as are characteristic of humanity in all ages. The spirit of Pharisaism is the spirit of human nature; and as the Saviour showed the contrast between His own spirit and methods and those of the rabbis, His teaching is equally applicable to the people of all time – {MB 79.2; emphasis added}.

In the days of Christ the Pharisees were continually trying to **earn** the favor of Heaven in order to **secure** the worldly honor and prosperity which they regarded as the **reward of virtue**. At the same time they **paraded** their acts of charity before the people in order to attract their attention and gain a reputation for sanctity – {MB 79.3; emphasis added}.

The Pharisees “were continually trying to earn the favor of heaven.” Why? In order to secure “the reward of virtue.” They believed that if they were virtuous, God would *reward* them with worldly honor and prosperity. Notice that this way of thinking is “characteristic of humanity in all ages.” This is “the spirit of human nature,” which we know is empowered by the spirit and wisdom of Satan and his Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The Pharisees believed God's kingdom functioned by a merit/demerit system—they didn't understand God's grace. This one misunderstanding led them onto the wrong path entirely.

But God's *agape* love is *impartial* and *unconditional*—merit or demerit do not come into play here. There is nothing we can do to *earn* or *lose* God's favor. His love for us is not based on how good or how bad we are—His love is based on who *He is*, and God is love. God simply loves us—period. God never rejects us; this is so because His character is unconditional and impartial. We are the ones that either accept or reject Him and His ways of life. God is absolute—this puts the ball in our court.

From where then did this concept of earning God's favor arise? It came from the “throne of iniquity that devises evil by law.” Lucifer rejected God's law of unconditional, impartial love. He rejected God's very essence and nature of *agape* love and this rejection included a discarding of unconditional love.

From here on we will see a series of consequences, one following another. If the law Lucifer devised was intrinsically antithetical to God's unitary, *unmixed*, indivisible law of unconditional *agape* love, then it stands to reason that his law *mixed* opposite concepts, and was divisible and conditional.

A rejection of *agape* meant that the principle he introduced had to be diametrically *opposed* to grace, which is freely given. If you remove grace, what you have now is a system of merit and demerit—now one has to *earn* their way to God, earn their way to heaven. One has to do something for it, thus one has to *deserve* it. Now “Good” works *earn* points, and “Evil” works *lose* points. Losing points translates into punishment—“Evil” works have to be punished.

Simply put, this is the principle behind the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—a reward and punishment system. So here is the crux of the matter, in terms of pride: iniquity is focused not only on what I can do, but what I can do *better* than others. This system is the source of competition, which results in pride and selfishness. The system itself is the root of Satan's pride and self-exaltation. Thus it was by the sheer nature of his own moral law that he became proud and selfish.

Iniquity is what “was found” in Lucifer. Thus it has to be a principle that is diametrically opposed to God. As such, it was a distortion of God's principle of unconditional *agape* love. As a reaction against *agape* love, it is its very opposite. Thus iniquity has to be conditional, partial, and *selfish* rather than *selfless*.

The moment Lucifer removed God's unconditional and impartial love

as the rule of law for the universe he introduced an *arbitrary* system imposed by an arbitrary ruler—himself. The moment he introduced an arbitrary system, he created force, violence. The result is the removal of freedom. Thus iniquity removes liberty, freedom; it enslaves us.

Then, the moment he created conditions he also created hierarchy—if one meets certain conditions, one will attain certain privileges. Inversely, if one doesn't meet certain criteria, one will suffer certain punishments. Iniquity created a *pyramid*, a scale of merit based on the balances of Good and Evil. This is the foundation for all hierarchies and religions that are based on works. The moment Lucifer created hierarchy, pride came into being.

As soon as he introduced his law, Lucifer (and subsequently the angels that followed him, as well as the human race who also adopted it) acquired and developed a *dual* character of Good and Evil. He and his followers now vacillated back and forth between two apparent polar opposites. A dual character was the inevitable consequence of this rebellion against God's indivisible law. Lucifer and all his followers no longer have an "entire" or "perfect" character—we are all two-faced schizoids in varying degrees.

Pride is also the *inevitable* condition of every heart that is controlled by Lucifer's moral law of reward and punishment. There is no escaping it, outside of Jesus Christ's principle of unconditional love; we are driven by pride. Only Jesus and His teachings can save us from this evil law residing in our hearts. Jesus' instruction to do our good works in secret, to not seek worldly recognition, is eye-opening—it reveals just how far removed from iniquity God's principles are.

Lucifer's desire to "ascend into heaven" was the first instance of self-exaltation, pride and self-seeking. This began the institution of a hierarchy based on merit, with him, heaven's brightest angel, at the top. Here is the onset of the survival of the fittest concept. There is only *one* winner in this race, *one* gold medalist. And *any* means to become "number one" are fully justified.

If it were possible, Lucifer would have destroyed God without a second thought so that he would have no opposition in becoming the one and only monarch of the universe. Why? Because inherent in his new law there was room for only one at the top. Besides, didn't he eventually attempt to do exactly what he had desired from the beginning, that is, to kill his competition? Isn't that what he did to Jesus at Calvary?

A merit-based system of government promotes self-exaltation and breeds hierarchy. Pride is embedded in hierarchy. Satan's hierarchy produces pow-

er, pride, covetousness, ambition, deception, corruption, profligacy, fear, greed, rage, bigotry and malice. All of these are opposed to the fruits of God's Spirit. Hierarchy forces people into submission, thus removing freedom of conscience. It uses fraud and forgery in order to accomplish even so-called high ideals, and stops at nothing to achieve its goals. It resorts even to cruelty and murder—many times in the name of a greater good, as in the case of Caiaphas' verdict: "it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish" (John 11:50).

Lucifer would want nothing more than for us to believe that his original sin was pride. Why? Because by believing this, we will remain ignorant of his law of Good and Evil. And as long as we are ignorant of his law that permeates the entire world, we will continue to be estranged from God, and will be transgressing His eternal law of *agape* love.

When Jesus said the Devil was a "liar and a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44), He was referring to the moral law Lucifer had authored in heaven. His law of merit and demerit is what creates pride, selfishness and desire for power:

Lucifer desired God's power, but not His character. He sought for himself the highest place, and every being who is actuated by his spirit will do the same. Thus alienation, discord, and strife will be inevitable. Dominion becomes the prize of the strongest. **The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of force; every individual regards every other as an obstacle in the way of his own advancement, or a steppingstone on which he himself may climb to a higher place** {DA 435.2, emphasis added}.

Satan's law is the reason why all earthly governments are plagued by widespread corruption. Characters built on merit-system-principles become proud, self-seeking, self-centered and arbitrary. In this environment it is usually the strongest, the brightest, the greediest, and the most ruthless that survive.

God is so completely different from this. He has no pride, no selfishness and no desire to be at the top by Himself. In fact, Jesus is even willing to share His throne with humanity:

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne (Revelation 3:21).

Jesus' parable of the wedding feast tells the story of "a certain king who arranged a marriage feast for his son." The story tells how the king's servants went out to invite various guests to the wedding but how each found an excuse not to come. The parable ends with an astonishing statement:

'Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the

wedding.’ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, **both bad and good**. And the wedding hall was filled with guests (Matthew 22:9-10, emphasis added).

What is Jesus saying here? Why would God invite both the “bad” and the “good” to His wedding feast? Isn’t Jesus saying that God’s law of grace is unconditional and impartial? Realizing this grace, these guests were transformed. Isn’t that what Jesus did when He was on earth? Didn’t He eat and drink with the bad and the good? Didn’t He extend God’s kingdom of mercy and grace to everyone alike?

Satan’s throne of iniquity, on the other hand, creates a ladder of worth based on a merit system, albeit a false merit; thus it promotes pride. The proud are just as spiritually sick as everyone else, if not more—but they do not see their own disease. They are blind to it—they are in need of nothing.

Jesus said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance’ (Mark 2:17).

Throughout the Scriptures, God shows His concern for those who see their own spiritual need:

The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them (Isaiah 41:17).

Since iniquity is the transgression of God’s law, iniquity is therefore contrary, opposed and completely separate from God’s law of *agape* love. This is extremely important to understand. We must not confuse God’s throne of grace with Lucifer’s throne of iniquity. They are worlds apart and have nothing in common.

Lucifer believed that conditions, the opposite of “unconditional,” were necessary for a more stable kind of “order” to exist. This is the ultimate reason he created the reward and punishment system we are living in. We must ask the question: is this system working?



9

THE TWO TREES IN
THE GARDEN

The Bible indicates that Satan “peddled” his principle of iniquity throughout the universe. This means that every living creature was confronted with the same option to either accept or reject his law.

The Lord has given me a view of other worlds. Wings were given me, and an angel attended me from the city to a place that was bright and glorious. The grass of the place was living green, and the birds there warbled a sweet song. The inhabitants of the place were of all sizes; they were noble, majestic, and lovely. They bore the express image of Jesus, and their countenances beamed with holy joy, expressive of the freedom and happiness of the place. I asked one of them why they were so much more lovely than those on the earth. The reply was, “We have lived in strict obedience to the commandments of God, and have not fallen by disobedience, like those on the earth.” **Then I saw two trees, one looked much like the tree of life in the city. The fruit of both looked beautiful, but of one they could not eat. They had power to eat of both, but were forbidden to eat of one. Then my attending angel said to me, “None in this place have tasted of the forbidden tree; but if they should eat, they would fall”** {EW 39.3, emphasis added}.

Everyone in God’s universe had the opportunity to choose between the Tree

of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This speaks volumes for the freedom God grants to all His creatures. One by one all the worlds rejected Satan's proposals except for one third of the angels who had been under his command. When God created the earth, Satan must have watched eagerly; he must have hoped this would be his big break. He was in Eden, and as in other worlds, his principle was veiled under the symbol of a tree.

You were **in Eden**, the garden of God... (Ezekiel 28:13, emphasis added).

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. **The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** (Genesis 2:8-9, emphasis added).

On the sixth day of creation Satan must have watched God forming Adam out of the ground. He must have waited for the right moment and opportunity to entice him to partake of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He also must have heard God warning Adam about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and his heart must have sunk at the sound of God's words:

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, **"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die,"** And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:15-18, emphasis added).

God created Adam first and then gave him dominion of the earth. He was to rule it with *agape*, as a loving, faithful servant. He was to be the father of mankind, the protector of his progeny and of the vast array of living creatures that populated the earth, the air and the waters.

God created all the animals before He made Eve. He then brought them to Adam, who named each one:

Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him (Genesis 2:19-20).

As Adam named the animal kingdom, he observed how God had made them male and female. He realized that among all the living creatures of the earth "there was not found a helper comparable to him"—and

his heart sank. There was a hole in his heart and no one suitable to fill it—God wanted him to realize this. God wanted Adam to realize that the purpose of life was relationship—loving relationship. Then “God saw that it was not good for man to be alone,” and He created Eve.

Eve was to be Adam’s companion, helper and aid. She was to be a source of great joy to the entire earth. As a mother, she would be the vessel through which the earth would be populated—“be fruitful and multiply.”

God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided “an help meet for him”—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. **Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him.** A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self; showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it.” “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one” {AH 25.3, emphasis added}.

Eve would reap the benefits of Adam’s service and labor, and while she was to join him in caring for the earth and its future population, the responsibility for the security of the earth rested strongly on his head.

It was to Adam that God had given the warning about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. After Eve was created Adam relayed the warning to her—but God had given the admonition directly to him, not her.

Satan knew he would have a better chance of success if he approached the woman when she was alone. When Eve left her husband’s side and approached the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the right moment had arrived, and Satan sprang into action under the guise of a serpent.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:1-4).

The fundamental lie of the serpent, the lie that steered the human race onto the wrong track altogether, was the statement that God *knew* Good and Evil, meaning that God operated by Good and Evil,

that His character was a *mixture* of both Good and Evil.

The serpent had one purpose and one purpose only: to *convince* Eve to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He knew that if he could get her to do so, Adam would most likely follow suit. If he could get the couple to directly disregard God's warnings regarding this Tree, their disobedience would place him, Satan, as the ruler of the earth—he would automatically step into Adam's position of dominion. Then he could establish on earth the principles he had developed in heaven. Since he had been rejected by all the other worlds in the universe, the earth, the Garden of Eden, was his last chance to find a realm in which to establish the principles of his kingdom.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a *symbol* of Satan's "throne of iniquity that devises evil by law." This Tree did not possess supernatural powers. The two Trees in the midst of the Garden represented two opposite principles—God's principle of life, the moral law of *agape* love, and Satan's principle of death, the moral law of reward and punishment, the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The Tree of Life possessed supernatural powers:

The fruit of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden **possessed supernatural virtue. To eat of it was to live forever. Its fruit was the antidote of death.** Its leaves were for the **sustaining of life** and immortality. But through man's disobedience death entered the world. Adam ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the fruit of which he had been forbidden to touch. This was his test. He failed, and his transgression opened the floodgates of woe upon our world {MM 233.5, emphasis added}.

However, the Tree was a *type*, a *symbol* of Jesus, "the one great Source of immortality:"

The tree of life was a type of the one great Source of immortality. Of Christ it is written, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." He is the fountain of life. Obedience to Him is the life-giving, vivifying power that gladdens the soul. **Through sin man shut himself off from access to the tree of life.** Now, life and immortality are brought to light through Jesus Christ.... {MM 233.6, emphasis added}.

The Tree of Life was also a "source of knowledge of which" Jesus' brothers (Christ's human family, a type of humanity) "were ignorant" of:

They [JESUS' BROTHERS] recognized that His education was of a higher type than their own. But they did not discern that He had access to the tree of life, a **source of knowledge** of which they were ignorant {DA 86.2, emphasis added}.

Ultimately, Jesus' words, life, and death, are the Tree of Life:

“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,” says Christ, “hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.... It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” **This is eating the fruit of the tree of life** (Manuscript 112, 1898) – {5BC 1135.8, emphasis added}.

Humanity had been ignorant of the Tree of Life, Christ’s “source of knowledge.” Christ came to earth to give us that knowledge so that we may have life. Jesus, therefore, is the greatest treasure anyone could ever possess.

The two Trees in the Garden also represent two paths: the path of blessings/life and the path of curses/death. God had intended that only the Tree of Life principle be used for governing His universe because God loves His creatures and wants to be with them throughout eternity. He wants eternal life for us.

And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak (John 12:50).

It is crucial that we understand the two Trees in the Garden or we will not be able to differentiate between God and Satan’s activities. Issues of life and death hinge on these two Trees and the moral laws they represent. Only when we see the difference between them will we be able to understand the complete truth about God’s heart and the extent and nature of Lucifer’s wickedness.

The Creator visibly separated the two laws contending for supremacy by giving each a *representative* Tree. Satan did not create his Tree. In the Garden, the Tree that *represented* the “wisdom,” or Knowledge of Good and Evil, was a physical Tree and the physical Tree was not deadly because God had created it. And since everything God creates is good, the *literal, physical* Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was also good. This Tree was, physically speaking, “good for food” and “pleasant to the eyes.”

So when the woman saw that the tree was **good for food**, that it was **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate (Genesis 3:6, emphasis added).

This Tree had to be created by God because Satan cannot create anything—he is not a creator. Physically speaking, then, this was not a deadly Tree. Eve saw that it was “good for food” and “pleasant” to the eyes just like any other tree in the Garden. What was lethal about this particular Tree is the fact that besides being a test of obedience it also represented a

deadly principle, and by eating of it, the couple gave themselves over to Satan and his deadly principle. They chose him as their teacher and ruler, and by doing so, they unwittingly chose his principle of iniquity also. It was thus that Satan became the god of this world:

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, **whose minds the god of this age has blinded**, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to **give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ** (2 Corinthians 4:3-6, emphasis added).

The fact that Eve thought the fruit of this Tree was “desirable to make one wise” indicates that there is more to it than just a *literal* meaning. How can a fruit, or a tree, made of roots, trunk, branches and leaves “make one wise”? It can't. Thus the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil has to be a symbol representing a principle...a principle that *appears* to be wise... that even boasts to be *wiser* than God and His principle of *agape* love... but which is *deceptive* and *lethal*—“the day you eat of it you shall surely die.” Such a Tree can have an appeal for “wisdom,” a certain desirability to make one wise.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represented Satan's throne of iniquity—his corrupt government. The moment Eve ate of it, Satan took command of the situation and claimed her as a subject of his kingdom. He began teaching her to see the world—and God—though shades of Good and Evil—light and darkness. Thus, Eve began *knowing* Good and Evil. Then Satan used her to seduce and entice her husband to also eat.

Adam must have been extremely distraught by his wife's choice. He must have thought back on God's warning that eating from this Tree would bring death, and must have weighed this against the thought of losing his wife. It must have been a fierce, painful struggle. Finally, he caved in and decided to join her, regardless of the consequences. This one decision opened the door for Satan to take control of the earth. Adam and Eve's unfortunate choice gave him the territory he needed in order to establish his kingdom and law.

Now the earth would be ruled by “iniquity.” But God would not leave the human race to perish under this destructive system without coming to the rescue. His Spirit would also work with mankind. From now on, there would be two principles, two moral laws, strug-

gling for supremacy in every beating heart:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

The two principles would be “the law of the Spirit of life,” *agape* love, and “the law of sin and death,” the Knowledge of Good and Evil. These are the “two antagonistic motives:”

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God’s original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the **two principles that are contending for supremacy**, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; **how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives**; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found {Ed 190.2, emphasis added}.

The above quote places the two laws or principles that are “contending for supremacy” at the heart of the great controversy. This brings to light the enormous significance of the two Trees in the Garden, and their central role in the great controversy between God and Satan.

We should learn how these two principles enter “into every phase” of our “human experience.” “How in every act of life” we reveal “the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives.” And how, *whether we so will or not*, we are “even now deciding upon which side of the controversy” we “will be found.” These are words filled with significance. But how can we make a decision between these two laws, if we don’t know what they are?

Not many would believe that Lucifer has a specific law with which he meant to replace God’s law of love. Much less would we think that he would have a *moral law*, of all things. Many believe that the alternative he had to God’s law was simply “lawlessness,” that is, lack of law altogether—“Do as thou wilt,” as Satanists and spiritualists say.

But we must allow the Bible to define the word “lawlessness” and not simply rely on our conventional understanding of this word. We must also be careful not to believe anything that comes from the mouth of a Satanist, because like their leader, they are filled with deception. They most definitely would not want us to know the truth about the two

Trees because it would expose their deception. They would rather we believe that “lawlessness” means no law at all—“do as thou wilt.”

We also need to understand that our “will,” if unsanctified by God’s *agape* love, is ruled entirely by Satan’s “law of sin and death.” Every person born on this earth is born with a sinful nature—we are born “in Adam,” in the “flesh.” This means we are all born with a moral character that is governed by Satan’s moral law of Good and Evil. Thus, if we indeed “do as we will,” we will actually default into our fallen nature and will in fact be operating by the law of iniquity that Satan introduced in the Garden of Eden. Relying solely on our “will” brings us full circle back to Satan’s moral law of Good and Evil:

Satan beguiles men now as he beguiled Eve in Eden, by exciting ambition for self-exaltation. “Ye shall be as gods,” he declares, “knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:5 Spiritualism teaches “that man is the creature of progression ... toward the Godhead.” And again: “The judgment will be right, because it is the judgment of self. ... The throne is within you.” And another declares: “Any just and perfect being is Christ” {HF 339.4}.

Thus **Satan has substituted the sinful nature of man himself as the only rule of judgment.** This is progress, not upward, but downward. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must be downward {HF 340.1, emphasis added}.

Lucifer’s moral law represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is the moral law into which every human being is born. As we continue we will learn exactly how this law has affected all of our relationships, including our relationship to God.



10

CONFUSION IN THE GARDEN

The Book of Genesis doesn't say much about Adam and Eve's lives before they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. There are bits of information here and there and through these we assemble a picture of their life. However, the limited amount of information Genesis does provide is all we need in order to assess what happened in the Garden.

First of all, God created Adam and Eve in His image on the 6th day of creation week.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." **So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.** Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28, emphasis added).

Being created in God's image meant that Adam and Eve were in harmony with God. Their hearts, thoughts, emotions and behavior were in complete harmony with the Creator's moral law of *agape* love. They had unconditional, impartial, self-sacrificing, other-centered love toward God and each other—they were "perfect" in the same way that Lucifer had been—*tâmymym*—"entire." They were to multiply and fill the earth with human beings who had *agape* love in their hearts.

God also gave them "dominion" over the earth and all its living beings. "Dominion," *râdâh*, means "to tread down, i.e. subjugate; reign, rule." As rulers of the earth Adam and Eve were supposed to do two things—"to dress and to keep" the Garden. These words mean:

To dress: âbad; to work (in any sense); by implication, to serve, dress, husbandman, keep, labor.

To keep: shâmar; properly, to hedge about (as with thorns), i.e. guard; generally, to protect, attend to, preserve, regard, watch.

Why was there a need to “protect” the earth when there was no sin yet? There was a need because Satan was at large—they were to protect the earth from him. They were not to eat of his Tree.

Adam and Eve were to have “dominion,” to rule the earth with *agape*. We must not misunderstand what “dominion” meant before sin. It didn’t imply force or arbitrary control back then. Satan has taken this word and given it a connotation of force and violence. In fact, Satan has done that to all words—such as the word “justice” for instance, as we shall see.

God also gave mankind its food—“every herb that yields seed” and “every tree whose fruit yields seed.”

And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food”; and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day (Genesis 1:29- 31).

These were the foods He appointed as the optimum nutrition for the human body and optimum spiritual connection to God. Our food was to be comprised of a vegetarian diet. Animals were to be loved and cared for. They were to be a great source of pleasure and joy for us.

“The Lord God” would come to visit Adam and Eve “in the cool of the day”—in the morning. The couple had complete freedom in the Garden but was cautioned not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

As soon as Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden Tree, their characters changed—they were no longer driven by *agape* love. Instead they were moved by a desire to save themselves and a desire to appease their new arbitrary ruler. They also became entirely self-oriented. Their focus switched from caring for the earth and each other to procuring their own well being—saving their own skin even at the cost of the other. It didn’t take long at all before accusations began to fly.

“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” And the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Genesis 3:12-13).

God found Himself between two quarreling children—something all parents will understand. “I didn’t do it, he did.” “No, she did it!” Adam was quick to blame not only Eve but God as well, “the woman whom You gave to be with me...” And Eve for her part excused herself by blaming the serpent. Why were they pointing fingers? The answer is simple: they were afraid. They were trying to escape blame in order to evade punishment. Why?

The answer is the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This “Knowledge” had taken over their minds, teaching them to look at things from the point of view of a new *duality*—Good and Evil—and through this new mind-set they perceived God as partly Good and partly Evil. Because they now perceived God as both Good and Evil, as an accuser and as one who was coming to punish them, they were filled with doubt and fear and as a result they hid from Him. It was fear that caused them to separate themselves from God—unfounded fear. And the moment they shied away from God, they immediately began dying—“a dying you will die,” according to Jeff Benner’s Mechanical Translation of Genesis—because He is the only source of life. They entered a state of entropy—a state of walking toward decay and disorder. Adam and Eve experienced an immediate spiritual death which eventually brought physical death as well.

What happened to Adam and Eve is expressed in the passage we have been studying in Ezekiel 28. Speaking directly to Satan, the passage says:

You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities (Ezekiel 28:18).

The word “defiled”—*châlal*—expresses this process of decay. Among its many meanings are such words as “to wound,” “to profane,” “to break,” “to pollute,” “prostitute,” “slay,” “sorrow,” “stain,” “wound,” “dissolve.”

We, the human race, became Lucifer’s “sanctuaries” and this is what he has done to us. He has wounded us, dissolved us, defiled, broken, polluted, slain, and stained us. This is that same word which contains the word “flute” as one of its meanings. Lucifer, the cosmic pied piper, has done all these things to the human race. What he has done is the opposite of the theory of evolution—he brought chaos from order. Order does not come from chaos—it is chaos that comes from order—this principle is found in the second law of thermodynamics, entropy. The chaos we are experiencing is a direct result of deviating from God’s “order,” and it was Satan who brought it forth.

Prior to eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve “were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). But after eating they became “ashamed:”

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings (Genesis 3:7).

What is the meaning of their nakedness? Is there a spiritual significance to this? Are we to understand this literally or symbolically? We know that in the Bible, “garments” are extremely symbolic. The prophet Zechariah, for instance, writes:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” **Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, “Take away the filthy garments from him.” And to him He said, “See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.”** And I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by. Then the Angel of the Lord admonished Joshua, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts:

‘If you will walk in My ways,
And if you will keep My command,
Then you shall also judge My house,
And likewise have charge of My courts;
I will give you places to walk
Among these who stand here’” (Zechariah 3:1-7, emphasis added).

“Garments” are called either “filthy garments” or “robe of righteousness:”

Notwithstanding the defects of the people of God, Christ does not turn away from the objects of His care. **He has the power to change their raiment. He removes the filthy garments, He places upon the repenting, believing ones His own robe of righteousness, and writes pardon against their names on the records of heaven.** He confesses them as His before the heavenly universe. Satan their adversary is shown to be an accuser and deceiver. God will do justice for His own elect {COL 169.3, emphasis added}.

The word “garment” is a metaphor that can represent either God’s imputed righteousness or Satan’s iniquity. Satan’s iniquity is represented as “filthy garments” and God’s imputed righteousness as “rich robes.” The King James Bible simply says, “I will clothe thee with a change of raiment.”

When God took away Joshua’s filthy robes He removed his iniquity from him, restoring him to the same condition Adam and Eve were in before they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Then He directed him to continue in His ways, in the path of life, in the moral law of *agape* love — the Tree of Life. This is the equivalent to Jesus’ telling the adulterous woman, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

In another instance, when Shechem the Hivite violated Dinah, Jacob’s daughter by Leah, Jacob’s sons took awful revenge by killing him along

with all the males of his tribe. Then God said to Jacob:

“Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.” And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, **“Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments”** (Genesis 35: 1-2, emphasis added).

Jacob equated putting away “foreign gods” with “purification” and changing of “garments.” Foreign gods are impure—they are really fallen angels, whose characters consist of an impure mixture of Good and Evil. They teach arbitrary reward for Good works, and arbitrary punishment for Evil works.

God also instructed Moses to make holy garments for Aaron:

And you shall make **holy garments** for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty (Exodus 28:2, emphasis added).

What makes a garment holy? The word “holy” means clean, pure, set apart, without contamination. “Holy garments” can only have symbolic meaning. They are a symbol of righteousness, purity, something undefiled by “mixture.” Solomon says,

Let your garments always be **white**, and let your head lack no oil (Ecclesiastes 9:8, emphasis added).

White *only*—not a mixture of white and black, as the mixture found in the Knowledge of Good (white) and Evil (black). And Isaiah says,

Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; put on your **beautiful garments**, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and **the unclean shall no longer come to you** (Isaiah 52:1, emphasis added).

Another passage in Isaiah indicates that the garments of iniquity are really just “webs:”

Their webs will not become garments, nor will they cover themselves with their works; their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands (Isaiah 59:6, emphasis added).

Notice how garments, which *cover* the body, are paralleled with *covering* oneself by “works.” Their “webs” “will not become garments” because they are “works” rooted in *iniquity*. The above passage seems to indicate that those who live in the realm of iniquity, attempt to cover themselves with “works”—but these are just webs.

Elsewhere, Isaiah talks about the “garments of salvation,” the “robe of righteousness:”

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has **clothed me with the garments of salvation**, He has **covered me with the robe of righteousness**, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels (Isaiah 61:10, emphasis added).

Jesus Himself is portrayed as clothed in “glorious apparel” because He “speaks” in righteousness, God’s law of love:

Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is **glorious in His apparel**, traveling in the greatness of His strength? — “I who **speak in righteousness**, mighty to save” (Isaiah 63:1, emphasis added).

The prophet Joel finally gets to the crux of the matter, telling us to stop taking this symbol literally, and to perceive its vital spiritual significance:

So **rend your heart, and not your garments**; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness (Joel 2:13, emphasis added).

Joel seems to be saying, “People, don’t you get it? Garments are symbols of your heart. Stop doing silly things like tearing up your robes. Instead, let your hearts of flesh love mercy, love kindness, let go of violence—let God cleanse you!”

Ultimately then, garments are a symbol of what is in our hearts, where the root of our thoughts and actions are. The heart is the “seat of judgment.” Are our hearts pure or mixed, single or double-minded? We are born with a double-minded *nature*, but if we yield our hearts to God, He is able to transform us back into His image, into His *singleness* of character.

The God who wants to save us from the destruction of Satan’s double-minded law of Good and Evil hears a cry, such as David’s, speedily:

Create in me a **clean heart**, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me (Psalm 51:10, emphasis added).

The clean heart referred to here by David is a heart that has no mixture, no contamination, no corruption.

Were Adam and Eve literally naked? The verse says they were, but what is much more important is the metaphor. Laodicea, the last church of Revelation chapter three, is also naked, but doesn’t know it. Speaking directly to Laodicea, Jesus says, “You do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and **naked**” (Revelation 3:17, emphasis added).

Laodicea is naked *after* sin—Adam and Eve were naked *before* sin. This seems to indicate that nakedness in itself must not be a bad thing—after all, that’s how God had created Adam and Eve in the first place, and He had created them pure.

It was after they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that Adam's and Eve's eyes were open to see their nakedness and as they saw it, they were filled with shame and fear. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil brought an awareness of their nakedness that they didn't have before eating from it. Laodiceans, on the other hand, are naked and don't realize it — they are blind to it. Why? Because Laodiceans think there is nothing wrong with their condition. They truly believe that they are in the right path and have the truth.

In their shame, Adam and Eve sewed garments out of fig leaves. Why fig leaves? Could it be that these garments were fashioned out of the Tree they had eaten from, sewn from the “cloth” of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? If that is so, then this Tree was not an apple Tree, but a fig Tree (which immediately brings to mind Jesus' cursing of the fig tree). And did the garments they sewed have the same meaning as Joshua's “filthy garments?” Were they covering themselves with “works,” which are not really coverings, but webs?

The word “ashamed” in Hebrew is *buwsh*—“to pale, i.e. by implication to be ashamed; also be confounded, confused” (Strong's Concordance).

In Psalm ninety-seven, *buwsh* is translated as “confounded:”

The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. **Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols:** worship him, all ye gods (Psalm 97:6-7, KJV, emphasis added).

In Psalm seventy-one it is translated as “confusion:”

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion (Psalm 71:1, KJV).

The prophet Daniel contrasted God and His righteousness with our unrighteousness, calling our unrighteousness “confusion of faces.” He says:

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, **but unto us confusion of faces** (Daniel 9:7, KJV, emphasis added).

O Lord, **to us belongeth confusion of face**, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him (Daniel 9:8-9, KJV, emphasis added).

God is merciful and forgiving, and yet we have rebelled against Him. Why? Because we have sinned against Him—we have “missed the mark” about Him. Therefore, to us “belongeth confusion of faces.” We see Him through the prism of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—We see Him as a God of love and a God of wrathful punishment and we therefore reflect the same.

“To us belongeth confusion of faces” implies that our characters are

two-faced. Our “faces” change between love and wrath, and that is so because we have a mixed character of Good and Evil. This is “confusion of faces”—a loving face that transforms into a spiteful face and vice versa.

As a consequence, we also have a confused view of God because we make Him to be in our image. We believe that God is mercy, for sure; but we also think that His mercy is mixed with punitive justice. But is it? How does the Bible define God’s justice? We have devoted an entire chapter to this subject because it is of extreme importance in the context of the great controversy.

We all know that our characters fluctuate between Good and Evil. When someone is evil to us, we are evil to him or her. Or, if someone is good to us, we are good to them. Our goodness is based on the goodness of the people around us, not on an inner, steadfast, *unchanging* character like the one we see in Jesus Christ. The Knowledge of Good and Evil has made us that way—“to us belongeth confusion of faces.” But God is *agape*—He does not *change*. If God changed in direct proportion to our works, being good to us when we are good, and being mean to us when we are evil, then God would be conditional. This would mean He would no longer be a God of unconditional *agape* love.

The Hebrew word Daniel uses for “confusion” is *bosheth*, a derivative of *buwsh* (the word “ashamed” in Genesis 2: 25). *Bosheth* means “shame (the feeling and the condition, as well as its cause); by implication an idol: ashamed, confusion,” (Strong’s Dictionary).

This word, *bosheth*, is very interesting because it is connected to idols. Idols are Satan’s counterfeit of true religion. According to the Scriptures, those who worship idols made of wood or silver and gold are in truth worshipping a false god. Who were these gods? The Bible is very clear on this. Speaking of the children of Israel, Moses wrote:

They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. **They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear** (Deuteronomy 32:16-17, emphasis added).

By making sacrifices to “foreign gods,” idols, the people were in effect worshipping demons, not Jehovah, the Creator. “Demons” and “gods” are one and the same thing—fallen angels who accepted Lucifer’s moral law of Good and Evil. They are the ones who brought confusion onto the earth. In the Book of Revelation, demons are also connected to gods—images, idols made of stones and wood:

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship

demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk (Revelation 9:20).

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil brought confusion into Adam and Eve's minds because it contains an *opposing* duality. Good and Evil is a mixture of two opposites that have no business being paired together—they ought to have nothing in common, but in this Tree they are inseparable.

It is Satan's work to **mingle evil with good**, and to remove the distinction between good and evil (The Review and Herald, December 4, 1900) – {7BC, 958.1, emphasis added}.

How is it that men who are at war with the government of God come into possession of the wisdom which they sometimes display? Satan himself was educated in the heavenly courts, and he has **a knowledge of good as well as of evil. He mingles the precious with the vile, and this is what gives him power to deceive.** But because Satan has robed himself in garments of heavenly brightness, shall we receive him as an angel of light? The tempter has his agents, educated according to his methods, inspired by his spirit, and adapted to his work. Shall we cooperate with them? Shall we receive the works of his agents as essential to the acquirement of an education {CT 378.2, emphasis added}?

Mingling the “precious with the vile” is what gives Satan “power to deceive.” What does Good have to do with Evil? Why are they conjoined into a Tree that is contrasted to the Tree of Life? Isn't this a recipe for confusion? Confusion is the natural result of Satan's law.

In Isaiah 14:4, Lucifer is addressed as the king of Babylon. Babylon is a symbol of his kingdom. Not surprisingly, Babylon means “confusion.” What causes Babylon's confusion? It is Babylon's gods—Good and Evil demons. Babylon's confusion springs from the gods who ruled it by the moral law of Good and Evil—the law of arbitrary reward and arbitrary punishment. At one moment the gods are beneficent, rewarding the good... the next moment they bestow severe punishments for any misdemeanor. The people are compelled to offer great sacrifices, even their own children, in order to keep the gods' wrath at bay.

Demons, the third of the angels who followed Lucifer, accepted this law as being better than God's law. This means that they themselves now live by this law—they also reward and punish each other because they have a dualistic character of Good and Evil. They are also unpredictable, volatile, because to them as well, “belongs” “confusion of faces.”

Lucifer and his city Babylon shall fall and cease to exist because of the innate violence contained in their “iniquity.”

It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from

your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: **“How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased”** (Isaiah 14:4, emphasis added)!

The city of confusion is **broken down**; every house is **shut up**, so that none may go in. There is a cry for wine in the streets, all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city **desolation** is left, and the gate is **stricken with destruction** (Isaiah 24:10-12, emphasis added).

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, **Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all** (Revelation 18:21, emphasis added).

This opens a new line of understanding for the events in the Garden, and explains why as soon as Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil they became filled with fear of God—they saw Him as a violent God. They became confused because they entered a new realm—the kingdom of Good and Evil.

Adam and Eve knew God was love... but now they perceived Him to be harsh, mean and punitive. They had gone against His command... surely God was angry with them... wasn't He coming to punish them?

But God doesn't change. So what changed? Adam and Eve — they changed. They began to *see* the world in shades of Good and Evil. They saw themselves that way, saw each other that way, and also God.

What really happened to Adam and Eve is that they became “unbelievers” in the biblical sense of the word. They no longer believed in the God of *agape* love, but in a violent god. Their faith was based on a dual god, who is not God at all. Paul called himself an unbeliever when he worshipped such a god:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly **in unbelief** (1 Timothy 1:12-13 KJV).

Paul's actions before meeting Jesus Christ reflect the god he believed in; he was a persecutor and injurious—causing harm to others. As such, he was *blasphemous*—he told lies about God.

From the moment Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil humanity entered an era of “survival of the fittest.” Why? Because they no longer saw themselves as *deserving* God's love and care. They no longer believed they were *worthy* to rely on God for their sustenance and subsistence. Jesus Christ overturned this wrong idea about God by saying such things as,

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith (Matthew 6:26, 28, 29 30)?

Having lost their knowledge of God's true character, and fearing the worst from Him, Adam and Eve took things into their own hands. This, God explained to them as He revealed the curse they had brought upon themselves and the earth, through the Knowledge of Good and Evil:

To the woman He said:

“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
In pain you shall bring forth children;
Your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you.”

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:

“Cursed is the ground for your sake;
In toil you shall eat of it
All the days of your life.
Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.
In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
For dust you are,
And to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:16-19).

The marital relationship was cursed by the principles of Satan's law—the strongest would rule with force over the weakest. The earth itself was cursed, and death would become the lot of mankind. We would eat our bread by sweat of our face, no longer having faith that God could provide for us. We would rely on our “toil”—a *works system*—not on God's grace. Our loss of faith in God would lead us to behave in all sorts of egotistical, unjust and fraudulent ways. The strongest, most violent and forceful would leave the weak and helpless behind without a second thought.

Good behavior would be rewarded and evil behavior punished—all done arbitrarily, so as to fit the *virtue* or *vice*. And since human beings would come to believe wholeheartedly in the wisdom of this principle (not real-

izing that it was coming from Satan per se, but thinking that this is general wisdom and common sense) we ourselves would use this moral law in our dealings with each other—rewarding and punishing each other as we saw fit. Human beings, made gloriously in the image of the God of *agape* love, would now become like Satan—transformed into *his* image.

But the worst and most damaging result of this new paradigm was that humanity would now see God through this prism—we no longer would see Him as a God of *agape* love but as a God of Good and Evil, a God of reward and punishment. This was the fundamental lie the serpent told Eve:

“You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4,5, emphasis added).

God was not Good and Evil; His Tree was the Tree of Life, a Tree altogether *set apart* from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Tree of Life represented His law of *agape* love, which is His character, the very essence of His being. So then what do we make of God’s own words:

Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:22).

Did God *know* Good and Evil? Yes, He knew it, but not in the same sense that Satan, his angels, and Adam and Eve knew Good and Evil. Satan and his followers knew Good and Evil in an *experiential* way—they were in *harmony* with it, living by it and *experiencing* its consequences. God knew Good and Evil’s fallacious *claims* and *intricacies*—He could even predict its eventual demise—and He knew what it would do to our minds. God knew what Good and Evil was all about, but He did not *agree* with it, He was not in *harmony* with it—He did not *think* or *act* in terms of Good and Evil. In fact He hated iniquity—which is the moral law of Good and Evil—according to Hebrews 1:9.

God also knew Good and Evil intimately in a very particular way: He knew the pain and suffering it produces. God was already suffering because of the rise of Good and Evil, and He knew very well what mankind was about to suffer under it. Any parent knows that the pain of witnessing his or her child’s pain is much greater than their own pain. And God would not only intimately feel the pain of every being born on this earth, but He Himself would one day experience it personally as He hung on a cross.

Being perceived as a God of Good and Evil created a real problem for God, because no matter what He said or did, it would be wrongly interpreted. We would perceive everything He did through the lens of the Knowl-

edge of Good and Evil, and this would keep us estranged from Him.

Let's examine, for instance, that moment when Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, **"Where are you?"** So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:6-10, emphasis added).

We read this and conclude that God was *threatening* Adam and Eve. We assume that He would kill them if they disobeyed Him. This makes the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil simply a test of obedience where, if Adam and Eve failed the test God would punish them with death. This is the predominant interpretation of this text. But there is something much, much deeper happening here! Let's analyze this.

First, we must establish that prior to eating from the forbidden tree Adam and Eve had never expressed a fear of God. God had never been frightening. Second, there is no indication that God's initial command to not eat from the Tree of Good and Evil had elicited any fear in Adam:

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:15-17).

Now, we know that some commands are meant to elicit fear, and indeed do imply punishment—"do this or else..." But there is no such indication of this anywhere in this text. There is nothing suggesting that Adam cowered from God's command. If that is so, then there could be nothing in God's voice to cause Adam to fear Him. Had there been any hint of violence from God, His words "you shall surely die," would have made Adam recoil in terror and he would have stayed away from his Maker even then.

God's statement that Adam would surely die was a *statement of fact*, not a threat; it was an *absolute* truth, because God does not lie. But through the lens of Good and Evil we have interpreted this to mean that God Himself would kill Adam and Eve as a punishment for disobeying Him. Had this been the case, Adam would have hid from God as soon as the command was given, but he did no such thing. Fear came in *after*, not

before Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden Tree.

Death did not come from Christ, the Creator:

Christ never planted the seeds of death in the system. Satan planted these seeds when he tempted Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge which meant disobedience to God (Manuscript 65, 1899) [published in F. D. Nichol, Ellen G. White and Her Critics]. – {1BC 1082.5}.

When Satan contradicted God by telling Eve that she would “not surely die” he gave himself away. He gave proof that death came from him and not from God. How so? Because if God had been the cause of death Satan would not have hidden that knowledge. But because he himself would be the source of death, he hid that information behind a lie so that the woman would go ahead and eat of his Tree.

When the law of Good and Evil took over Adam’s and Eve’s minds, it also erased their knowledge of God’s *agape* love and filled them with a false knowledge of the Creator. The Creator would now be blamed for everything Satan himself did.

What then truly brought fear into being? It was Satan’s “iniquity,” which is imbued with violence – this is what brought fear into being. Take a look at the next verse:

Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”
So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:10).

Was God playing mind games with Adam? Didn’t He know where Adam was? Why was God calling out to him?

God knew what had happened to Adam’s mind. He knew that Adam would interpret everything He did in the wrong way now. So why did God ask such a question? Wasn’t it to show Adam that God was not trying to chase him down? If God was really out to get Adam He wouldn’t have asked where he was—He would have stealthily swooped down and taken Adam by surprise, giving him no chance to escape. Isn’t that how we try to apprehend the guilty? The very fact that God was *conversing* with Adam was a way of showing him that He hadn’t changed. God had come in peace as He always did, and had no intentions of punishing him.

Adam’s response, “I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself (Genesis 3:10)” reveals Adam’s mind-set—not God’s. It was Adam’s “nakedness” that created fear in him, and God’s next question pointed to the real cause of his nakedness:

Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat (Genesis 3:11)?

This reveals much about God. Why did He ask, “Who told you that you were na-

ked?” It is as if God is saying, “How do you know you are naked, Adam? You weren’t supposed to know that—I didn’t want you to know that. *I* didn’t tell you this—so *who* did?” Adam had lost the understanding of the righteousness of God — His love, His mercy, His unconditional grace—and as a result he realized he was naked.

God’s next sentence is even more enlightening: “Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” Isn’t God pointing Adam to the *true* culprit here? In other words, “Did you eat from that tree, because now I see that the Tree is making you afraid of Me. And you are feeling naked in front of Me, and you are even hiding from Me! You have chocolate all over your face, Adam, so I know you put your hand in the cookie jar!”

God’s response to Adam clearly points to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as the cause of his fear. And we all know who was lurking around that Tree.

Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” And the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Genesis 3:11-13).

The serpent—where was it, all this time? It was there all along, working behind the scenes, working on their minds through the moral law of Good and Evil, causing them to see God as an angry judge.

The cunning serpent, the “wisest” of all creatures, that fallen angel who had “corrupted his wisdom by reason of his beauty” was the source of their fear. Here at the Garden he was implementing the law he believed was better than God’s. Here, for the first time, we can see exactly the results of the iniquity that was “found in him” and which filled him with “violence within.”

Prior to eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve knew God and were not afraid, ashamed, confounded or confused about His character. As soon as they ate from the forbidden Tree, however, they entered a state of confusion about Him. They lost their trust in Him. How can one trust a Jekyll and Hyde?

They ran away from Him who was their loving Maker and Friend. They entered a state of abject fear, thinking He was coming to punish them. Iniquity brought confusion into their minds, because they now began to see God as both Good and Evil. By distancing themselves from God, the only source of life in the universe, they spiraled steadily down towards death. Within nine hundred and thirty years, Adam, who had been created perfect, was in the grave.

Adam and Eve’s choice to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil had great significance and tremendous repercussions throughout the uni-

verse. They in effect abdicated dominion of the earth to Satan, making him its new ruler. By believing Satan and “eating” of his Tree they elected a new god, a new master, a new kingdom, a new law—and now a cruel arbitrary despot, pretending to be in the place of God, would rule over the earth.

At his creation Adam was placed in dominion over the earth. But by yielding to temptation he became Satan’s captive. The dominion passed to his conqueror. Thus Satan became “the god of this world.” 2 Corinthians 4:4. But Christ by His sacrifice would not only redeem man, but recover the dominion he had forfeited. All that was lost by the first Adam will be restored by the second. See Micah 4:8 { EP 34.1}.

Satan became the “god of this world” as well as the “ruler” of this world. But Christ would come to our rescue. He would redeem us, recover the dominion we forfeited, and restore all that was lost by the first Adam—the true knowledge of God.

When Satan overcame Adam and Eve, he thought he had gained possession of this world, “because,” said he, “they have chosen me as their ruler.” He claimed it was impossible that forgiveness be granted; the fallen race were his rightful subjects, and the world was his. But God gave His own Son to bear the penalty of transgression. Thus they might be restored to His favor and brought back to their Eden home. The great controversy begun in heaven was to be decided in the very world, on the same field, that Satan claimed as his {EP 35.3}.

Satan claimed our world as his own. He hijacked us, he kidnapped us. How did he do it? He took us captive by *twisting our view* of God’s character. We began seeing God as a harsh ruler, a stern judge. As a consequence we feared Him, and fear kept us estranged from Him. Christ would come to rescue us; He would come to free us—He would do whatever it took—to bring back to us the true knowledge of God. Only then would we be redeemed, “restored,” “brought back” to our Eden state of communing with God face to face, without fear. Then Zacharia’s prophecy would be fulfilled:

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,
 For He has visited and redeemed His people,
 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
 In the house of His servant David,
 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
 Who have been since the world began,
 That we should be saved from our enemies
 And from the hand of all who hate us,
 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers
 And to remember His holy covenant,
 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:

**To grant us that we,
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,**
In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life
(Luke 1:68-75, emphasis added).

Satan finally attained on earth what he had desired to have in heaven—a kingdom of iniquity. Now the universe would see the results of the moral law of Good and Evil. The rule of arbitrary reward and punishment became the law—the moral law of the land, what is known as “natural law.” But this “natural law” is not of God. It is of Satan.

Adam and Eve gave the fallen cherub the opportunity he was seeking. They gave him the territory on which he could build his kingdom of iniquity. And you and I became the subjects of his kingdom. Speaking directly to Satan, the prophet Isaiah says:

...you have destroyed your land and slain your people (Isaiah 14:20).

Our planet earth became *his* land — and we, *his* people. But God is calling us to come out of the “city of confusion” into His kingdom of grace and mercy so that we will not perish with her:

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.” And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues” (Revelation 18:1-4).

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11

FREEDOM, EQUAL
ACCESS, AND
IMPARTIALITY

With Satan's takeover of the earth a new and unique opportunity arose in the universe. For the first time ever, angels and other intelligent beings had the opportunity to observe how God deals with those who go against Him.

Through the new and unfortunate circumstances taking place on the earth, the possibility of attaining greater insight into the character of God became a reality. To see God in action and examine how He has preserved intact the principles of *agape* love in all His dealings during the rebellion—these are things that “even angels desire to look into,” 1 Peter 1:12.

As we analyze the rise of the great controversy we too will see how God has kept inviolable His principle of *agape* love. We will now examine in particular three aspects of *agape*: freedom, equal access, and impartiality, all of which could only come to light in the context of rebellion.

FREEDOM

Most of us can understand that freedom is an essential component of love—the two go hand in hand. In fact, love without freedom is not love.

A love relationship in which one party exercises control over the other ceases to be a love relationship and becomes a master/slave interaction.

It would stand to reason then, that if God is love, then He does not, in fact *cannot* control or usurp one's freedom of choice in any way.

God placed man under law, as an indispensable condition of his very existence.

He was a subject of the divine government, and **there can be no government without law.** God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; **but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character.** Such a course would have been contrary to God's plan in dealing with the inhabitants of other worlds. It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule {PP 49.1, emphasis added}.

Being under law—moral law—is an “indispensable condition” of humanity. We are either under God's moral law or Satan's moral law. Furthermore, “there can be no government without law.” This applies even to Satan: if he has a government then he has to have a law. Under God's government there is freedom of choice: we can choose by which law to abide. This freedom makes us free moral agents—we are free to make our own moral choices.

God “might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit.” How would God have done that? By literally, physically holding his hand back? Or by placing a threat of punishment upon Adam's head, which would have been just as efficient? But then Adam's “obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced.” Literally holding Adam's hand back or threatening punishment—either way would have involved force, which is contrary to God's ways.

Love being the law of God's government, His law is not something that God can *enforce* on His creatures, otherwise love would cease to be love. Thus by the sheer nature of the law of *agape* love, we have freedom of choice. Without freedom of choice our obedience would not be voluntary, but forced. This is not what God, whose essence is love, desires. Most of the world, however, believes that God is a control freak. But if God could indeed operate by force, then He wouldn't be a God of *agape* love. He would simply be an impersonal ruler, a dictator, an autocrat—like Satan.

So here is a question—Would God stop respecting our freedom if we rejected Him or stopped obeying Him? This isn't a trick question. But think of it... If God stopped respecting our freedom once we rejected Him, did we have any freedom in the first place? The answer is NO, and if that is so, then

our freedom has to remain in place, even if we disobey God.

Here is another question—Let’s say we reject God and He punishes us. By punishing us, is God respecting our freedom? No. What kind of freedom is that? God would still be controlling us—through fear.

What if you told your children, “Kids, I don’t want you to go to the movies tonight because I hear rumors that there are riots out there and it wouldn’t be safe for you to go out tonight. But you are free to do what you want.” The children understand your reservations but decide they want to go to the movies anyway. After all, you gave them the freedom. When they get home you scold them severely and send them to their rooms without dinner. Were they really free? Can freedom and punishment coexist? Aren’t they in contradiction to each other?

Likewise, God told Adam and Eve, “Don’t eat of that tree because it is going to bring great damage to you and the earth. But you are free to choose.” Adam and Eve exercised their freedom. Did God punish them? No. There can be no punishment in God’s kingdom. Why not? Because God is perfect love and perfect love casts out fear, which is related to punishment.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment [GREEK *KOLASIS*: PUNISHMENT]. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love (1 John 4:18, emphasis added)

There is fear in Satan’s kingdom of reward and punishment because he operates through punishment. Rebellion itself is proof that God is not controlling:

God’s government is a **government of free-will**, and there is no act of rebellion or obedience which is not an act of free-will {ST June 5, 1901, par. 4, emphasis added}.

A God of *agape* love *has* to provide absolute freedom to His creatures, otherwise He would cease to be *agape*. Absolute freedom implies that God cannot use punishment to control us. If God used punishment, His creatures would cease to be free agents. If they are not free agents, they are merely automatons, robots. But we are not robots. We all instinctively understand that freedom is our natural right.

All things in the universe were in complete harmony with God’s character of love until Lucifer challenged God’s “standard.” The covering cherub had complete freedom to rebel in heaven, otherwise God would have stopped him in his tracks. But he is still here ruling the earth—case in point. As far as he was concerned, Lucifer believed he had something far superior to God’s law and his heart was lifted up, even as he was *falling*. But God knew he was bringing disaster into being... and yet, *even knowing this*, He did not withdraw Lucifer’s freedom.

Furthermore, Satan had freedom to “peddle” his “goods” to the entire universe. Not only did he have freedom to do so, but the other worlds and the angels themselves were free to leave God and join him if they so wished. Everyone’s freedom was inviolable and not once curtailed by God. We know that one third of the angels exercised their freedom to join Lucifer, while the rest of the universe used the same freedom to reject him.

Adam and Eve were given the same choice as the rest of the universe and the choice was a simple one: choose God or choose Satan—choose the Tree of Life or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God created us as free moral agents:

God had power to hold Adam back from touching the forbidden fruit; but had He done this, Satan would have been sustained in his charge against God’s arbitrary rule. **Man would not have been a free moral agent, but a mere machine** (The Review and Herald, June 4, 1901) – {1BC 1084.2, emphasis added}.

The typical explanation of the Garden of Eden story illogically portrays God as threatening to kill Adam and Eve for disobeying Him. But if God was going to kill Adam and Eve, Satan would have capitalized on that point and used it against God; instead, he said “you shall not surely die.” God had said “that Tree will surely kill you,” and Satan, trying to hide the fatal consequences of his Tree, and wanting them to eat of it said, “No it won’t, go ahead and eat it.”

If God’s warning had been a threat, then Adam and Eve would have had no freedom of will to begin with. In this paradigm, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil becomes simply a test of obedience. And if it was a threat, then when Adam and Eve failed the test they would be punished by God—with death. But there is much more to this Tree. The Tree itself is the cause of all our problems. It is what the Tree symbolizes that causes death, not God.

We asked earlier: would God stop respecting our freedom if we rejected Him or stopped obeying Him? The logical answer has to be “no,” because if God stopped respecting our freedom once we rejected Him, then there would have been no freedom from the beginning.

A death threat is not compatible with freedom. Rather, it is intimidation, coercion and downright abuse. Most of us don’t usually deal with our children that way and we generally look down upon those that do. Then why would we think that God, who is perfect love, deals with us in this way? If God had threatened to punish Adam and Eve, then they never had freedom to begin with; and if they didn’t, neither do we.

This way of thinking is not only illogical but also blinds us to the enormous symbolism of the forbidden Tree and the principle it repre-

sents. It is with this principle that Satan has been ruling the earth and deceiving each and every one of us—the whole world, from “beginning to ending.” May we open our eyes and see it at last.

Death did come to earth as God had warned, but not by His hand. Then what really happened in the Garden? It is actually quite simple; God had asked Adam and Eve to not jump into the fire. Adam and Eve disregarded His advice and jumped. Who or what burned them, God or the fire? The answer is obvious.

Freedom and force are opposed to each other. If God gives freedom, He cannot also use force. God warns and counsels but then freely allows choices to be made. He shows us cause and effect and then leaves it with us to decide whether to listen or not. Such were His methods in dealing with Lucifer’s rebellion; the same methods are seen in His dealings with Adam and Eve. He warned Lucifer of the consequences of his choices and did the same for Adam and Eve. They all disregarded His warnings. Showing cause and effect, but upholding freedom are the ways in which God operates.

Our first parents were free to obey God. If they did so, they would continue in the joy of knowing Him and believing in His friendship, forever eating from the Tree of Life. But they were also free to disregard His warning and partake of the Tree that would bring death. Freedom of choice was so vital that it would inevitably determine the fate of all beings and the destiny of the human race. Adam and Eve chose death, but even then their freedom was kept inviolable.

Most of us would probably have done things a little differently than God. We might have blocked Satan from contacting Adam and Eve. We might have shielded the couple from his influence. Or we might have placed the forbidden Tree in a secluded, inaccessible location somewhere out of sight, out of mind. Instead, God allowed Satan to be in the center of the garden—“in the midst”—right next to the Tree of Life. Does God take the concept of freedom and fairness a bit too far?

Had God blocked Satan in any way, Satan would really have had some good grounds to accuse Him. But it is not as if Satan had checkmated God, or as if God was acting out of a selfish desire to protect His own reputation—No! Freedom is part of His character; it is not *in* Him to violate it—He cannot do it. If He did, it would change His own character—and that would really bring chaos into the universe. God is too wise to allow that to happen.

Can you see that without complete freedom we wouldn’t be in the predicament we are in today? Think of it—Lucifer’s freedom remained intact, even though God knew he was going to harm Adam and Eve, harm the rest of His creation, and even God Himself!

God knew that Lucifer would go to any extent to win the war, and to that extent he would introduce something absolutely dark and foreign to the universe. Knowing that eternal destruction and ruin would be the result, and so many of God's beloved children would be taken down in the process, God still respected Lucifer's freedom. Neither did God use force to stop him, nor did He force Adam and Eve from believing Satan's terrible lies about Himself. Nothing could be more evil than the law Satan introduced in the universe, and yet he was given complete freedom to promote it. How can God deal with evil this way, you may ask? Baffling, isn't it?

These things speak volumes about God's character, though. Only a God of *agape* love could grant such liberty. What value He places on the freedom of His creatures! If free will were not important to God, He would have put a stop to the rise of evil. But He did not do that; He allowed it to happen. This is clear evidence of the integrity of His *agape* love.

God's character does not allow Him to act or react in any other way. If He used force or control, He would become arbitrary, and once He became arbitrary He would cease to be *agape* love. Thus great injustices and evil were bound to come into being, even against Himself. But He went further and continued doing good to His enemies, even sustaining their lives throughout their rebellion, because He does not repay evil with evil. God does not join evil in order to overcome it:

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

From the lessons we learn from the Garden, we can see that we are not to obstruct anything or anybody, even if we believe it to be opposed to what we regard as God's truth. To do so would be contrary to God's principle of freedom. Such methods are in themselves an indication that those who use them are not acting in harmony with God. Forceful or underhanded methods to present God's truth are out of harmony with His principles. Thus, all who choose to oppose God's truth have ample liberty to advance their views without fear of intimidation or punishment from Him, because He has given them complete freedom to do so.

Satan's choices have been fatal to the universe. The entire creation groans under the misery of sin, and many people will eventually choose to lose the joy of spending eternity with God. God will forever feel the pain of losing the companionship of His lost children. But God is love, and freedom will always exist even if God Himself becomes a casualty. And isn't that what happened? Wasn't His Son nailed to the cross?

Adam and Eve were safe as long as they followed God's counsel to not eat of the forbidden Tree. The only power God had in this situation was

the power of His love, which the couple unfortunately disregarded.

God's "power" has been grossly misunderstood in that we have ascribed to Him a violence-based power. God provided freedom through His law, and as Lucifer deviated from the mind of God, he also deviated from freedom. Violence, if the reader recalls, arose in Lucifer, not in God. But we have also misunderstood the power of human choice. The choices we make have clear consequences because God has to respect our freedom. This means that if we persistently choose a path that causes us to die, God cannot stop us.

Such freedom is fraught with responsibility. There are really only two choices available to us: God's kingdom of life and Satan's kingdom of death. So the consequences of our choices are life and death. God will respect our choices. We must choose very carefully and wisely because of God's great respect for our freedom.

It is precisely because of God's respect for our freedom that we are in danger of eternal death if we reject Him who is life. God could not spare the world from the consequences of Adam and Eve's choice; they entered Satan's death domain and God couldn't stop it. The only solution God had to our predicament was this: to send us His Son, who would tell us the truth about Him. God's truth has the power to change the course of our lives and the direction of this planet.

Every choice has a consequence and because of His principle of *agape* love, God has to honor it:

Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him (Hebrews 2:1-3).

The "just reward" is to receive the consequences of the choices we made. If we choose the principles of death we will receive death, and if we choose the principles of life we will receive life.

God has given us a great salvation in His Son Jesus Christ. This salvation is a new understanding of who God is. This new understanding of God can save us from death and give us eternal life:

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3).

God's wisdom and principles are always dictated by His love, therefore every decision He makes, He makes in love. God's ways, though it may seem like foolishness to some of us, are the only wise ways. God is wisdom personi-

fied. His ways are the only ways of life. When all is said and done, God's ways will be seen as the only wise ways, and those that see His wisdom will exclaim:

Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints (Revelation 15:3)!

EQUAL ACCESS

The tree of life was also in the midst of the Garden, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2: 9).

Equal access goes hand in hand with freedom. What does this mean? It means that both God and Lucifer have a level playing field in the universe. Lucifer's freedom meant he had free access to Adam and Eve. God did not prevent him. It was in God's very own Garden that Satan was allowed to reside and access Adam and Eve. Not only did God allow him in His Garden, but God allowed him to have a Tree to represent his principle of death. And that Tree was in the midst of the Garden, side by side with the Tree that represented God's principle of Life.

This positioning of the two Trees reveals much about God. God could have banned Satan's Tree to the back of the Garden somewhere out of sight. Instead, He allowed Satan equal exposure and opportunity to peddle his goods, even letting him take up residence right next to the Tree of Life. The two Trees' central position shows that God gave Himself no advantage over His adversary.

Adam and Eve also had equal access to both Trees. They were warned about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but their freedom to eat of it obviously was not removed. It is true that Satan could only access the couple at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That is so because he only had jurisdiction over that one Tree. The rest of the Garden was under God's jurisdiction and there was nothing there for Satan to peddle. Satan was confined to this tree because this was his only claim in the Garden. Therefore, it was only at this tree that he could influence Adam and Eve. But God gave him a platform side by side with His own Tree of Life—and this says much about God.

Jesus gave a good example of equal access in the parable of the wheat and the tares. His interpretation of this parable is that the wheat and tares represent true and false believers who grow side by side. But there is something more here—we can amplify this principle and apply it to truth and error. Notice the following regarding words:

“He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man.... The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.”

The good seed represents those who are born of the word of God, the truth. The tares represent a class who are the fruit or embodiment of **error, of false principles**. “The enemy that sowed them is the devil.” Neither God nor His angels ever sowed a seed that would produce a tare. **The tares are always sown by Satan, the enemy of God and man** {COL 70.3, emphasis added}.

In this parable, we see a God who allows the enemy to “plant” his followers alongside the true followers of God until their fruit is ripened. When the fruit is ripe, the fruit itself will be sufficient evidence as to which is true and which is false. The false children of the kingdom operate by iniquity, by the “false principles” Lucifer introduced and which transformed him into a violent being.

Would God allow truth and falsehood to grow side by side? Isn't it a fact that truth and falsehood have grown side by side throughout history? The difference between truth and error has been almost indistinguishable, so much so that the serpent deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9) with the error of his principles. Thus, it will be only when we become *mature* that we will be able to discern between them — to know them for what they are, which according to the parable will be at the end of the world.

Not even the Bible is immune to this principle of equal access—the Bible also contains truth and falsehood about God's *character*. This freedom is inspired of God, and through it we can have a complete picture, a faithful *account*, of the great controversy. Paul's admonition to Timothy regarding the Scriptures attest to this:

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:14-16).

Notice that “the Holy Scriptures are able to make” us “wise for salvation *through faith which is in Jesus Christ*.” Christ teaches us how to recognize error and the truth. How does He do it? By giving us the truth about God's character. Without the truth given to us by Jesus Christ we would be forever inside the maze of Satan's lies from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Christ gives us the knowledge of the Tree of Life.

God did not sanitize the historical record found in the Scriptures. He inspired the writers to pen down things as they were. He also did not prevent Satan from infiltrating lies in there about His character. He did not prevent Satan from influencing human minds either. Elijah, Moses,

David... etc... they all shed blood in the name of God. But Jesus comes along and tells the disciples, who want to follow their murderous example, that they don't know what manner of spirit they have by wanting to do that. The spirit He was referring to, was of course, the spirit of Satan:

Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village (Luke 9:51-56).

This is why Jesus came to earth. Only He gives the world the absolute truth about the character God, and this, the character of God, is the focus of the entire controversy. This is the most important piece of knowledge we must acquire, because it is in the knowledge of God that there is salvation for everyone, without exception. Thus, only Jesus' revelation of the Father is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), and no one can come to this revelation except through Him.

But while we may discard the Old Testament's view of the character of God, we do not discard the Old Testament, or claim it to be uninspired—it too is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." It is through wrestling with the Old Testament that we come to Jesus, and they are the texts which testify of Him (John 5:39), the *corner stone* of our knowledge and understanding about the Father..

The equal access God provides in the Bible is mind-boggling. Each one of us can come to the Bible and choose our own conclusions. Even the Hebrew language provides this freedom of choice, because many Hebrew words can mean two opposite things. This means translators can choose a meaning that is according to their belief system. For instance, take the verse that says:

I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things' (Isaiah 45:7).

The word "create" before the words "darkness" and "calamity" is the same word—*bara*; this word means "to create," but it also means "to cut down." If we rewrote the verse with this new meaning, the text changes considerably:

"I form the light and cut down darkness, I make peace and cut

down calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things.’

As one who believes that God is not at all involved in the works of darkness, we choose to believe that this second translation is more accurate. How can we get confirmation? From Jesus Christ—the Lord cuts down darkness and calamity with the sword of the Spirit, Jesus Christ, who is the truth about God, and whose “sword,” His *word*, comes out of His mouth (Revelation 19:15).

Isn’t it interesting that the harvest is only at the end of the world? Why do you think that is? Could it be because the spiritual “latter rain,” the “rain” absolutely necessary for the fruit to ripen just before harvest, will be poured out only at the end of the world? The latter rain will be God’s last message of hope to a world entrenched in iniquity—a world steeped in Satan’s moral law. The truth about God will be given to such an extent that it will cause both principles to ripen.

Daniel spoke of this when he said in chapter 12:

“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase....” And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand” (Daniel 12:4, 9-10).

The lies are so deceptive that only those who have the wisdom of God will discern them; at harvest however, the lies will be destroyed. Until then, Lucifer’s false “wisdom” will seem so close to the truth, appear so logical, that we are told “if possible even the elect” would be deceived, (Matthew 24:24). Only by looking at the truth can we distinguish error. We must know the truth and let it set us free or we will succumb to Satan’s deceptions. The fundamental truth that Jesus came to give us has to do with the true knowledge of the character of God:

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3).

It is the darkness of **misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted.** At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth** {COL 415.3, emphasis added}.

Knowledge of the truth and the lies, the wheat and the tares, will grow exponentially in the last days. This is only possible because under God’s law of *agape* love there is equal access to Himself as well as to Satan.

IMPARTIALITY

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe (Deuteronomy 10:17).

Now therefore, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes” (2 Chronicles 19:7).

Yet He is not partial to princes, nor does He regard the rich more than the poor; For they are all the work of His hands (Job 34:19).

For there is no partiality with God (Romans 2:11).

...but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors (James 2:9).

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy (James 3:17).

Another aspect of God's *agape* love is impartiality. Impartiality places every single human being on the same level. This can go two ways—it is a double edged sword. How?

First, God sees each of us through the prism of His love. Through *agape* He sees us all as objects of His love and care, whether we are good or bad. There is no ladder of importance or hierarchy of worth with Him. We are all important and worthy to Him. He invites both the “good” and the “evil” to His wedding supper.

The other side of the coin is that God will allow everyone who has knowingly and willingly chosen Satan's ways to suffer the consequences of *his* kingdom. God cannot arbitrarily save us even if we try to bribe Him. Nothing will dissuade Him from allowing us to reap the consequences of our actions, because He will never subvert our freedom of choice. God will continually ask us, till the last moment, to turn from iniquity, but if we refuse to do it, He will allow us to go into the death domain that we have chosen.

The focal point of Jesus' message is that to become sons of our Father in Heaven we must know that “He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good,

and sends rain on the just and the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). This is God’s impartiality. This is His “perfection”—His “entireness.” He is not partial—good to some and evil to others, as we human beings are. He is good to all—good to the “good” and to the “evil,” good to the “just” and the “unjust.” God’s inner character is “entire” and not “divided”—unchanging—thus He is impartial.

God’s goodness respects our choices. As such, He also allows us to suffer the consequences of our choices. The distorted thinking that God does not allow people to reap what they have sown is a major problem. This is made clear in the history of Israel:

The history of Israel was to be placed on record for the instruction and warning of coming generations. Men of all future time must see the God of heaven as an impartial ruler, in no case justifying sin. But few realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Men flatter themselves that God is too good to punish the transgressor. But in the light of Bible history it is evident that God’s goodness and His love engage Him to deal with sin as an evil fatal to the peace and happiness of the universe {PP 420.2}.

We will be able to understand this statement a little better as we reach the end of this book. God’s so-called “punishment” really entails Him letting go of those who reject Him. “Letting go” means giving us up to be entirely ruled by the accuser, the Destroyer, who is Satan. “Letting go” means God respects our freedom of choice; He cannot force us to live by His principles, which bring peace, love, happiness and joy.

To God, no man is common or unclean. Peter’s words to Cornelius reveal God’s impartiality towards all: “God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean,” Acts 10:29. In a vision, God showed Peter the principle of impartiality:

The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise Peter, kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common’ (Acts 10:9-15).

Peter was so ingrained in a false knowledge of God’s character that this message had to be repeated three times: “This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again” (Acts 10:16).

Yet even after this dream, Peter still did not completely under-

stand what Jesus meant when He said that God “makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.” The proof is that later on Peter entered into controversy with Paul regarding ritual purification requirements for Gentiles.

Peter’s dream was given to teach us that God shows no partiality between Jews and Gentiles. Jews represent those who profess to follow God, and Gentiles those who do not. Peter’s dream revealed that God treats those who live outside His principles with the same benevolence that He treats those that follow Him. God’s love for each of us is beyond what we can imagine. His main objective is to save all of us. But He never uses force, coercion or destruction towards anyone in order to achieve this goal. To say that He destroys some to save others goes against His principle of impartiality.

By adopting His ways, God’s followers glorify the true God of the universe. Those who reject the God of *agape* love are free to choose how they want to worship Him because He will not annihilate them for not conforming to His ways. Were He a God that mixes love with force, they would be in trouble. And yet they are in trouble; because by choosing violence, they position themselves under the jurisdiction of the Destroyer, (Satan, according to Revelation 9:11) and under *him* they will suffer a most violent end.

Consider this verse one more time:

Now therefore, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes” (2 Chronicles 19:7).

And this one:

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe (Deuteronomy 10:17).

Did you notice how iniquity is related to “taking of bribes?” We will talk more about this in the next chapter.



12

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

The track of truth lies close beside the track of error, and both tracks may seem to be one to minds which are not worked by the Holy Spirit, and which, therefore, are not quick to discern the difference between truth and error {ISM 202.2}.

Christ is the “Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). As through Christ every human being has life, so also through Him every soul receives some ray of divine light. Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart. **But against these principles there is struggling an antagonistic power. The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man’s experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist.** To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Cooperation with that power is man’s greatest need {RC 106.5, emphasis added}.

We have finally arrived at the place where we will discuss in greater detail the principle Lucifer devised when he went against God’s law of *agape* love. We will address this law by various names, including iniquity, the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the moral law of Good and Evil, or just Good and Evil.

The Bible doesn’t come right out and say exactly what Lucifer’s issue was at the beginning of his rebellion. The puzzle must be assembled one piece at a time. Nuggets of truth have to be mined from the Bible, as described by the prophet Isaiah:

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand

doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little (Isaiah 28:9-10, KJV).

“Knowledge” and “doctrine” are understood by “them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts,” and are to be mined “precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.” What is “solid food,” and how does one become “weaned from the milk”?

The writer of Hebrews states that to be “weaned from the milk” is to become spiritually mature:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:12-14).

According to this verse, becoming spiritually mature has to do with discerning “both good and evil.” How hard is it to discern good and evil? Don’t we all know the difference between the two? Doesn’t even a child? Apparently not; because according to Paul, discerning “both good and evil” is what constitutes spiritual maturity—“solid food” for “those who are full of age.” Furthermore it is implied in this text that maturity means to be skilled in the “word of righteousness,” as opposed to being skilled in iniquity.

Then what did Paul mean by the words “discerning both good and evil?” How do we discern them? Was he talking about the Good and the Evil of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? If so, we can run into some problems... because the Tree of Life is good—no one can dispute that. But the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil has to be evil since it causes death. It is poison—God said so. And yet, this Tree has Good in it too... doesn’t it?

If the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil causes death, then the Good of this Tree has to be a component of that poison. As such, can it be good? The answer is no, it can’t.

It is simple, then: the Tree of Life is good (“there is no one good but God,” Matthew 19:17) and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is evil (“the day that you eat of it you shall surely die,” Genesis 2:17). This is essentially what Moses says in Deuteronomy:

“See, I have set before you today **life and good, death and evil...**” (Deuteronomy 30:15, emphasis added).

Jesus' warning we read earlier about false prophets can help us to understand this further. He said:

Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them (Matthew 7:17-20).

A Tree that causes death is a “bad tree.” Therefore, it cannot “bear good fruit” in spite of all appearances. Remember the false prophets—they came in sheep’s clothing but were really ravening wolves. And the Scribes and Pharisees had a beautiful façade, but inside were full of death:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed **appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness** (Matthew 23:27, emphasis added).

Lucifer’s proposed changes to the law of God could not have been good, by the sheer fact that they deviated from the perfect law of life and as a result caused death:

Since “the law of the Lord is perfect,” every variation from it must be evil. Those who disobey the commandments of God, and teach others to do so, are condemned by Christ. The Saviour’s life of obedience maintained the claims of the law, and showed the excellence of character that obedience would develop. All who obey as He did, are likewise declaring that the law is “holy, and just, and good” {ST March 29, 1910, par. 11, emphasis added}.

Satan’s law is a “variation” of God’s law; thus it is evil. His law cannot have any true good in it. Spiritual maturity, therefore, is being able to discern between these two Trees. One is life—good; the other is death—evil (Deuteronomy 30:15).

Here is the problem. We have all been trapped inside the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We have looked at its Good thinking that it is of God. We must think outside of this Tree in order to see what true good is — we must look to the Tree of Life. Then we will be able to “discern both good and evil.” And the only person that can show us the Tree of Life is Jesus Christ.

The two Trees in the middle of the Garden of Eden represented the two principles “contending for supremacy” in our hearts. Consider this quote again:

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God’s original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the **two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation.** He should see how this

controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals **the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives**; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found {Ed 190.2, emphasis added}.

These are profound words. They place the controversy over these two principles directly into each of our lives—*every act of life* “reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives.” And “whether we will or not,” we are “even now deciding upon which side of the controversy” we “will be found.” Spiritual maturity is being able to discern between these “two antagonistic principles.”

This is easier said than done, because the moral law of Good and Evil is very deceptive—so deceptive that it is hard for us to grasp its wickedness. It stands on a very high deceptive *moral* ground. Furthermore, as fallen human beings, our moral identity is completely in *harmony* with it. This is why, after Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, God said that He would put enmity between the serpent and the woman.

And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

Why would God have put enmity between the serpent and the woman? The answer can only be because there was complete *sympathy* between the two from the moment Eve ate of his Tree. “Enmity” would come through the woman’s “Seed,” another metaphor referring to Jesus Christ.

In the sentence pronounced on Satan in the garden, the Lord declared, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15. **This was a promise that the power of the great adversary would finally be broken.** Adam and Eve stood as criminals before the righteous Judge, but before they heard of the toil and sorrow which must be their portion or that they must return to dust, they listened to words that could not fail to give them hope. They could look forward to final victory {EP 33.1, emphasis added}.

Jesus was the “Seed” that would bruise Satan’s head:

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Unless we look to Jesus as the only true model of righteousness, we cannot see the deceptive nature of Satan’s law. In fact, what we often believe

to be “truth” in terms of human morality turns out to be false and part of the rebel’s law. For this reason, many of us cannot accept the real truth when it is given to us, and sadly turn away from the true God.

The prophet Isaiah describes the human condition under the moral law of Good and Evil:

Alas, sinful nation,
 A people laden with iniquity,
 A brood of evildoers,
 Children who are corrupters!
 They have forsaken the Lord,
 They have provoked to anger
 The Holy One of Israel,
 They have turned away backward.

Why should you be stricken again?
 You will revolt more and more.
 The whole head is sick,
 And the whole heart faints.
 From the sole of the foot even to the head,
 There is no soundness in it,
 But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores;
 They have not been closed or bound up,
 Or soothed with ointment (Isaiah 1:4-6).

And the apostle Paul states:

For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

As it is written:

“There is none righteous, no, not one;
 There is none who understands;
 There is none who seeks after God.
 They have all turned aside;
 They have together become unprofitable;
 There is none who does good, no, not one.”
 “Their throat is an open tomb;
 With their tongues they have practiced deceit”;
 “The poison of asps is under their lips”;
 “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”
 “Their feet are swift to shed blood;
 Destruction and misery are in their ways;
 And the way of peace they have not known.”
 “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:11-18).

This is not a pretty picture, and yet it is our reality—whether we like it or not, we are all described in the above verses. Why are we like this? Because of the moral law of sin which is our inner compass. “The poison of asps,” the serpent’s principles, are “under” our “lips.” “Destruction and misery” are in our ways of thinking, which are ordered by Satan’s moral law. “The way of peace,” that is, God’s law of *agape* love, we “have not known.”

However, we need not lose hope because God is able to get us out of this pit of darkness where we are gasping for air at the moment. But our minds must be turned completely upside down before this can happen. This is the “repentance” God is seeking for in us. This is *metanoia*—a complete change of mind, a reversal of our way of thinking. This is being “born again,” this is the “new man.”

Since Lucifer has so deceived us, to the point that we are in agreement with him, we must be able to first see his deceptions before we can reject them. Our hearts must be melted by God’s love. And we must daily commune with that “Vine” that gives us light and truth so that we don’t walk back into darkness again.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going” (John 12:35).

We will begin to understand Good and Evil when we realize the foundational reason for Lucifer’s rebellion against God’s law. We already know that Lucifer considered God’s law weak and foolish. But why did he think that?

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God’s favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner {DA 761.4, emphasis added}.

These words are filled with meaning. “The opening of the great controversy” mentioned here parallels Ezekiel’s statement, “You were perfect in your ways till iniquity was found in you.” Both statements are a reference to the beginning of

Satan's rebellion against the law of love. If we put these passages together, we see that the "iniquity" that was "found in" Lucifer at the "opening of the great controversy" was a new concept of "justice:" the idea that "every sin must meet its punishment." This was his foundational reason for rising up against God in the "opening of the great controversy," the very beginning of his rebellion.

Isn't this a correct description of our moral make up? When we hear of crimes in the news, don't we believe that the perpetrators must be punished accordingly, in proportion to their crime? We even have some expressions that describe this sentiment—"they had it coming to them," or "they deserve every bit of it."

Lucifer's announcement that justice is "inconsistent with mercy" reveals a new way of thinking about "justice"—*his* way, not God's. Mercy is God's justice—this is the foundation of His throne. In the tabernacle, the law was covered by the mercy seat, where the two covering cherubs sat. The mercy seat (a throne) is a symbol of God's kingdom of mercy—mercy being the foundation of His law.

"In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and **seeking justice and hastening righteousness**" (Isaiah 16:5, emphasis added).

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face (Psalm 89:14, emphasis added).

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies (Psalm 25:10, emphasis added).

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; **But he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him** (Psalm 32:10, emphasis added).

But You, O Lord, are **a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth** (Psalm 86:15, emphasis added).

For I have said, "**Mercy shall be built up forever;** Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens" (Psalm 89:2, emphasis added).

Lucifer claimed that the flaw, the weak point in God's law of love was its lack of arbitrary punishment. He argued that *agape* love was doomed for failure without punishment—it was weak, inefficient and foolish. Ironically, it was precisely because there was no inherent punishment in God's law that Lucifer himself had the freedom to bring in his law without having to fear punishment or destruction from God.

But Satan's law is not just about punishment; if this were the case, it is highly doubtful that he would have managed to draw one third of the angels to his side. The symbol that helps us understand his moral law, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, was not called the Tree of Evil but the Tree of the Knowledge of Good *and* Evil—two opposites. This is a subtle but extremely significant nuance because it is through this mingling, this mixture of Good and Evil, that Satan has managed to deceive us so thoroughly.

To claim that there is any good in the Devil might look like absolute blasphemy to some. The natural human mind cannot conceive such a thing, and rightly so. But Lucifer's law does have a side that *appears* to be Good.

We all know what he stands for. He is the Devil, after all; pure evil. It seems absurd to propose that any form of Good, even arbitrary, can originate from him. One assumes that everything about him is wickedness—and ultimately this is true. So how are we to understand this Good? Is it good, or is it evil?

When God said to Adam, "of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die," God declared that both the Good and the Evil embedded in this Tree are part of a death principle. Thus, this is a false Good because it also, along with its Evil counterpart, causes death. There is no true goodness here, even though Satan would like us to think so.

Satan is God's antagonist; therefore, he and anything that comes from him has to be totally opposite to God and His principle of *agape* love. The moral law of Good and Evil has to be entirely opposed to God's Tree of Life principle—this is foundational. Furthermore, even though Lucifer's morality is comprised of what appears to be two principles, it is really just one principle. It is a single, coalesced, and corrupt principle.

By using one tree to represent this principle, God indicated that this law of contrary ideas represents one principle composed of two contrasting sides. Good and Evil is a single principle but it is not *unitary*; it is *dualistic*—it is a *hybrid* principle. The two work together and cannot be separated.

Superficially, then, the Good and the Evil of Satan's law appear to be opposites, but intrinsically they both result in destruction and death; this makes them both evil. In the context of this law, Good and Evil are two sides of the same coin and they are both violent because they are what filled Lucifer with "violence within."

The Good in the principle of Good and Evil is a kind of love—but this "love" is entirely antithetical to God's unconditional *agape* love. Ultimately, this is why this "love" cannot be good at all, since it is completely

opposite to the true, unconditional goodness of the Tree of Life.

Satan has wrought with deceiving power, bringing in a multiplicity of errors that obscure the truth. **Error cannot stand alone, and would soon become extinct if it did not fasten itself like a parasite upon the tree of truth. Error draws its life from the truth of God.** The traditions of men, like floating germs, attach themselves to the truth of God, and men regard them as a part of the truth. Through false doctrines, Satan gains a foothold, and captivates the minds of men, causing them to hold theories that have no foundation in truth. Men boldly teach for doctrines the commandments of men; and as traditions pass on, from age to age, they acquire a power over human mind. But age does not make error truth, neither does its burdensome weight cause the plant of truth to become a parasite. **The tree of truth bears its own genuine fruit, showing its true origin and nature. The parasite of error also bears its own fruit, and makes manifest that its character is diverse from the plant of heavenly origin** {Ev 589.1, emphasis added}.

To persons of culture and refinement the prince of darkness presents spiritualism in its more refined and intellectual aspects. **He delights the fancy with enrapturing scenes and eloquent portrayals of love and charity.** He leads men to take so great pride in their own wisdom that in their hearts they despise the Eternal One {HF 339.3, emphasis added}.

Lucifer fastened on to the concept of beneficence—drawing “life from the truth of God.” But “the parasite of error also bears its own fruit, and makes manifest that its character is diverse from the plant of heavenly origin.”

The “fruit” Satan’s Good bears, is death. But how is his Good, his version of beneficence, expressed through his law? Satan devised a *bribe* system—a system of rewards. We saw in the last chapter how the “taking of bribes” is a part of iniquity—well, here it is. Iniquity is comprised of a bribe system as well as a punishment system. In broad strokes, this is what the Knowledge of Good and Evil means.

Punishment is Satan’s version of “justice.” Punishment is the Evil side of Good and Evil. Reward and punishment are the primary distinguishing features of his law. To be more precise, these features are arbitrary rewards for doing Good and arbitrary punishments for doing Evil. As mentioned above, punishment was the original reason for Satan’s rebellion—he believed *agape* was “faulty” because it did not include any form of punishment, and so he urged that “every sin must meet its punishment.”

The Knowledge of Good and Evil uses arbitrary rewards and punishment as *incentives*. This is Lucifer’s wisdom. These positive and negative incentives have one goal: to generate order, to promote good behavior. The Good and the Evil arms of this law are somewhat akin to the good cop/bad cop idea. They are opposite methods or means to achieve one common goal—order. Lucifer was competing with God for a system of *universal order*.

His ideas were highly organized and systematic—not some shabby or weak claim such as lawlessness or pride. These were there, no doubt, but must be understood as coming out of his dualistic moral law. His principle was so logical that one third of intelligent angels wholeheartedly bought into it. Who would ever run a political campaign with lawlessness or pride as their main ticket, and who would ever vote for such a platform?

Both reward and punishment are *external* motivations arbitrarily *imposed* upon us. As such they are violent methods of behavior control. They remove our freedom of will and damage our relationships. They create selfishness, fear, pride and alienation. They especially damage our relationship with God because this law has made us believe that it is He who arbitrarily rewards and punishes us.

He [SATAN] will **favor and prosper some** in order to further his own designs, and he will **bring trouble upon others** and **lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them** {GC 589.2, emphasis added}.

Satan's lies from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil cause us to be afraid of God, and as a result we run away from Him who is the only source of all love, joy, and life. In essence, reward and punishment is nothing more than Pavlovian conditioning—this is not God's *modus operandi*. This type of conditioning dehumanizes us and removes our true identity as free sons and daughters of God.

Duality—*opposing* duality—is Satan's key signature. Dual snakes are prevalent in many cultures and are a reflection of this. The American Medical Association logo is a good example. It is made of two snakes—they represent the serpent's Knowledge of Good and Evil. The angel wings at the top of the logo, above the serpents, add another link to the fallen *angel*, who is a “bird,” a “dragon.” The drugs used in modern medicine are Good and Evil—they may bring healing but at the same time also cause harmful side effects. Duality is seen even in the serpent's anatomy; the serpent has a forked tongue—is this a coincidence?

In the Book of Job, leviathan, a symbol of Satan, is portrayed as having a “double bridle:”

Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?... I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion...Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his **double bridle** (Job 41:1, 11, 13 KJV, emphasis added)?

A “bridle” is an instrument used to direct a horse. The “double bridle” Satan uses to *direct* the human mind is his moral law of reward and punishment—a Dyad. A Dyad is one thing that consists of two *opposed* elements. Interestingly, the horse is a biblical metaphor for the church. How often have religionists in general

been directed by Satan's "double bridle," thinking they are being led by God?

Jesus doesn't use a bridle to direct us. He *yokes* us together with Him—we walk side by side in close relationship. His "yoke is easy" (Matthew 11:30), because His yoke is His law of *agape* love, mercy, and grace.

All of this gives us a new understanding into the perfection Lucifer had before iniquity was found in him. Remember that prior to sinning he was "entire"—he had an *undivided* character. *Agape* had made him *tâmym*, perfect, morally entire, whole, complete, full, morally undefiled, without blemish or spot, upright, a being full of integrity and truth. Iniquity, with its mixture of Good and Evil, caused him to develop a dual, split personality. He became the opposite of *tâmym*: divided, partial, fractured, dual, volatile, confused, confusing and violent; he became accusing and condemnatory.

Because iniquity is divided into Good and Evil, it turned Lucifer into a two-faced character—a hypocrite, a false character. It transformed him into a Jekyll and Hyde. Now Lucifer crosses easily back and forth between Good and Evil depending on what circumstance demands. This means he has an *apparent* Good side and an Evil side; but we must always keep in mind that his Good is still evil, because it is not *agape*.

God's Tree of Life has no such *duality*—it is *singleness* (Greek *haplotes*), a unitary, unchanging principle of love. It is a Monad, referring to the number one. Jesus' prominent character trait is this singleness—the one thing Satan deceived Eve about. This sheds greater meaning onto "the first of all the commandments," as quoted by Jesus:

The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is **one** Lord (Mark 12:29, emphasis added).

Jesus was quoting Moses, who had said:

"Hear, O Israel: '**The Lord our God, the Lord is one**' (Deuteronomy 6:4, emphasis added).

The number one here—*echad* in Hebrew—refers to God's singleness, His unchanging character. This is "the first of all the commandments" because it can help us distinguish the true God from all the false gods of this world who have a dual character of Good and Evil.



13

PUNISHMENT AND
REWARD

PUNISHMENT

We will not provide a full explanation of the reward and punishment system of Satan here in this book; rather, we will direct the reader to our first book, *God on Trial: How God Has Been Demonized*. There, the mechanics and workings of this system have already been explained in great detail.

Punishment is the right arm of Lucifer's moral law. Punishment is overtly violent. Satan cannot sustain order without arbitrary punishment, and arbitrary punishment cannot exist without violence.

The idea of punishment as a means of *keeping order* was a reaction against *agape* love—a rejection of unconditional love, mercy and forgiveness; Satan believed these were too weak to keep order. He also saw punishment both as a *deterrent* and as a *teaching* tool—albeit a violent one.

Punishment can take several different forms, but by nature it is *always* violent. It may be expressed as threats, or through verbal or physical, corporal violence. Or it may be doled out through ostracism, the imposition of penalties, sanctions, demotions or shaming. There are all sorts of negative “corrective” methods Satan uses to bring about “positive” behavioral change in his subjects. As active members of his system, all we need do is look at ourselves to see how it has been used *on* us or *by* us.

Physical punishment is the most visible form of violence—the death penalty be-

ing the most drastic. Subtler forms, called *passive aggression*, may appear peaceful but are just as damaging and lethal as overt force. Violence may come in the form of rejection, silent treatment, backbiting, gossiping, character assassination, lying, stealing, emotional and psychological abuse, etc. . . . And all of these may be used with various gradations and/or combinations of the preceding methods as well.

Whatever they are, Satan's punitive measures are cruel, unkind, aggressive and damaging to human beings. This is how he has destroyed "his sanctuaries," "his" people. And when we ourselves use his destructive methods, we not only hurt others but ourselves too, because using cruelty makes us do evil acts.

Punishment is completely outside of God's vocabulary, because God is merciful—He forgives *ad infinitum*. God's teaching ways are always ways of righteousness. This means that they are always non-violent, because violence is an intrinsic part of "iniquity," which arose in Lucifer.

Many parents punish their children because they believe the Bible promotes child punishment. This belief is based on the common saying "spare the rod and spoil the child." This is not a literal biblical phrase, but is based on a saying taken from the Book of Proverbs:

He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly (Proverbs 13:24).

Unfortunately, most parents have misunderstood what the biblical meaning of the rod means and as a result they use various forms of physical punishment to force their children towards good behavior. The rod was an instrument used by the good shepherd to *guide* the sheep—not to *hurt* them in any way. The rod here is the same rod spoken of in Psalm 2:9 and Revelation 2:26-27. In each of these passages the "rod of iron" refers to the unbreakable nature of God's eternal law of love as revealed by Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He never used a literal rod to punish anyone.

What are we really doing every time we use violence against a child? We are teaching him/her that violence is the best way to solve a problem. Ultimately, we are teaching our children to be violent. What is the alternative, you may ask? God's way is the better option. How does God teach? He teaches us by showing cause and effect. We need to sit with our children and reason with them, show them what would happen if they chose a certain course of action. Show them the consequences of their negative behavior; pray with them and for them. If they persist in going in the wrong direction, we must allow them to reap the consequences of their actions. These are broad principles that can be used at all ages. We must respect our children and their freedom of choice.

This is how God deals with us—He warns us, and then allows us to

choose which path to take. And He always allows us to reap what we have sown. If He didn't, He would be violating our freedom. But if we turn back to God and His ways, He accepts us unconditionally and heals us.

There is absolutely no violence in *agape* love. Any violation of God's law of love is violence. That's why James could say that if we break one commandment, we break them all. If in any way we violate God's law of love in the horizontal dimension, that is, towards a human being, we are guilty of violence, even if it doesn't appear so. Any time we harm someone, we are being violent towards him or her. Stealing is violence. Adultery is violence. The same applies if we deal with our parents in evil and unfair ways. Killing, destroying life, in whatever form, bearing false witness, and coveting—all this is violence. Since all these things are hurting or destroying someone, they are therefore inherently violent.

When we stop using Satan's reward and punishment methods and start using God's unconditional love principle, then we cease inflicting physical, psychological and emotional violence onto others. Instead, their well-being becomes our concern and we care about their welfare even at the expense of our own. That is Jesus' example.

There is no punishment in God's system of unconditional love. As long as one remains under His law of love, there is no punishment from within it. If we remove ourselves from the protection of God's *agape* love then, by default, we become subjects of Satan's kingdom. Then from within the realm of the Knowledge of Good and Evil we are subjected to punishment. Satan makes us think that it is God who is punishing us, but that is not the case.

One of Satan's greatest deceptions is to use violence in the name of good—the idea that violence is a necessity in producing good results. The concept of “just war,” for instance, falls into this category. Machiavelli's book, *The Prince*, explains very well Satan's mentality of the necessity of control and violence in government.

REWARD

The Good arm of Lucifer's law of Good and Evil is the reward system. Just like punishment, his kingdom could not survive without the reward element of his law.

Lucifer opposed the Creator's *unconditional* love principle of government because he believed that goodness should be *conditional* and based on the goodness of the recipient. Thus he created a conditional *merit system*, a balance between *virtue* and *vice*. The Good of Good and Evil is

a conditional Good that changes according to circumstances. A person whose character is driven by the moral law of Good and Evil is unstable—he or she varies according to the conditions of others.

The Good of Satan's Tree is a counterfeit of *agape* love—it is a *tare*. It is a false love because it is conditional—subject to change in any given situation—and arbitrary—subject to one's discretion or whims. The love based on this Tree is passing, impermanent, changeable and may turn at any moment from love to hate. This Good promotes selfishness since it is based on rewards. This is the reason for the egocentric, self-oriented human heart, which seeks the best results for itself, looking to maximize its selfish benefits even at the expense of others. This reward system is also to blame for Lucifer's pride as we shall see.

Satan has clothed himself with a robe of light in order to better deceive. He offers arbitrary rewards, incentives, prizes, and even grants wishes in order to keep people orderly. His system dangles a carrot stick before our eyes in order to motivate us to be good. For this reason, our goodness falls completely short of true goodness. We do Good because we desire a reward, not because we are inherently good. We are conditioned to behave well so that we may earn a candy bar.

How often do we do Good things with ulterior, selfish motives? How often do we stop ourselves from doing something good because there is no gain in it? How often do we befriend others because they fulfill our needs, or have something that we want such as fame, money or status? Even weighty decisions, like marriage, are often done from a selfish perspective. What about the façades we put on, when inside us lurks some selfish agenda, of which, often, we are even unaware?

Satan's reward system also promotes pride. It does so by maximizing the exposure of Good works, so as to influence us to do Good things. This system honors the doer of Good works, not only with arbitrary rewards but also with arbitrary recognition and arbitrary acceptance. The *virtuous* are applauded by the entire world, which marvels at their magnanimity. And those watching become envious and covet the same attention. Some are motivated to achieve as much as their idols, and do not cease to labor until they too become the center of attention and recognition.

The selfish human psyche desires recognition and applause and goes to great lengths to satisfy its need to rise and distinguish itself above others. This condition exists because of the law of Good and Evil. It is *this* system of arbitrary rewards that promotes an environment of competition, pride and self-exaltation. So now it is easy to see how Lucifer's pride came into being at the beginning; his own system filled him with pride.

This is also why volunteering and donating to charities and worthy causes has

become such a popular thing. Many universities will not even consider an applicant that has not put in hours of charitable service. There is nothing wrong with charitable service—the motive, however, is what renders it either Good or *agape*. Are we charitable for selfish reasons, or out of a real love and concern for the downtrodden? The ultimate form of selfishness is that of seeking the maximum rewards possible—even if these rewards are simply recognition and applause.

When we operate by Satan's Good, we might not do any overt harm to anyone, but if push came to shove, when confronted with danger, we would seek our own protection above others. We would also most likely use any violent means necessary to achieve it. *Self* becomes the most important thing, and others' plights are not our concern.

When we buy into the moral law of Good and Evil we always judge our success in comparison to others. We become extremely conscious of our position in the ladder of success, and will do anything to rise to the top, even if at the cost of others. Self becomes our entire focus, and in our own view, we are always good, and anyone who threatens us is evil. We may mask and hide our true selfish ambitions by doing "Good" works but we nevertheless remain self-oriented. The more rewards we acquire, the greater our own value rises in our esteem. This system of reward creates all the hierarchical ladders in the world. Pride, self-exaltation, self-seeking, competition, coveting and envy—all arise out of this hierarchy system embedded in the law of Good and Evil.

It is easy to understand how chaos, destruction and death result from Evil, but how do they result from Good? They do, when Good is motivated by selfishness. By teaming up with Evil, this Good is not good at all. The Good present in Good and Evil is antithetical to the very essence of God's *agape* love.

God is selfless—His love is pure, unmixed with selfish motives. He will not hesitate to even give up His life—His eternal life—for us. We on the other hand, would easily kill someone in order to get what we want. We would easily step over someone's head in order to secure a coveted position. Without a second thought, we can selfishly cause horrible destruction in the name of something good. Thus the Good of Good and Evil is as incompatible and irreconcilable to God as its counterpart, Evil, is.



14

VIOLENCE

Lucifer was filled with violence *within* because his law of iniquity is violent. Iniquity depends on violence and force, because it is arbitrarily enforced upon us; we have no choice in the matter. It is also violent because of the new foreign concept Lucifer introduced in the universe—punishment. Since iniquity does not function by the power of love, its only alternative is to use force through rewards and punishments. Consider the following quote:

The principles of the character of God were the foundation of the education constantly kept before the heavenly angels. These principles were goodness, mercy, and love. Self-evidencing light was to be recognized and **freely accepted** by all who occupied positions of trust and power. They must accept God's principles, and, through the presentation of truth and righteousness, convince all who were in his service. This was the only power to be used. **Force must never come in.** All who thought that their position gave them power to command their fellow beings, and control conscience, must be deprived of their position; for **this is not God's plan** (RH, September 7, 1897 par. 8, emphasis added).

Satan was in a position of power, and as a light-bearer, he used to present truth and righteousness *without* force. But at some point he started believing that enforcement and control were necessary. Thus he devised his dualistic system of reward and punishment. Being the enforcer of this new moral system, Satan became a dictator, and as a result he became “filled with violence within.” This explains why his throne has absolutely no fellowship with God (Psalm 94:20), who rules by *agape* love, mercy, freedom, righteousness and goodness.

If Jesus is the final authority on the character of God, and according to the Bible He is, then there is no violence in God. Isaiah tells us plainly that, regard-

less of appearances (as in the cleansing of the temple and the cursing of the fig tree), Jesus had *absolutely no violence in Him*:

And they made His grave with the wicked— but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth (Isaiah 53:9).

“Iniquity” makes us miss the mark completely in regards to God’s character because it makes us think that God operates by the confusing duality of Good and Evil. The Knowledge of Good and Evil has twisted our minds to believe that God uses violence and force through arbitrary reward and punishment, in order to lead, control and correct us.

Satan’s violent system was a reaction to God’s nonviolence; it was a repudiation of God’s nonviolent law of love. He became filled with violence within, because he believed force was necessary in order for *harmony* and *stability* to exist.

From Satan’s perspective, unconditional love was weak, impractical, inoperative and unrealistic, especially when faced with evil. He did not believe that love was strong enough to keep things in a state of *order*. He could very well have looked at his own situation and said to God, “Your law of love may work in a perfect world, but now that I have introduced a system contrary to Yours, what will Your law of love do? How are you going to deal with someone like me, without using force?”

But God is against violence—He completely rejects it. And if we look beneath the surface, we will see that this is true throughout the Bible. Let’s look at a few examples. The Bible says that the antediluvians were corrupt and filled with violence.

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was **filled with violence** (Genesis 6:11, emphasis added).

According to Strong’s Dictionary, the word “corrupt”—*Shâchath*—means “decay, ruin, destruction, perish, spill, spoiler, make utterly waste.”

This is a description of violence. Biblically speaking, then, corruption is equivalent to violence. It was violence that corrupted the people who lived before the flood. Satan “corrupted his wisdom”—the pure *agape* love he had—because he invented violence. Thus if we go back to the previous statement which says that Lucifer’s traffick was “an emblem of corrupt administration” we will understand that the word “corrupt” here is equivalent to the word “violent”—“traffick” is an emblem of a *violent* administration. {4BC 1163.7} And we must not forget that the serpent *corrupted* Eve’s mind “from the simplicity of Jesus Christ”—from His singleness, His absolutely nonviolent character of *agape* love. Isaiah described the human race as a “sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are *corrupters* (Isaiah 1:4, emphasis added)!”

Look again at the following quote with this new meaning—violence—added to the word “corrupt:”

The principles of Satan’s working in heaven are the same principles by which he works through human agents in this world. It is through these **corrupting principles** [VIOLENT PRINCIPLES] that every earthly empire and the churches have been **increasingly corrupted** [BECOMING VIOLENT]. It is by the working out of these principles that Satan **deceives and corrupts the whole world from the beginning to the ending**. He is continuing this same policy-working, originally begun in the heavenly universe. **He is energizing the whole world with his violence with which he corrupted the world in the days of Noah** {4BC 1163.8, emphasis added}.

Notice also how other worlds viewed the flood:

The holy inhabitants of other worlds were watching with the deepest interest the events taking place on the earth. **In the condition of the world that existed before the Flood they saw illustrated 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.** In those high-handed sinners of the antediluvian world they saw the subjects over whom Satan held sway. The thoughts of men’s hearts were only evil continually. Genesis 6:5. Every emotion, every impulse and imagination, was at war with the divine principles of purity and peace and love. It was an example of the awful depravity resulting from Satan’s policy to remove from God’s creatures the restraint of His holy law {PP 78.4, emphasis added}.

“The condition of the world that existed before the Flood” was a result of “the administration which Lucifer had endeavored to establish in heaven, in rejecting the authority of Christ and casting aside the law of God.” What was the condition of the world before the flood? “The thoughts of men’s hearts were only evil continually.” By casting aside God’s nonviolent law of *agape* love and instituting his moral law of Good and Evil, Satan created a world filled with violence. This violence is what brought about the flood. How, specifically? We don’t know. But we know this: that the people living before the flood were physical and intellectual giants. They also lived close to a thousand years. Who knows what kinds of technologies they could have developed that could have brought about the flood?

As we look at our world today, we see enormous potential for destruction—all at the hands of mankind, who are influenced by Satan. We know that the earth will never be destroyed by water again—the conditions for that to happen are no longer in place. The canopy of water above, and the intricate subterranean irrigation system God had designed below—both were broken, causing the flood. But we know that the next *world-wide* destruction will be by fire, and we don’t need an “act of God” for that to happen. We have enough fire-power (created by human beings who have bought into Satan’s theory that violence is necessary for our own protection) to destroy the earth many times over.

Jesus predicted that our days—the last days—would be like the days of Noah. He said that the same conditions would exist: 1. Intemperance and 2. Chaotic human relations (multiple marriages, incest, adultery, promiscuity, gender confusion).

“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark” (Matthew 24:37-38).

This disintegration of the family social fabric which God had designed as a blessing to us was also evident before the flood:

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose (Genesis 6:1-2).

These two reasons, intemperance and the breakdown of the family, would cause our world to be filled with violence again—on a global scale. It is not hard to see how our own violence can destroy us.

But let's say that God did destroy the world through the flood. There are some enormous contradictions here. What was the reason for the flood according to the Bible? Wasn't it the fact that the people were violent *all the time*—continually?

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).

Does it make sense that God would use *mega* violence—the flood—many times more force than any human being is capable of, to punish the people for being violent? Is God a self-contradictory, illogical, irrational tyrant? How could He punish us for using something that He Himself uses on an exponentially grander scale? Some, in order to defend their position, would say that when God uses violence it is not violence, but mercy. What can one say against such an irrational argument?

Furthermore, what kind of solution was the flood? Does God use solutions that don't work? Did the flood really solve the problem of violence on the earth? We know it didn't; we know that violence and iniquity were again perpetuated on the earth *after* the flood, through the very people that were saved—only eight of them.

So what do we make of verses like this one:

The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth (Genesis 6:13).

What would happen if we looked at this in another way... Let's say God could *predict* that through violence mankind was somehow about to put in motion a worldwide catastrophe... Let's say He could see a leak here and there in the

amazing aqua system He Himself had designed...And let's say that He sat down and did some simple mathematical calculations in a fraction of a millisecond... after all, God is a genius... And let's say He could see that the beautiful and perfect planet He had created was reaching a *tipping point*...And let's assume God looked down here and when He looked at all the people on earth He picked one man who "feared" Him...One man who was open to hear God's "still small voice" and take it seriously. And God said to him: "Noah, build a boat because things are going to fall apart soon."

God tried to save as many people as possible through Noah. But only eight heeded the warning. God was trying to *save*, not *destroy*. He could see that in one hundred and twenty years the dam was literally going to break... But as with all that happened in the Old Testament, God received the blame for the destruction. Satan and his principles working through mankind did their work, and God received the blame.

But let's look at another example. We know that the story of the children of Israel leaving Egypt and entering Canaan is a type of leaving sin—Satan's principles—and entering the kingdom of God—God's principles. If we study the book of Hebrews' summation of what happened in the exodus we will learn that it was violence that disqualified the older generation of the children of Israel from entering into Canaan, the Promised Land. The writer says:

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God [THE GOD OF LIFE – TREE OF LIFE]; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion [THE EXODUS]." For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose **corpses fell in the wilderness**? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12-19, emphasis added).

Here we learn that those "whose corpses fell in the wilderness" sinned. What was their sin? They did not obey. How did they not obey? They did not believe. What didn't they believe? The writer ends there, simply saying that they could not enter the Promised Land because they didn't believe. And he equates entering the Promised Land to entering God's rest. So what are we to make of it?

Once we start delving into the words themselves, we find clarity. The Greek word used here for "corpses," for instance, is *kolon*, which means "a

limb of the body (as if lopped): -- carcass,” (Strong’s Concordance). *Kolon* comes from the word *kolazo*, which means “properly, to curtail, i.e. (figuratively) to chastise (or reserve for infliction): punish” (Strong’s Concordance). These definitions imply that the cause of death for these “corpses” was violence of some form—these corpses’ limbs were *lopped off!*

What does the Old Testament say was the reason for this older generation not entering Canaan? Moses wrote:

And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from **the midst of the camp**, just as the Lord had sworn to them. For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed. **So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, that the Lord spoke to me, saying:** “This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab. And when you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot as a possession” (Deuteronomy 2:14-19, emphasis added).

Thirty-eight years of war. At the end of this period, all the men of war had died—through violence—warfare. How did the Lord consume these men? How did He “destroy them from the midst of the camp”? By giving them the freedom to do what they wanted to do, that is, to engage in war—“So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people...”

There is a second passage that speaks about these men of war. It is described in the Book of Joshua:

For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, **till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord**—to whom the Lord swore that He would not show them the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way (Joshua 5:6-7, emphasis added).

Here we see how these men of war “did not obey the voice of the Lord”—they engaged in war, which was not the will of the Lord. It was never God’s intention for them to engage in war to begin with. But what could a freedom-giving God do but allow them to suffer the consequences of their own violence? They could not enter, as the Book of Hebrews states, because of unbelief in the “living God”—unbelief in the God of *life*. They believed in a violent god, the god of *death* and destruction—they believed in Satan. He was their god.

Canaan was the Promised Land. It was a literal, geographic region. But it was also

a metaphor for something much greater—the kingdom of God. Canaan is a symbol of God's principles of righteousness, His law of *agape* love, His nonviolent ways. All who believe in violence and live by it cannot inherit the nonviolent kingdom of God. All who reject violence are already in God's kingdom. Canaan was a metaphor of God's promised rest for the human heart, a rest that can only come from knowing God as He truly is—a God of infinite, unconditional, impartial love in whom there is no violence *at all*. The Bible describes what that kingdom will be like:

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
 The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
 The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
 And a little child shall lead them.
 The cow and the bear shall graze;
 Their young ones shall lie down together;
 And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,
 And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.
**They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
 For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
 As the waters cover the sea**” (Isaiah 11:6-9, emphasis added).

“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
 The lion shall eat straw like the ox,
 And dust shall be the serpent's food.
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,”
 Says the Lord (Isaiah 56:25, emphasis added).

He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; **they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore** (Isaiah 2:4, emphasis added).

He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore (Micah 4:3).

The corpses of the men of war were strewn in the desert, dismembered, lopped off because they were trying to enter Canaan through violence. They destroyed themselves and those around them. They were guilty of “an evil heart of unbelief”—in not believing in a “living God”—a non-violent God—a God of life. It was after they were all dead that God basically said to Joshua, “Now, cross over and take possession of the land.”

Another example from the Old Testament is Jonah. He was sent to warn the Ninevites that destruction was coming unless they changed

from their evil ways. Notice his message:

And he [THE KING] caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, **let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands**" (Jonah 3:7-8, emphasis added).

John the Baptist had the same message as Jonah. Notice what he said to the soldiers, of all people:

And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, and what shall we do? And he said unto them, **Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely;** and be content with your wages (Luke 3:14, KJV, emphasis added).

Jesus had this to say about John:

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth **violence, and the violent take it by force** (Matt 11:12, KJV, emphasis added).

What was Jesus saying? Could He be saying that the violent want a violent God? That the violent inflict violence onto the kingdom of God because what they want is a God of violence? But notice also what He says about John the Baptist:

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John (Matt 11:13).

What did Jesus mean by this? Could it be that perhaps all the prophets until John believed God to be violent, and that is why they ascribed violence to God? Jesus goes on to say that John was more than a prophet:

But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You' (Matthew 11:9-10).

John was a "messenger" with a direct message from God. His message pointed to the Lamb—a nonviolent creature, so that we could see Him as the representation of a non-violent God.

The Psalmist writes, regarding violence:

The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and **him that loveth violence his soul hateth** (Psalm 11:5 KJV, emphasis added)

And Solomon, speaking about wisdom, states:

Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they

cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and **drink the wine of violence**. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. **The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble** (Proverbs 4:14, emphasis added).

Demons, who live by Satan's law of Good and Evil, are imbued with violence, and their behavior shows it:

When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, **coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce**, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. **And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently** down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water (Matthew 8:28-32, emphasis added).

Notice that these demon-possessed men lived amidst the graves and were "exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way." They were filled with thoughts of death and dying—living amidst the graves. They were most comfortable among the dead. Luke adds some more detail to their condition, even though he speaks of only one man:

Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned (Luke 8:26-33).

Both of these passages also reveal the minds of evil angels. They see God as a "tormentor," as one who *tortures*. Their words clearly reveal that is their expectation, that in the future God will do just that to them—"have you come to torment us before the time?"

Those who reject that God's essence is *agape* love, and that He has no violence in Him, have "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." They are not worshipping the "living God," the God of life. Rather,

their god is the god of violence and death. In departing from the “living God” they have an evil heart of unbelief and will inherit corruption, death.

Having stated as much, now look at what Paul says:

Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**, nor does corruption inherit incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:50, emphasis added).

“Flesh and blood”—a metaphor of the fallen, mortal human nature of Good and Evil—cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither can “corruption” inherit “incorruption.” These are two ways of saying the same thing. Thus, “flesh and blood” equals “corruption” and “the kingdom of God” equals “incorruption.”

God’s kingdom is everlasting life—incorruption, immortality. The flesh cannot inherit immortality because it is driven by Satan’s violent death principle of Good and Evil. Incorruption is only possible through God’s principle of *agape* love—the principle of the Tree of Life.

From a logical perspective then, there can be no violence, force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation in God’s kingdom, otherwise, not only would God not be a God of love and freedom, but He would also not be a God of life. If God were violent, He would be corrupt, and as such He could not have “incorruption” and immortality.

Babylon, the city that represents Satan’s kingdom, means confusion—this confusion is caused by the duality of her moral law of Good and Evil. As a consequence, she is also filled with violence. Her demise is caused by her own violence:

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, **thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down**, and shall be found no more at all (Revelation 18:21, emphasis added).

God’s followers cannot resort to violence if they are to be true followers of the “living God.” They can’t use violence to attack or even to defend themselves. They can’t resort to violence even to defend their faith or their loved ones. If they do, they stop being God’s followers and become Satan’s followers.

God’s truth will be challenged, attacked, defied and subjected to intense scrutiny. After all, the world is still under the control of God’s greatest enemy, the one who hates His law of love. But God’s true followers are motivated by *agape* love, and *agape* love only will prevail against such attacks. The use of any violence to defend God and His truth is a contradiction. Those who use it prove by their actions that they have an incorrect or limited understanding of God’s character.

So why does the Bible portray a violent God? Here are some possible answers:

1. The writers of the Old Testament had a very limited understanding of the great controversy
2. “Present truth” is progressive
3. All human beings are violent, and use violent language to describe God
4. God takes our violent human language but redefines it — for instance, Jesus *destroyed* the devil by **dy**ing on the cross: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that *through death* He might **destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil**” (Hebrews 2:14, emphasis added). God also speaks about using a sword, but His is “the sword of the Spirit.” “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” (Ephesians 6:17)
5. All violence attributed to God was perpetrated by us and by the author of violence—Satan
6. When God says that He will destroy the wicked He means that He will honor the wicked’s choice to be separated from Him, who is the source of life—this is the “wrath of God,” as defined by Romans 1:18-32
7. God teaches us to “destroy” our enemies by *loving* them
8. God “destroys” nations by giving them freedom and allowing them to go into the domain of the ruler they have chosen—the Destroyer, Satan
9. God “*destroys*” sin by giving us truth
10. God does not ever combat violence with violence
11. When we say God is violent we are making God in our image, and we show that we ourselves are violent, showing that we want a violent God
12. We must compare Scripture with Scripture (allow the Bible to be its own expositor) in order to understand the language of the Bible.



15

ORDER

We naively think that Satan is interested only in causing harm, death, destruction and evil. This is indeed the ultimate outcome of his moral law, but there is more to him than meets the eye. Very few of us realize that he rebelled against God in an actual attempt to create something good—in fact, something *better* than what God already had in place. *Order* is the entire reason for his reward and punishment system:

It was pride and ambition that prompted Lucifer to complain of the government of God, and to **seek the overthrow of the order which had been established in heaven** {PP 403.3, emphasis added}.

It was by disobedience to the just commands of God that Satan and his host had fallen. How important, then, that Adam and Eve should honor **that law by which alone it was possible for order and equity to be maintained** {PP 52.2, emphasis added}.

Lucifer sought to “overthrow” the “order” of heaven. “The order which had been established in heaven” was done through God’s law of *agape* love. Why would Satan seek to overthrow it? He had a new idea, a replacement in mind—a *new order*. His intent was to create a new and better universal order through the system of reward and punishment. Order itself was the reason for his rebellion.

Lucifer’s *order* was implemented here on earth, in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. We have been living by this order ever since. Right now, at this time in the history of the world, Lucifer is giving his order a fresh new face, calling it a “New World Order”—also known as “Social Justice.” Many have been de-

ceived by these terms, not realizing their underlying principles. Others do know, and have sided with him, believing this is a good system.

Lucifer was not so naive as to offer anarchy or chaos as an alternative to God's law—he could not have expected a following then. What he was offering appeared to have substance and commanded respect. It would eventually result in anarchy and chaos, but this he refused to acknowledge, even though God warned him by showing him cause and effect.

His order is accomplished on the premise that people will do Good in order to avoid the punishment they would receive if they did Evil. Speaking again of Leviathan, God said:

His [LEVIATHAN] heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves (Job 41:1, 11, 13, 24 KJV, emphasis added).

The word “breakings” is *sheber*; some of its meanings are “a fracture, figuratively, ruin; affliction, breach, breaking, crashing, destruction, hurt, vexation.” Leviathan intimidates us into “purifying” ourselves out of sheer fear.

Interestingly, the Hebrew word “purify” used here is the same word used to describe Lucifer's sin—*châlâl*. This would be confounding were it not for the fact that it is not unusual for a Hebrew word to have two opposite meanings:

Some Hebrew words can have quite different—sometimes exactly opposite—meanings in different contexts, (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary Of Hebrew Words, by W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr.)

Thus in Hebrew the word “sin” can also mean “to purify” and “to cleanse.” Leviathan thinks he can “purify” us through pain—“breakings.” How?

If, in the back of our minds, we knew we would be punished for stepping out of line, wouldn't we be motivated to behave, to *clean up* our act? Surely we have all been in that situation! How did it make us feel? Did we feel freedom or coercion? Was our Good behavior genuinely Good or were we just going through motions in order to avoid pain? Did punishment elicit love or fear, anger or hatred? This is familiar territory to those in this war zone—we all can relate to this.

Lucifer's principle intended to create order is based on an erroneous notion that human logic has come to accept as rational: the more rewards are in place to motivate a person into doing Good, the better and less evil that person will become. But if this doesn't work, then the more dreadful the Evil, the more drastic the punishment must be to curb it

and bring about Good behavior again. This works to a degree, because at a certain point fear does kick in. Fear can be a powerful deterrent, as we all know, but at what cost is such order established?

The methods used in Satan's reward and punishment system are immaterial as long as the desired end—order—is achieved. In his system, the end justifies the means. Lucifer's law justifies brutal, violent actions, as long as some form of order is achieved through the *balance* of Good and Evil.

What about rewards, shouldn't they produce order? They do work to a point, because the more rewards are in place, the less evil takes place. But start rewarding a child for good behavior and soon we begin to see pride rise up, and that creates problems, which will then need to be dealt with by punishment—we can see the vicious cycle.

Lucifer envisioned that the positive and negative forces of his law would be more effective in shaping order than God's pure love, mercy and grace. He believed that this method of bringing about a model society was better than God's, which was done solely through unconditional love.

Through these two powerful motivators, reward and punishment, the former guardian of God's law created a whole new form of government in which the value of a person was automatically framed inside a hierarchical structure. He believed that such hierarchy would be more successful as the basis for a society than God's impartial system of freedom, where everyone was on the same playing field.

Ultimately, Lucifer's order is nothing else but a Pavlovian utopia. Reward and punishment are simply positive and negative stimuli, and our responses are nothing more than conditioned reflexes. We are at once both subjects and witnesses in this case study. What do you think? Is it working? Is this a viable system of government? Should God have adopted it? Would the universe survive such a system, or come to an eventual end, as the earth is soon to experience?

The intelligent beings scattered in God's universe were wiser—they rejected this law. In fact, they must have been watching its implementation on earth with absolute horror. God is not protecting them from seeing all the chaos, destruction, pain and suffering happening down here. They have been following this great controversy with intense interest, and they have come to understand the subtleties and deceptions of Satan's system. Not only that, they are coming to know God even better than before. Consider Paul's words:

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; **to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places**, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him (Ephesians 3:8-12, emphasis added).

The “principalities and powers in heavenly places” are learning the “manifold wisdom of God” by—*through*—the church, the people on earth who will eventually accept and live by God’s moral principles of *agape* love.

Through Christ, moral power is brought to man that will change the entire affections, and enable man to work with a will for the cause of God. Where all the power of mind and body was before concentrated to work the works of evil, by the Spirit of God a revolution is brought about. The Holy Spirit enlightens, renews, and sanctifies the soul. **Angels behold with inexpressible rapture the results of the working of the Holy Spirit in man.** {YRP 332.2}

Some of us are also catching on to these things. We are learning the deeper issues of the great controversy—the attack on God’s character and His moral law of love. We are learning that Satan’s violent system produces anything but order, and that his moral law is a total failure.

But Lucifer will not give up this war without one last fight. Now that he has entered wholeheartedly into this controversy, he will do anything to win and will push to the end. Therefore, he will do anything to keep order, even if that means destroying those who no longer choose to live within his system.



16

GOD'S GOODNESS
VERSUS SATAN'S
GOOD

God is immutable. He does not change according to circumstances. Therefore, His principles in dealing with each of us are the same regardless of who we are:

There is no partiality with God (Romans 2:11).

God's goodness is His love. He is more interested in a relationship with His creatures than in order per se. To God, order is a by-product of love, a result of respect for life and freedom. God's goodness is entirely different from Satan's Good.

In His conversation with the rich young ruler, Jesus differentiated God's goodness from the Good of Good and Evil:

Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good teacher, what good shall I do that I may have eternal life?' So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is God. But if you want to enter life, keep the commandments' (Matthew 19:16, 17).

The rich young ruler's question reveals that what drove him was the law of Good and Evil. He wanted to know what Good works he could do in order to *deserve* or *earn* eternal life. He didn't realize that salvation is given freely to us because of God's grace—because He loves us. He was thinking in terms of *con-*

ditions and therefore wanted to know what were the conditions he had to meet in order to earn salvation. To him, heaven was a transaction: if he did Good he would receive the reward of eternal life. And we might add, he only wanted to be good because he wanted that reward. Instead of addressing his misconception, Jesus corrected his perception of what real “good” was—He pointed him to God. “Why do you call me good? There is no one good but God.”

Jesus was not saying that only His Father was good, because Jesus too was good, in the real sense of the word. Jesus was divine; therefore, He had to be speaking about Himself as well when He said “there is no one good but God.” So what was He trying to say? He no doubt also wanted the young man to acknowledge that *He* was God, *He* was the Messiah. But there is one more thing He wanted to convey to that young man: He wanted to raise the bar in his thinking regarding what is “good.”

Jesus was separating God’s goodness from the Good of the principle of Good and Evil—“why do you call me good?” Which Good are you talking about, human Good or divine goodness? Having done that, He then stated “there is no one good but God.” In other words, all the Good in the world is a counterfeit, a deception, because it is flawed by selfish motives and agendas, and stems from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Only God’s unconditional *agape* love stands as truly good because *agape* is not tainted by any evil. It is not tainted by self-seeking either. The young ruler’s Good works were motivated by the selfish desire to earn salvation, not for love of God or his fellow man. If he had really loved God he would have also loved Jesus, and he would have accepted His amazing invitation to follow Him.

Agape love is the underlying principle of God’s Ten Commandments. The apostle James said that if we break one commandment, we break all of them. How so? If we act outside of *agape* love in one area we break the principle, the spirit of the law. If we act outside of love in one area, we will act outside of love in another. If the underlying principle that rules our heart is not *agape*, all our actions will be out of harmony with God’s law.

Says the psalmist, “The law of the Lord is perfect” (Psalm 19:7). **How wonderful in its simplicity, its comprehensiveness and perfection, is the law of Jehovah! It is so brief that we can easily commit every precept to memory, and yet so far-reaching as to express the whole will of God, and to take cognizance, not only of the outward actions, but of the thoughts and intents, the desires and emotions, of the heart.** Human laws cannot do this. They can deal with the outward actions only. A man may be a transgressor, and yet conceal his misdeeds from human eyes; he may be a criminal—a thief, a murderer, or an adulterer—but so long as he is not discovered, the law cannot condemn him as guilty. The

law of God takes note of the jealousy, envy, hatred, malignity, revenge, lust, and ambition that surge through the soul, but have not found expression in outward action, because the opportunity, not the will, has been wanting. And these sinful emotions will be brought into the account in the day when “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14) – {1SM 217.1, emphasis added}.

The Pharisees believed they could hide their hearts behind Good works. But Jesus saw what was inside them—they were filled with iniquity, because their moral law was based on the reward and punishment system. Only *agape* love can fulfill the law of God. And none of us are able to *produce* this love—it is a supernatural act of God that enables us to have it. We must desire it—and He will provide it. But even then, it is God who also provides the desire.

...for it is God who works in you **both to will and to do** for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13, emphasis added).

So what part do we have in it, if God provides both the desire and the empowerment? We must consent. When God shows us the way and gives us the desire, then we must freely choose the path to follow. He will never let go of us, and we must never let go of Him.

So how can we truly distinguish between human and divine love? From a spiritual perspective, in the context of God’s essence, divine and human love have absolutely no common ground because they are based on opposite motives—divine love, true love, is selfless. Human love is always selfish.

In order to understand God’s character, we must comprehend the limitless difference between *agape* and Good and Evil. Therefore, it is very important that we make a distinction between divine love and human love.

Human love is dependent on the beauty or goodness of its objects, therefore it is variable and partial. Human love favors its own, friends and family, those who are considered good, and condemns enemies and those that are perceived as evil. This is not *agape* love, but the Good of Good and Evil.

The Good of Good and Evil is based on feelings, emotions, and attitudes, while *agape* on the other hand controls feelings, emotions, and attitudes by an inward principle of unselfish love that never sways. Thus *agape* provides the basis for an unconditional, impartial commitment. The Good of Good and Evil can provide the basis for establishing a relationship, but it is a superficial and unstable foundation. *Agape*, on the other hand, is durable, dependable and will never break a relationship. Good yields to circumstances, while *agape* survives and transcends all circumstances.

The Good of Good and Evil is Satan's substitute for God's love; it is unforgiving and selfish, and is not governed by God's moral law. *Agape* is God's plan for all intelligent life relationships, and is the principle that overcomes the unreliability of Satan's Good. *Agape* is always generous and forgiving, and when it becomes our moral law, it governs all aspects of our life.

By contrast, the love that stems from the Good of Good and Evil is based on control—it strives to control others. It is insecure therefore it desperately grasps and exercises arbitrary power out of fear of losing control. *Agape* seeks to control self instead of others; it grants power without fear. The Good of Good and Evil fosters pride, but *agape* is victorious over this destructive and blinding emotion. Good falters in the face of stress and tension and utterly collapses when it encounters emotional chaos. By contrast, *agape* survives stress and tension and endures all emotional turmoil.

As you can see, there is a vast difference between God's *agape* love and the conventional worldly meaning of the word "love." We hope that this will help us realize the wisdom of God. Wouldn't the world be an entirely different place if we all operated by *agape* love? Imagine a world powered by selfless, giving, unconditional, infinite, never ending *agape* love! Wouldn't this be heavenly? This love would indeed heal us.

Agape love is not based on the goodness of the one loved, but on the perfection of the Lover; this is why God's love and the so-called "love" of the realm of Good and Evil are worlds apart. *Agape* is a life-giving principle. God's *agape* love reaches all, even the most degenerate criminal or terrorist who, in our eyes are unworthy of being loved. Isn't that true hope? Hope that reaches everyone, not just a few?

This is the love that motivated Christ when He died for us, "the ungodly," sinners, His "enemies:"

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Romans 5:6-8, 10, emphasis added).

God demonstrated *His* love—*agape*—by dying for us while we were yet enemies towards Him. *Enemy love*—that's how God treats those who are in opposition to Him. If Jesus instructed us to love our enemies, we may assume that He and the Father do the same. Listen to His words of life:

You have heard that it was said, ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5: 38-39, 43, 44-45).

Never anyone spoke with such authority, simplicity, and insight into the character of God as Jesus! By telling us to love our enemies, He said all we needed to know about God. By teaching us to love our enemies He overthrew all the wrong concepts about God’s character that had derailed us from a true knowledge of the Creator since Adam and Eve sinned. Because of Christ’s revelation, we can now experience a breakthrough in our understanding of His character.

God can’t ask us to conform to a moral code He does not follow. If we are to be “imitators of God” (Ephesians 5:1), God Himself must believe and act according to what He asks of us otherwise He would be a hypocrite and we would be left completely confused. As the express image of God, Jesus is the quintessential example to be followed because Jesus lived according to what God asks of us. There is no contradiction in Him.

God wants us to treat each other, especially our enemies, with *agape* love, because that is how He, in Jesus, treated us. In His eyes, perfection is having impartial love for all. That is what Jesus meant when He said “... for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on just and on the unjust. ... Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5: 45, 48).

How overwhelmingly opposite to our own ways are these words! They cut sharply, against our inner compass, which the Bible calls “the flesh.” How will we ever exhibit God’s *agape* love when it is so contrary to our nature?

God will empower us, if we so desire it. God’s love will be truly shown by how we treat our enemies—if when confronted with any negativity, we react in love. *Agape* love will be fully evident in us when we choose to die rather than inflict harm on our enemies, doing good to them even if they have an insatiable hatred for us and are determined to destroy us.

How has God’s goodness been shown to His enemies? When Jesus created the earth He made all things in a state of perfection, and it is His sustaining and upholding power of life that continually makes life possible:

...He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His [God's] glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power... (Hebrews 1:2-3).

It is "by the word of His power" that Jesus constantly provides life to all living things. After sin entered the world through Adam, God did not remove the energy and life-giving force necessary for the upkeep of creation. The slow death of the planet began with a wrong choice and continues to this day because of wrong choices. By these wrong choices we counteract the sustaining power of God and nullify it. But not once did God remove the power of His word that upholds His "enemies."

Even as we destroy the earth to the point of extinction, God continues to bless the world through every possible avenue still open to Him. Had He withdrawn any part of His sustaining upkeep, the planet would have self-destructed from the first moment that sin was introduced.

God will continue to send all the blessings He possibly can, until the last ray of His love is blocked or rejected by a world locked in stubborn rebellion. But even then, His *agape* love will continue, unabated, because one day He will restore all things to their original splendor:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1).

Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful' (Revelation 21:5).

The human race is actively participating in the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is empirically evident that God's principle of *agape* love is not being used on earth. If we believed and practiced God's *agape* love, the earth would not be in its present chaotic condition. How do we switch from Good and Evil to *agape*?

As we said earlier, we cannot do this. God will do this for us if we allow Him. Then, we will stop loving with a selfish agenda and begin loving for the long-term betterment of others, even at our own expense; then we will be living by *agape* love. This is the narrow gate through which we can enter into life:

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and confined is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:13-14).

The greatest manifestation of God's goodness was to give us His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ came to earth to reveal God's unconditional love. There were no conditions attached to the love of Christ; this was demonstrated in His life, and even more so, in His death. He sacrificed Himself for us and His giving of Himself was unconditional and is universally applied.

... but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26).

Christ "has appeared to put away sin"—our wrong view of God, our "missing the mark" about the heart of the Creator. In putting away that one misconception, He also puts away all our "sins"—we are all forgiven, justified, "sitting in heavenly places."

There are no stipulated conditions to be fulfilled before the merits of Jesus Christ's death for the sins of humanity can be appropriated, because salvation is not based on works we may do:

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

God's Son gave Himself to us, sinners, before He received any positive response from us. He gave Himself to the ungodly, to the world, to the entire sinful human race. He gave Himself unconditionally out of *agape* love. While we were still evil, wicked, ungodly enemies of God, Christ died for us. God came into our midst through the person of Jesus Christ to rescue us from Satan's lies. We can subjectively receive this salvation when we internalize and believe that God gave His life for us while we were yet ungodly, undeserving, and living in enmity towards Him.

God's *agape* love is like a giant magnet that draws, not forces, us to Himself:

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw** all peoples to Myself (John 12:32, emphasis added).

It is only when the power of God's *agape* love attracts us that we begin responding to Him in positive ways. Jesus knew that the demonstration of His love on the cross, where He was lifted up, would attract and draw us to Himself and the Father. The drawing power of His love empowers us to follow Him out of love, not out of fear.

God has always been reconciled to us. When we accept His love as the ruling principle in our lives, we become reconciled to Him. We cannot be reconciled to God unless *agape* love becomes our governing principle. If we reject God's impartial *agape* love, we automatically shift our allegiance into Satan's partial and arbitrary domain of Good and Evil, and there we suffer punishment, pain and destruction.

When we turn to false gods and their laws, we disenfranchise ourselves from God's jurisdiction and by default we position ourselves in Satan's jurisdiction of Good and Evil. When we accept the principle of *agape* love, then the conditional law of Good and Evil will cease to reign in us. God's unconditional love is the light that destroys darkness.

One could say that all the tragedies in the world could have been avoided, had God not been a God of *agape* love. How so? If God had not been *agape* He would have destroyed Lucifer right from the very beginning.

Lucifer wanted God to implement the knowledge of Good and Evil as the law of the universe. If God had followed his advice to adopt that law He would have taken Lucifer's freedom away or exterminated him, and we would not have been exposed to the mayhem that overwhelms our world. Would this have solved the root cause of the problem of evil?

No, because had God annihilated Lucifer, He might have achieved a temporary peace, but He Himself would have become evil. He would no longer have been a God of *agape* love but a very different being altogether. He would have become the ultimate arbitrary dictator, the ultimate controller. The universe would have become a literal hell, because no one would have been able to escape God's omniscient, arbitrary control. He would have been exactly what Satan accused Him of being: an arbitrary controlling dictator. What a blessing that God was, is, and always will be a God of *agape* love!



17

THE LAW OF
WORKS

When discussing sin earlier, we stated that Jesus is concerned with *the sin*, and that Satan on the other hand, is concerned in keeping us focused on *sins*. Sins have to do with our works—our Good and our Evil works. Both of these fall under the category of Good and Evil works, and these are the works that are involved in *righteousness by works*.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil embodies the principle of righteousness by works. This is a false righteousness. Righteousness by works focuses on behavior and performance—thus it is *works* oriented. Righteousness by works incorporates both Good and Evil works. Since it is behavior/performance-based, it creates all the wrong motives for obeying God. This system is focused on *sins*.

Most believers would agree that there is no greater reward than spending eternity with God. This greatest of all rewards, in the merit system of arbitrary reward and punishment, is often the only motivation for a relationship with God and is based on a very subtle and disguised form of selfishness. And yet, many believers have been trying to earn God's acceptance through this system because they believe He operates this way. But God is driven by another law altogether, in which our works do not alter His love or His promises.

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. **But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according**

to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:3-7, emphasis added).

God “saved” us “according to His mercy,” not according to our works. Our works do not alter His love toward us. As a God of *agape*, He loves us unconditionally.

Consider the parable of the prodigal son. God is that Father who, looking eagerly down the road, yearns for His son to come home. He isn’t concerned about what His son has or has not *done*; He only wants to have him back in His arms. He knows His love is more than sufficient to bind the prodigal to His heart. Once the wayward son realizes the extent of His Father’s love he will be at peace, not only with God but also with the rest of humanity. The Father ordered for “best robe and put it on him” (Luke 15:22). This robe is the robe of righteousness we discussed earlier. It is the same robe Adam lost when he ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and is the same robe with which God covered Joshua the High Priest.

Most of us begin our spiritual journey thinking that in order to attain heaven, we must jump through many hoops. And our goal is exactly that—to attain heaven. This is the common understanding of salvation. Within this mind-set is also the idea that God puts forth many pre-requisites for us to meet, and once we fulfill them, then He will reward us with eternal life. This is a false picture of God’s salvation. But what could possibly be so wrong with receiving the gift of eternal life after we have met God’s requirements?

First, we are not capable of meeting God’s requirements. Of ourselves, we can never reach His perfection. All good gifts come from Him—we simply choose to accept or reject them. To think that we can be good enough so God can accept us is a great fallacy.

Second, this way of thinking involves a *transaction*, not a *relationship*. In this deal, believing and obeying God are simply good deeds we offer in exchange for His benefits—this is self-gratification. The Creator Himself, the God of the gift, is only a *means* by which we may obtain the end-results we desire. We comply with the requirements and stipulations of this formal contract—we do the works—purely in order to receive the promised gift. We believe and follow the stipulated conditions simply in order to reap His benefits—heaven. In this scenario, there is no *agape* love relationship between God and us. These are all selfish works stemming from the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God knows how we think; He understands that the root of our problem is the moral law of Good and Evil. And yet His attitude doesn’t change toward us. Our selfishness does not alter His unconditional love toward us in the least, and

that is purely because He is *agape* love. But does God reward us at all?

The Bible delineates the boundaries of the Path of Blessings. This path contains inherent blessings—they are not rewards for works. The blessings and rewards from God are intrinsic to following His ways. For example, if we love our enemies, we reap the reward of peace. If we follow the laws of health we reap health. If we love others unconditionally we reap a pure heart. If we are honest in all our earthly transactions, we reap a clean conscience.

These blessings are not acts of recompense from a capricious God. And one does not live by His principles in order to receive these rewards and blessings. One lives by His principle after being moved by His love. It is in response to God's great love that one embraces His wise counsel for living.

God knows that the only thing that will change human behavior is a change of heart. A change of heart comes only from understanding and experiencing the love of God firsthand. It is this that empowers us to live by His principle of *agape* love. Then the heart, which had been dead in works, will be imbued with the principle of unconditional love that flows from the heart of God.

By contrast, if we follow a dual-personality, capricious, arbitrary god, we cannot experience such a change of heart. We may strive to conform to his commandments in order to earn a reward, but our hearts will remain as cold as stones. We may promote virtue and all sorts of beneficent works, but behind it all will be the selfish motive of attaining a reward. Reward plays the single most important role in such a relationship.

We must learn in the school of Christ. Nothing but His righteousness can entitle us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace. **We have long desired and tried to obtain these blessings but have not received them because we have cherished the idea that we could do something to make ourselves worthy of them.** We have not looked away from ourselves, believing that Jesus is a living Saviour. **We must not think that our own grace and merits will save us; the grace of Christ is our only hope of salvation.** Through His prophet the Lord promises, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55:7. We must believe the naked promise, and not accept feeling for faith. When we trust God fully, when we rely upon the merits of Jesus as a sin-pardoning Saviour, we shall receive all the help that we can desire {CCh 47.4, emphasis added}.

When this reward/punishment system is the foundation of our relationship with God, we are left with a gaping chasm in our hearts and lives. If the reward of eternal life is the foundational and ultimate reason for a relationship with God, such a relationship will be empty of *agape* love. Thus we will miss out on the most amazing experience in the universe, the experience Jesus prayed we would have with Himself and the Father:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; **that they also may be one in Us**, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, **that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me**; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me (John 17:20-26, emphasis added).

The bond God wants to have with us is the same one He has with His Son. God wants us to know that He loves us just as much as He loves His Son, “that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” Can we possibly fathom such a thing? Can we comprehend such closeness to infinite love, the same love the Father and Son shared from eternity, from before the foundation of the world? Eternity with God is not a reward, but a return to true love. It is a return to the pre-fall state—a face-to-face loving relationship with God.

The story of the rich young ruler is a perfect example of how we can end up worshipping God with a reward and punishment mentality. When offered a close relationship with the Son of God, the rich young ruler sadly turned away. He was not interested in re-connecting with his Creator; rather, he was motivated by the fear of eternal death, and hoped to do all he could in his own power in order to please God so that he could earn eternal life.

The other and much more damaging reason for obeying God under Satan’s law of works is “fear”—fear that an angry God will punish the offender if he doesn’t perform well. This is what legalism is. Sadly, often this is what the Christian world calls *agape* love. This is another selfish reason to comply with God’s requirements, and yet it is accepted as truth.

Many of us are paralyzed by the fear that if we act contrary to God’s ways He will inflict terrible punishment upon us. We even go as far as to believe that He will unleash disasters upon us and consign us to an eternal hell. Thus it is the fear of retributive punishment that prompts us to “faith”—if it could be called that. And so we strive to obey His commands. But we obey Him in abject fear, caged in a master/slave relationship. This is not the way God desires to be followed!

God desires from all His creatures the **service of love**—service that **springs from an appreciation of His character**. He takes **no pleasure in a forced obedience**; and to all He grants **freedom of will**, that they may render Him **voluntary service** {EP 9.5, emphasis added}.

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him

must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).

God “takes no pleasure in a forced obedience.” He desires “the service of love” out of an “appreciation of His character.” This is what it means to “worship in spirit and truth.” When fear is the foundational reason for compliance, *agape* love is nonexistent.

The apostle Paul identified the system of salvation by works as belonging to Baal, the ancient Canaanite heathen god.

Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, “Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life”? [But what does the divine response say to him?] **“I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”** Even so then, at this present time there is a **remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works;** otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work (Romans 11:2-6, emphasis added).

Paul calls those who trust in God’s grace “the remnant.” The law of Good and Evil—works—is no longer driving them. They have not bowed the knee to Baal—Satan, the god of works. Paul again nullified Satan’s system of salvation by works through the following words:

... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified (Galatians 2:16).

“The works of the law” are works from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The works of this Tree justify “no flesh.” “Works” do not remove our sense of guilt and condemnation, which we are born with, and which is imposed on us by Satan’s fatal Knowledge. Only the belief in what Christ has revealed to us about the true God brings us peace and relief from the weight and oppression of Satan’s system. Notice how the system of works has been connected with a *tree*:

The good tree will produce good fruit. If the fruit is unpalatable and worthless, the tree is evil. So the fruit borne in the life testifies as to the condition of the heart and the excellence of the character. **Good works can never purchase salvation, but they are an evidence of the faith that acts by love and purifies the soul. And though the eternal reward is not bestowed because of our merit, yet it will be in proportion to the work that has been done through the grace of Christ** {DA 314.2, emphasis added}.

No one who follows the law to receive an arbitrary reward will be justified. Justification comes only by faith in the everlasting love of God toward us. Satan’s principle of doing Good in order to receive an arbitrary reward has no place in

the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we keep God's law by the spirit of the principle of Good and Evil, our obedience will have no meaning—it will be dead works.

God's law can be properly obeyed only if it is obeyed by love. Only when we freely obey the law, from a heart that responds willingly to the all-encompassing love of God, will our obedience have any true meaning. The law has to be kept in the spirit of the law—through love. The law cannot be kept from any external pressures such as a carrot stick dangling before our eyes, or fear of punishment.

Love is the fruit that is borne on the Christian tree, the fruit that is as the leaves of the tree of life for the healing of the nations {2SM 187.1, emphasis added}.

“Love is the fruit” of the Tree of Life—and its leaves are for “the healing of the nations.” This is *agape* love, the love that is the underlying principle of God's eternal law.

So how do we deal with the Ten Commandments, God's moral law? How do we keep the law? It depends on who teaches us how God's moral law should be viewed. Satan takes the law and uses it to magnify his principles of reward and punishment. He prompts us to keep the law so that we may receive rewards, and makes us believe that if we fail, we will be punished. He uses the law as an accusatory tool and prescribes punishments that meet the crime for those who cannot comply with the requirements of the law.

For instance, the law of God categorically commands, “you shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:16). Satan's principle of Good and Evil takes the law and calls for the severest punishment for those who transgress it—death, as stated in the Old Testament:

The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death (Leviticus 20:10).

Jesus comes and nullifies this—He voids this punishment system. In the case of adultery, the punishment was stoning. When the Scribes and Pharisees brought the adulterous woman before Him, Jesus didn't sanction their demand to stone her. Instead He said, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first” (John 8:7).

Jesus denied the murderous desires of the adulterous woman's accusers without engaging in controversy with them; and one by one they all left. Using the principle of *agape* love, Jesus did not impute this sin to the woman. Neither did He impute to the accusers their sin of accusing her. Paul reveals the principle behind Jesus' action:

Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin (Romans 4:7-8).

Jesus was not being permissive by not imputing sin to the adulterous woman. Not punishing her did not mean He condoned her sins; but He knew that she would be cleansed from her sins only when she learned that she was loved unconditionally. He did want her to change—but He didn't want her to change out of fear. He wanted her to be transformed out of her own understanding of His love. Jesus was giving her a new vision of what her life could be, and He respected her freedom to either accept or reject that vision. She recognized that Jesus was drastically different from every man she had ever encountered. She saw the vision, she accepted it, and she fell in love with the Savior, the only Man that treated her with respect.

Nor was Jesus condoning accusation by not accusing her accusers. On the contrary—by not condemning them, He condemned *condemnation* itself. God hates all sins because they cause harm and pain to all involved. But God deals with our sins in a very different way than Satan. God does not want to program us to be good citizens. He is not interested in making drones out of us. He gave us free will, and He wants a relationship with intelligent beings, not creatures that are conditioned by positive and negative stimuli.

It was Christ's mercy that changed the adulterous woman's heart. She was filled with gratitude, love, and admiration for Him whose wisdom was so different from human wisdom. She became His most fervent follower and she happily left her life of sin and became a new creature. And Jesus said of her, who later anointed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair:

“Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her” (Mark 14:9).

God has forgiven all our “lawless deeds.” He has “covered” all our sins. He does not “impute” anything to us. This is a universal truth that applies to all of us. And this includes all sins—past, present, and future. We are blessed when we believe this, and such grace envelopes and sanctifies all those who perceive this love of God. This is what “purifies” us in the truest sense of the word.

“Righteousness by works” then, is actually “unrighteousness” because it is not the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God is explained in Romans 3:21-26:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, **being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**, whom God has set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that **were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness**, that He might be just and

the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:21-26, emphasis added).

God's righteousness justifies all—freely! His righteousness “passed over our sins” and forgave all the works we had done, are doing, and will still do under the law of Good and Evil. When we believe and accept Jesus' love for us as demonstrated by His life and death, then we will reap the benefits of this knowledge and will be fully reconciled to God. Such great love is transforming. This is the God who created the heavens and the earth; this is the God we will praise also into eternity.

How do we apply this wonderful knowledge to our lives? Children learn from observing their parents; we learn from the example Jesus gave us. The apostle John explains how we can apply God's righteousness in our lives:

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another (1 John 3:10, 11).

We are to be imitators of God; we are to do to others what He has done for us. Righteousness is unconditional *agape* love toward one another. Righteousness means to forgive—forgive up to “seventy times seven”—“seven” being a Biblical number indicating perfection and used by Jesus to symbolize unconditional forgiveness (Matthew 18:22). Righteousness forgives *completely* and *infinitely*.

Most Christians realize that righteousness by works is of Satan and not of God. But they inadvertently fall into Satan's trap by believing that God arbitrarily rewards Good” works and arbitrarily punishes Evil deeds. By believing this, they unwittingly believe righteousness by works is of God.

Satan incessantly advocates and coercively promotes the law of Good and Evil to each of us; the ultimate purpose of his system of righteousness by works is to teach us to be Good. But his reward/punishment mechanism abysmally fails in achieving this purpose.

When we step outside of God's law of love we automatically default to Satan's law of Good and Evil. When we decide against God we automatically decide in favor of Satan. Without *agape* love we are “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked,” Revelation 3:17.

Since Good and Evil has become the human default, it is no surprise then that we attribute Satan's character traits to God:

... **You thought that I was altogether like you;** but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God (Psalm 50:21-23, emphasis added).

God is altogether NOT like us. We are to order our lives aright—in *agape* love. The second to the last sentence of this Psalm can be especially frightening if we don't comprehend God's principles of non-violence. Only when we understand that God is not a destroyer can we read this with a spiritual mind—with *agape* love. This Psalm will then come to mean exactly the opposite of what it appears to mean. Paraphrased, it will mean something like this:

Mark this, you who forget that God has unconditional love for all, lest you think that He will destroy you and then there will be no one that can help and deliver you because, if you think God is against you, who will be for you? Get to know God's true character, so that you may offer only thanksgiving and praise to Him instead of the penance of killing animals thinking that this will appease an angry God. It is the one who knows that there is no reason to be afraid of God honors Him. The one who corrects His understanding about God will also correct his behavior toward his fellow man. To such a one God will show how much He loves him, and what a great salvation He has for him and for the whole human race!

The phrase "to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God" cannot mean salvation by works, for by the works of the law no one will be saved. The only other possible interpretation is the one offered above. God's ways are higher than ours because His ways are *agape* love:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

We must be very careful not to make God into a God that is like ourselves, having the duality of Good and Evil.

Ultimately, righteousness by works negates what God, in Christ, demonstrated on the cross when Jesus died for the sins of the human race. Righteousness by works promotes the deceptions from the Knowledge of Good and Evil—that God arbitrarily rewards Good works with salvation and arbitrarily punishes Evil with death and even eternal torment, according to some. This is iniquity, lawlessness, and is the opposite of God's righteousness as demonstrated on the cross. On the cross, God did not impute our sins to us—He took them upon Himself.

True righteousness means that neither the positive nor the negative works of the law impact God's attitude and behavior towards us, because righteousness is unconditional love.

Salvation by faith versus salvation by works was typified from the very beginning of human history—in the lives of Cain and Abel.

Cain came before God with murmuring and infidelity in his heart in regard to the promised sacrifice and the necessity of the sacrificial offerings. His gift expressed no penitence for sin. He felt, as many now feel, that it would be an acknowledgment of weakness to follow the exact plan marked out by God, of trusting his salvation wholly to the atonement of the promised Saviour. **He chose the course of self-dependence. He would come in his own merits.** He would not bring the lamb, and mingle its blood with his offering, but would present his fruits, the products of his labor. He presented his offering as a favor done to God, through which he expected to secure the divine approval. Cain obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice; but he rendered only a partial obedience. The essential part, the recognition of the need of a Redeemer, was left out {PP 72.1, emphasis added}.

Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; **the other venture to depend upon their own merits;** theirs is a sacrifice without the virtue of divine mediation, and thus **it is not able to bring man into favor with God.** It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned. Those who feel no need of the blood of Christ, who feel that without divine grace they can **by their own works** secure the approval of God, are making the same mistake as did Cain. **If they do not accept the cleansing blood, they are under condemnation.** There is no other provision made whereby they can be **released from the thralldom of sin** {PP 72.5, emphasis added}.

The class of worshipers who follow the example of Cain includes by far the greater portion of the world; for **nearly every false religion has been based on the same principle—that man can depend upon his own efforts for salvation.** It is claimed by some that the human race is in need, not of redemption, but of development—that it can **refine, elevate, and regenerate itself.** As Cain thought to secure the divine favor by an offering that lacked the blood of a sacrifice, so do these expect to **exalt humanity to the divine standard,** independent of the atonement. The history of Cain shows what must be the results. It shows what man will become apart from Christ. **Humanity has no power to regenerate itself.** It does not tend upward, toward the divine, but downward, toward the satanic. Christ is our only hope. “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” “Neither is there salvation in any other.” Acts 4:12 {PP 73.1, emphasis added}.

“Humanity has no power to regenerate itself.” Christ is indeed “our only hope,” for only He reveals to us a God of *agape* love.

And this is eternal life, that they may **know You, the only true God,** and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3, emphasis added).



18

JUDGMENT AND CONDEMNATION

Once Lucifer discarded the unconditional nature of God's law of *agape* love, he had to automatically institute a system of judgment. Humanity's actions and motives had to be judged so he could divide us into the Good and the Evil categories. How else could he have determined whom to reward and whom to punish?

The system of Good and Evil must first establish one's merit or demerit before a reward or punishment can be meted. This process of determining one's innocence or guilt is done through weighing one's behavior on the balances of Good and Evil. Whichever side leans heavier determines the outcome of the judgment.

Now if God's love is unconditional, can He resort to such a mode of judgment? Jesus addressed this issue in the Sermon on the Mount:

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye (Matthew 7:1-5).

"Judge not that you be not judged." In this succinct but loaded phrase, Jesus gives us a principle that can determine our fate. Why are we not to judge? So that we will not be judged. But who will judge us if we judge others? God? Satan? Ourselves? These are important questions and we are going to try to answer them.

In the Book of Luke Jesus amplifies the word "judge" to mean condemnation:

Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.

Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you (Luke 6:37).

What is the plank in the eye of someone who judges others? The plank in the eye is “judgment” itself—because this kind of judgment is condemning, and comes from the moral law of Good and Evil. Jesus characterizes this as a grosser flaw, a beam much bigger than the splinter in their brother’s eye.

As we judge and weigh others, we give proof that we are in the domain of death. Judging and finding fault is in itself a greater sin than the actual faults we may find in others. After all, we are all sinners; all are imperfect. Accusation is the greater evil. Paul gives the same warning:

Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand (Romans 14:3-4).

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way (Romans 14:10-13).

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me [GIVES ME JUSTIFICATION] is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God (1 Corinthians 4:3-5).

Paul says that he does not even judge himself and God is able to make him, and all, stand through His *agape* love.

He who judges after the flesh by speaking against his brother, judges the law of unconditional love and joins Satan in declaring God’s law inefficient, faulty. He is like Lucifer, in that he also judged God’s Law and found it to be foolish and weak. He rejects unconditional love in preference to the law of Good and Evil. By rejecting God’s unconditional principle, he rejects God Himself.

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another (James 4:11-12)?

There is only one true Lawgiver—He is the Creator of heaven and earth, and He has one supreme, eternal law—*agape* love. His law is the true law. Lucifer's law is a deception and a failure that will not survive the test of time. It is through his law that he is destroying the earth and its inhabitants. In the end, God's law will stand vindicated; it will continue eternally, as it has always been.

What do we make of the words "He is able to save and destroy?" By judging we stand in danger of destruction. The key word here is "freedom." God saves and destroys by giving us the ultimate freedom to choose between the law of life and the law of death. Both destruction and salvation are inherent to the choices we make. Judging one another puts us clearly under Satan's jurisdiction.

What is the danger of judging one another? Why does Jesus warn us not to judge? You may say it is because we may make a wrong judgment, since we cannot read the heart. Yes, that is absolutely true. And we could say that judging kills love; it makes the heart cold—all this is true.

But another, real danger to us is this: that by using the system of Good and Evil to measure others we actually measure ourselves. By judging others, we state that our moral law is the moral law of Good and Evil. By weighing others on his balance of merit and demerit we disregard God's law of unconditional *agape* love and demonstrate that we have chosen Satan over God—we are subjects of his kingdom of death. Thus, Satan's condemning law will judge us, and there is no mercy in his system.

By judging others we judge ourselves. By imputing sin to others we also impute sin to ourselves. This results in self-condemnation and, in due course, in total darkness. This is Lucifer's and his angels' fate.

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day (Jude 1:6).

The loss of one life to eternal death is a senseless, needless loss. God is infinite love and mercy. No one needs to be lost. If God never condemns us, then who does? We condemn ourselves. When we study the cross, it will become very clear how lethal Satan's condemning power is.

Jesus explained that this "judgment" of condemnation is done "according to the flesh," the carnal mind, (which is controlled by the moral code of Good and Evil):

You judge according to the flesh, I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me (John 8:15-16).

Those who “judge according to the flesh” use the principle of Good and Evil as their measuring rod. “I judge no one”—Jesus judges no one by the moral code of Good and Evil. What about the words “Yet if I do judge, My judgment is true?” If God judges no one in order to arbitrarily reward or punish, then how does He judge, and what is the true judgment He is talking about?

God’s judgment must not be confused with the judgment inherent in the principle of Good and Evil.

Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment (John 7:24).

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).

“Righteous judgment” is based solely on righteousness. God’s “righteous judgment” has to be in harmony with His unconditional love. As such, “righteous judgment” cannot involve the reward and punishment system.

God cannot both judge “after the flesh” and love unconditionally. It is either one or the other. The judgment that Jesus referred to as “My judgment is true” is a judgment based on *agape* love, not Good and Evil. Therefore “righteous judgment” means that God deals with each of us in the same manner—with unconditional, impartial love. This includes respecting our freedom of choice. God’s final judgment will be conducted through “righteous judgment.” What will that look like?

It is very simple. In the final judgment, God’s “righteous judgment” will be to give us freedom and honor the consequences of our choices. He will allow us to fully receive the consequences of the jurisdiction we have chosen in this life. If we have chosen the jurisdiction of life, we will receive life. If we have chosen the jurisdiction of death, we will receive death. This is righteous judgment that stems from *agape* love.

How do we choose a jurisdiction? By the law we adopt as our moral rule in this life. If we choose to live by the unconditional law of *agape* love, we will be under God’s jurisdiction and will inherit the gift of eternal life. If we live by the conditional law of Good and Evil we position ourselves under Satan’s jurisdiction and reap death. Thus we reap what we sow. God’s “righteous judgment” is to respect our choices, and the “righteous judge” will make sure that our freedom is upheld and our choices respected.

“The righteous Judge will give the crown of life to all those who love His appearing at that Day.” Those “who love His appearing” died in the hope of the resurrection at Jesus’ second coming. They did not trust their

own goodness, their own works. They put their trust on God, who unconditionally gave them the gift of eternal life. They trusted on God's mercy and grace. They accepted the gift of life freely given to all—they believed Jesus' revelation of the Father's unconditional love.

And yet the Bible does say our works will judge us, does it not? If the "righteous judge" does not base our salvation upon our own works, then how will He judge us?

Works are the visible evidence of our thoughts. They reveal what's inside us. Therefore, our actions are "evidence" of who we are, evidence used in the cosmic courtroom. God is our defense, Satan our prosecutor. Our actions show whether we believe and follow what Christ told us regarding God's unconditional love or whether we have remained in bondage to Satan's arbitrary law—the kingdom of accusation and condemnation.

God cannot force us to get out of Good and Evil. He cannot violate our freedom. If we choose to remain in it, He is forced to leave us there, and there we will reap death. Our lives will be weighed and the evidence will be examined so that all can see which law we have chosen to live by. Transparency is the reason for this investigative judgment. Each law has its own set of rules. Satan's law is condemning—God's is absolving. According to which law do we live?

Christ is the gift God gave to the world, to reveal His non-judging and non-judgmental character. The only negative in regards to God's judgment, as far as God the Father and Jesus the Son are concerned, has to do with our reaction to the light we are given. We can accept or reject light. If God gives us truth and we reject it, then He allows us to return to darkness—His hands are tied.

The flood was a judgment—two thousand years after the creation of the world. The light of the gospel was given to the antediluvians:

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine long-suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water (1 Peter 3:18-20).

The people of Noah's time rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ, and as a result, the flood came by the hand of the accuser, the Destroyer.

The first advent was another judgment—four thousand years removed from Eden. The very act of bringing "light," truth, to the earth, also brought judgment. Jesus said:

"For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind." Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "are we blind

also?” Jesus said to them “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains” (John 9:39-41).

Jesus revealed God’s character to the children of Israel. They were to impart His love to the world. But most of them rejected and crucified God’s Son—the destruction of Jerusalem came forty years later again by the hand of the Destroyer. By rejecting the truth the people of Jesus’ time gave themselves over to Satan.

The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;” “for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” Hosea 13:9; 14:1. Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan’s vindictive power over those who yield to his control {GC 35.3}.

Another judgment is about to take place soon—six thousand years after Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The light of God’s character is being given now. God is pouring light to His messengers all over the world so they can carry it to all people. The light of God’s character of unconditional love will cover the entire earth.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).

“Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed,
Who establishes a city by iniquity!
Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts
That the peoples labor to feed the fire,
And nations weary themselves in vain?
For the earth will be filled
With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord,
As the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:12-14).

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14:6-7).

If this knowledge is rejected, destruction will come again by the hand

of the Destroyer, who is described in Revelation 9:11:

And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon (Revelation 9:11).

Sadly, many will reject the truth about God's character. The rejection of this truth places them under the jurisdiction of the Destroyer. Then destruction, by the hand of the Destroyer, will come in through the seven last plagues of Revelation sixteen.

We have freedom of choice. We can either accept or reject Jesus' testimony—this will be our judgment. This judgment involves what we do with everything Jesus taught and revealed about God, in particular in regards to His principle of unconditional love. This judgment came into effect the moment Jesus declared the truth about God, and if we reject the same, we judge ourselves. What judges us is our acceptance or rejection of the light Christ shed on God's character. Note His words in this regard:

And if any one hears My words and does not believe, **I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.** He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – **the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.** For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak (John 12:47-50, emphasis added).

Jesus was the true light that came into the world. He came to give light, but the world did not accept Him:

That was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:9-13).

Even though the world was made through Him, the world did not know, receive, or accept Him. The world could not accept the principle of *agape* love because the world preferred Satan's law of Good and Evil.

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (John 3:19).

To many, Satan's law makes so much more sense than unconditional love. After all, how can we not punish criminals? How could love alone reform them? How can we not use violence to protect our families, our

children and ourselves? How can order be kept without the use of force?

True love for God elicits an obedience that is blind to consequences—this is evident in the life of the martyrs. Daniel and his friends had the only true, correct response to the argument that we need to follow the world in order to save ourselves:

O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up (Daniel 3:16-18).

It may be counter-intuitive, but Jesus said, “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 16:25). Losing our lives for the sake of God’s nonviolent love principle will bring a reward this world cannot offer – eternal life. But even then we are cautioned not to follow God out of selfish reasons:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Humanity is saturated with the law of the god of this world. One way or another, Satan’s arbitrary moral code has gripped our hearts. Our only hope is to open the door for Jesus to enter our hearts. He is knocking at the door. Our only hope is to stand before “the judgment seat of Christ,” because in Him there is no condemnation, and all are freely absolved.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1).

God is calling us to come out of Satan’s system so that we may not share in its impending destruction. He will empower us to shed our dual nature and will impute His righteousness unto us—He can purify us from all “corrupting” elements. God will never use force against us or violate our free will, not even to save us. The choice is ours, and we must choose on which side we stand.



19

JUSTICE

The concept of justice is extremely important in understanding the war between God and Satan. Why? Because it was in this particular point that Lucifer first deviated from God in the opening of the great controversy.

As we study the word “justice” in the Bible, it becomes apparent that, just as there are two types of judgment, there are also two types of justices—God’s justice and Satan’s justice. There is a justice according to Good and Evil (iniquity) and there is a justice according to *agape* love, which is righteousness. We must be able to differentiate between the two, otherwise we will fall into the human error of interpreting “justice” according to the law of Good and Evil. Again, the Bible must be our interpreter and definer of terms. God’s justice is never divorced from mercy:

God’s love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan’s purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. He sought to prove that the righteousness of God’s law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God’s plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. ‘Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.’ Psalm 85:10 {DA 762.3, emphasis added}.

Mercy and God’s law of love are inseparable. Satan sought to prove that God’s *agape* love cannot keep order—that His righteousness “is an enemy to peace.” But mercy is God’s *true* justice:

Then the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts:
‘Execute **true justice**,
Show mercy and compassion

Everyone to his brother.
 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless,
 The alien or the poor.
 Let none of you plan evil in his heart
 Against his brother” (Zechariah 7:8-9, emphasis added).

In Moses’ Sanctuary, God’s mercy was represented by the lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments. That lid was called the “mercy seat.” What is this mercy seat? In essence it is God’s “throne” (seat) of mercy. God instructed Moses how to build the mercy seat:

“You shall make a **mercy seat of pure gold**; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. **And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat**, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel” (Exodus 25:17-22, emphasis added).

The cherubim were to be made of one piece with the mercy seat. They faced each other, and their faces were to be directed toward the mercy seat. This is highly illustrative of the position Lucifer occupied and its significance in heaven before his rebellion. When he broke trust with God, he turned his face *away* from the mercy seat. In doing so, he rejected the concept that mercy and justice are inseparable. The Psalmist states:

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face (Psalm 89:14).

God’s righteousness, justice, mercy and truth are intrinsically intertwined with His law of love and do not, in fact cannot, contradict each other. They are a harmonious package, as Jesus revealed in His own life and death.

Because mercy is the “foundation” of God’s throne, it is not surprising that from the very beginning of Satan’s rebellion, the focus of his attack on God had to do precisely with the issues of justice and mercy. When talking to the Pharisees, Jesus indicated that justice and mercy were the “weightier matters of the law:”

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected **the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith**. These you ought to have done, without

leaving the others undone (Matthew 23:23, emphasis added).

As we read earlier, “in the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy.” Take another look at this quote:

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, **that justice was inconsistent with mercy**, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God’s favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner {DA 761.4, emphasis added}.

What could Satan have meant by the statement “justice was inconsistent with mercy?” Did he mean that *God’s justice* was indeed inconsistent with mercy? Or did he mean that, according to *his own opinion*, justice *could not* be consistent with mercy? If we weigh the words “justice was inconsistent with mercy” against the statement “every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan,” we have to conclude that the latter is the case—Satan was creating a new concept of justice. If the reader recalls, one of the Hebrew words for iniquity, *âvôn*, also means punishment. When iniquity was found in Lucifer the concept of punishment came into being.

At a certain point in his rebellion, Satan came to perceive justice as the equivalent of punishment, and as he rebelled against love, he began urging that God should accept his new definition of justice. To him, punishment became central to the concept of justice.

As one in holy office, he [LUCIFER] manifested an overbearing desire for justice, but it was a counterfeit of justice, which was entirely contrary to God’s love and compassion and mercy {RH September 7, 1897, par. 4, emphasis added}.

His [SATAN’S] object is to instigate evil, and when he has succeeded, throw all the blame upon the tempted one, presenting him before the Advocate, clothed in the black garments of sin, and endeavoring to secure to him the severest penalty. **He would urge justice without mercy**. Repentance he does not allow. The penalty, he argues, can never be remitted, and God be just {RH September 22, 1896, par. 7, emphasis added}.

If we take these statements and compare them to Ezekiel’s description of Lucifer’s fall, we shall gain a new insight into the nature of Satan’s attack on God’s law:

You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. “By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned” (Ezekiel 28:15-16).

Now we can interpret this passage to mean that Lucifer was perfect in his ways until this new concept of justice, the idea that “every sin must be punished,” arose in his mind. Thus the iniquity found in him was a new understanding of what justice should be, a penalizing justice, a justice which according to God is not justice at all.

Now we are confronted with two types of justices—one from God and one from Satan. To tell them apart we must sift through the Scriptures in order to identify which justice is of God and which is of Satan. Satan’s justice filled him with “violence within;” his sense of justice naturally caused him to become violent. Thus his justice uses violence.

In the Bible, God’s justice is often paired with His righteousness. If justice is done in the spirit of righteousness, then it is of God. Central to God’s justice are the concepts of goodness, loving-kindness, truth and mercy. That is His righteousness. Conversely, if justice is achieved through violence then it is of Satan.

The case of the adulterous woman is a clear example of both Satan’s and God’s justice. The Pharisees wanted to give her Satan’s justice and as such were prepared to stone her to death. Jesus gave her God’s justice: mercy. The adulterous woman received God’s justice and her life was transformed from that moment on. Consider, then, the following verses about justice:

He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord (Psalm 33:5, emphasis added).

Righteousness and justice are the **foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth** go before Your face (Psalm 89:14, emphasis added).

The Lord executes **righteousness and justice** for all who are oppressed (Psalm 103:6, emphasis added).

Zion shall be redeemed with **justice**, and her penitents with **righteousness** (Isaiah 1:27, emphasis added).

In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and **seeking justice and hastening righteousness**” (Isaiah 16:5, emphasis added).

Also I will make **justice** the measuring line, and **righteousness** the plummet; the hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow

the hiding place (Isaiah 28:17, emphasis added).

Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice (Isaiah 32:1, emphasis added).

The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with **justice and righteousness** (Isaiah 33:5, emphasis added).

“I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy” (Hosea 2:19, emphasis added).

According to these verses, God’s justice equals goodness, mercy, truth, loving-kindness and righteousness. Righteousness being rightness, rectitude and moral virtue, it has to be aligned with God’s *agape* love and all its attributes, otherwise it is not righteousness. There is never any mention of violence in God’s justice.

The word “justice” also refers to that which is right. In reference to God’s law of *agape* love, it indicates equity, which is by definition impartial and unconditional. Again, God’s justice has to be exercised within the parameters of His *agape* love. Justice that steps outside of *agape* love is a false justice—it is Satan’s *perversion* of justice.

Satan created a new type of rightness, rectitude and moral virtue, a new justice that operates *outside* of *agape* love. His justice is not filled with goodness, mercy, truth, and loving-kindness. Rather, it is cruel, mean and destructive—it is violent. Consider the following words:

The condemning power of Satan would lead him to institute a theory of justice inconsistent with mercy. He claims to be officiating as the voice and power of God, claims that his decisions are justice, are pure and without fault. Thus he takes his position on the judgment seat and declares that his counsels are infallible. **Here his merciless justice comes in, a counterfeit of justice, abhorrent to God** {CTr 11.4, emphasis added}.

Satan instituted “a theory of justice,” a counterfeit justice, that is “inconsistent with mercy.” This means that his justice is “merciless” — devoid of mercy. Not only that, but he deceived the universe into thinking that his justice was coming from God—“he claims to be officiating as the voice and power of God.” And he insists that his justice is the correct one, that his “decisions are justice, are pure and without fault.” “Thus he takes his position on the judgment seat and declares that his counsels are infallible.”

This is “abhorrent to God,” because God is the personification of mercy. In fact, to God, Satan’s justice is actually *injustice*—and this injustice done through a false justice is what iniquity in essence is.

This explains why “Jesus loved righteousness and hated iniquity,” as stated in the Book of Hebrews:

But to the Son He says:

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness [INIQUITY];
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions” (Hebrews 1:8-9, emphasis added).

The counterfeit justice of Satan is a “censuring” kind of justice that judges and condemns others:

The **counterfeit justice that Satan advocates is abhorred by God. His censuring** must not be imitated by any who are partakers of divine mercy and love. Guard your own soul, my brother, my sister; watch closely for the first jealous thought, the first suggestion to **question or judge others**. We must not be **severe** with the infirmities of others, but attend zealously to our own individual case {SW September 25, 1906, par. 10, emphasis added}.

Questioning and judging others are part of the package of Satan’s counterfeit justice. There is nothing positive in censuring and criticizing others; rather, criticism only reveals a harsh spirit that seeks to accuse and indict. This is what Satan has done to our moral make up. This spirit is far removed from God’s impartial goodness, mercy, and love.

Consider the following verses—they show that to use violence in the context of justice is a contradiction, a perversion:

If you see the oppression of the poor, and the **violent perversion of justice and righteousness** in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them (Ecclesiastes 5:8, emphasis added).

In transgressing and lying against the Lord,
And departing from our God,
**Speaking oppression and revolt,
Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.
Justice is turned back,**
And righteousness stands afar off;
For truth is fallen in the street,
And equity cannot enter (Isaiah 59:13-14, emphasis added).

God’s justice can be traded off and blocked by a false, violent perversion of His justice. Thus it is that justice “stands afar off,” “is fallen in the streets,” “and equity

cannot enter.” The next verses show how violence and justice are incompatible, but that often justice and righteousness are perverted into something they should not be:

“Thus says the Lord God: ‘Enough, O princes of Israel! **Remove violence and plundering, execute justice and righteousness**, and stop dispos-
sessing My people,’ says the Lord God” (Ezekiel 45:9, emphasis added).

“Seek the Lord and live, lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, with no one to quench it in Bethel— you who **turn justice to worm-wood**, and lay righteousness to rest in the earth” (Amos 5:6-7, emphasis added)!

Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen? Yet you have **turned justice into gall**, and the fruit of **righteousness into wormwood** (Amos 6:12, emphasis added).

True justice is the fruit of righteousness. But Satan has turned this word into “gall” and “wormwood”—both noxious and poisonous plants. Satan’s justice is filled with violence and oppression—it is not equitable.

We all know Satan’s type of justice quite well and have experienced its punishing and destructive nature. Nothing good comes out of his style of justice, even if it may appear that way for a time. The eventual end-result of his system is alienation, rebellion, pain, strife, destruction and death.

Lucifer was the first sinner and according to his own reasoning, God should have punished him. Isn’t that the logical conclusion? But God did not do any such thing. Lucifer’s banishment from heaven was not an arbitrary act of God; he banished himself by being completely out of harmony with every inhabitant of heaven. They stopped listening to his cunning deceptions—heaven rejected his “wisdom.”

Furthermore, it was his own mind, his own thinking that banished him from the favor of God. Lucifer became the first unbeliever. Because of his new concept of justice, he could not believe in pardon whether for himself or for anyone else. Ellen White states:

Satan, the chief of the fallen angels, once had an exalted position in heaven. He was next in honor to Christ. The knowledge which he, as well as the angels who fell with him, had of the character of God, of His goodness, His mercy, wisdom, and excellent glory, made their guilt unpardonable {Con 21.1}.

Lucifer rejected mercy itself, and by doing so he committed the unpardonable sin. This is so, not because God could not pardon Lucifer—no, from God’s point of view he is pardoned already. If God’s love is *un-conditional* and *impartial* then even Satan has been forgiven. But notice:

There was no possible hope for the redemption of those who had witnessed and enjoyed the inexpressible glory of heaven, and had seen the terrible majesty of God,

and, in presence of all this glory, had rebelled against Him. **There were no new and wonderful exhibitions of God's exalted power that could impress them so deeply as those they had already experienced.** If they could rebel in the very presence of glory inexpressible, **they could not be placed in a more favorable condition to be proved. There was no reserve force of power, nor were there any greater heights and depths of infinite glory to overpower their jealous doubts and rebellious murmuring.** Their guilt and their punishment must be in proportion to their exalted privileges in the heavenly courts {Con 21.2, emphasis added}.

If Satan could rebel against the embodiment of mercy and love, what hope was there for him to come back to God? He had already been exposed fully to the God of love—and he rejected Him. Thus he was caught in his own trap. He would have to eventually suffer the very punishment he had formulated for others—not because God demanded it, but because *his own mind set it so*. His condemnation will come solely from his own law of Good and Evil—from his “evil heart of unbelief.” Consider the following verses:

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion” (Hebrews 3:12-15).

“An evil heart of unbelief” is the only thing that separates us from the God of unconditional love. None of us has fallen so low that God cannot forgive us. None of us has become so treacherous and evil that God cannot reform us. The only sin that cannot be pardoned is the sin of unbelief in the true character of God—and again, not because God won't pardon it, but because unbelief itself cuts us off from the God of mercy.

In the Koran, the Devil is called *Iblis*. Notice the definition of this word, according the *Encyclopedia Mythica*:

Iblis is the name for the devil in the Qur'an. Although the term “devil” comes from the Greek diabolos, the Muslims derived the name from the Arabic, *balasa*, “he despaired,” which can be interpreted “despaired of the mercy of God” but he is also al-Shairan, Satan, and “the enemy of God.” The latter aspect of Satan is a commonly shared belief of both Muslims and Christians. According to one tradition, when Allah ordered the angels to bow down to the newly created man, Adam, Iblis refused to do so because he, being made of fire, thought himself superior to a creature made of earth. He continues tempting humans, especially through the whisper (*waswas*, “he whispered”) and false suggestion (*haiif*). In the end, it is believed, he will be cast into Jahannam (Hell). Another commonly shared belief held by both religions is that the universal existence of evil in personal lives is usually experienced as a consequence of a personal agent, the devil. Although both Satan and al-Shairan are identified, Shairan also has a distinct existence, perhaps as the leader of the jinns, a personification of temptation. This coincides with the Muslim belief that each individual is accompanied by two personal spiritual entities; an angel records all the good deeds the person performs, and a shairan who records the

bad deeds (“Iblis.” Encyclopedia Mythica from Encyclopedia Mythica Online. <<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/i/iblis.html>> [Accessed March 02, 2016]).

The Arabic word from which his Arabic name comes from means “he despaired, which can be interpreted ‘despaired of the mercy of God.’” *Iblis* despaired of the mercy of God not because God doesn’t have mercy, but because *Iblis* stopped believing in mercy altogether. Note how he and his angels record “all the good deeds” and the “bad deeds” of human beings. This is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If, according to 1 Corinthians 13, God keeps no record of wrongs, and if our good works do not earn our salvation, then it is clear that it is the Devil and his angels who are recording these things. They are keeping a record so that they can accuse us before God.

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for **the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down**” (Revelation 12:10).

By not believing in God’s mercy and love we cut ourselves off from mercy. “An evil heart of unbelief” is the only thing that will prevent us from having eternal life. It is no wonder Paul calls it “an evil heart of unbelief!” We must hang on to Jesus’ love and mercy as if to a life raft.

Men would no longer be the slaves of sin if they would but turn from Satan’s alluring, delusive attractions, and **look to Jesus long enough to see and understand his love**. New habits will be formed, and powerful propensities for evil will be held in check. **Our Leader is a conqueror, and he guides us on to certain victory**. Our Advocate, Jesus, is pleading before his Father’s throne in our behalf, and he is also pleading with the sinner, saying, “Turn ye, for why will ye die?” **Has not God done everything possible through Christ to win men from Satanic deception?** Has he not given himself? Did he not for our sake become poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich? Is he not a risen Savior, ever living to make intercession for us? Is he not ever following up his great work of atonement by the work of the Holy Spirit on every heart? **The bow of mercy still arches the throne of God, testifying to the fact that every soul who believes in Christ as his personal Savior, shall have everlasting life. Mercy and justice are blended in God’s dealing with his heritage** {ST September 19, 1895, par. 2, emphasis added}.

Can you imagine this—that there is an unfathomable future eternal life being offered to every human being, not based on their own goodness or evilness, but freely given, but many will lose it simply because they do not believe? What is “the deceitfulness of sin”? It is the same unbelief that gripped Lucifer’s mind when he deviated from God’s justice and mercy. The same unbelief he has “instilled” in angels and human beings:

That which Satan had instilled into the minds of the angels ‘a word here and a word there’ opened the way for a long list of suppositions. In his artful way

he drew expressions of doubt from them. Then, when he was interviewed, he accused those whom he had educated. He laid all the disaffection on the ones he had led. As one in holy office, he manifested an overbearing desire for justice, but it was a counterfeit of justice, which was entirely contrary to God's love and compassion and mercy {RH September 7, 1897, par. 4, emphasis added}.

Satan was sowing seeds of unbelief as he was drawing expressions of doubt from the angels. The particular target of his seeds of unbelief was the justice of God. Satan was leading an entire section of the heavenly hosts into unbelief regarding God's justice.

His success is evident by how fallen angels reacted to Jesus while He was here on earth. They often recoiled from Him in fear and typically exclaimed, "Have you come to destroy us before our time?" They too were deceived by the condemning moral law of Good and Evil, and expected that Jesus would use Satan's counterfeit of justice. This is the only justice they now believe in, and as a consequence, this is how they see God.

The human race has been held captive by Satan's deceptions for a long time. Ever since Adam ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil we have been exchanging God's justice for Satan's. We interpret everything, even the Scriptures with the same filter. The result is that we have been keeping away from God because we see Him as condemning. But all condemnation, without exception, springs from Satan's law of iniquity, and is a by-product of his counterfeit justice.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them**, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-20, emphasis added).

God's mercy never ends because love never ends. God "is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). It is the deceptions of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, etched in our minds, that block us from seeing His mercy and appropriating it for ourselves.

When a man takes the position that when he has once made a decision he must stand by it, and never to alter his decision, he is on the same ground as was Lucifer when he rebelled against God. He held his plans regarding the government of heaven as an exalted, unchangeable theory {3BC 1161.6}.

Are we open to see the evidence and allow God to change our hearts and our way of thinking regarding His character?



20

FEAR

Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears (Psalm 34:3-4).

God's love is perfect. By definition, divine love always abides by its principles of righteousness and never deviates from them (1 Corinthians 13). Freedom is an inherent component of *agape* love. Without freedom, love ceases to be love and becomes slavery. True love elicits a spontaneous response from within us—without external pressures. If love grants freedom it cannot also use force; neither can it be arbitrary, choosing when and where to grant freedom. Such inconsistencies cannot be a part of *agape* love. *Agape's* freedom has to be absolute. This means *agape* cannot be violent. And if *agape* cannot be violent then it can never elicit fear.

This is precisely what John, the apostle who experienced the closest relationship with Jesus, wrote:

There is no fear in love: but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4: 18, 19).

God is perfect love. There is no fear in God's perfect love. Fear involves "torment." What did John mean by this? In Greek, "torment" is *kólasis*:

chastisement, punishment, torment, perhaps with the idea of deprivation" (Strong's Concordance). *Kólasis* comes from *kolaphos* — "a buffeting, a blow - properly, punishment that "fits" (matches) the one punished (R. Trench); torment from living in the dread of upcoming judgment from shirking one's duty (HELPS Word-Studies).

Fear is a reaction to violence, to punishment. It involves "torment" be-

cause punishment elicits an expectation of pain. We live in a system where punishment is used daily by others and by us. The whole world is involved with punishment in one form or another. Many of us believe that negative input is necessary in order for positive things to happen. And many believe that God relies heavily on it. Dare we question this paradigm?

The idea that punishment should fit the crime is central to Satan's law of Good and Evil. He has *peddled* this law throughout human history using various means. In India this is known as Karma; in Asian countries, as Yin and Yang or Tao. In the western world the two major disseminators of Satan's moral law have been Freemasonry and the Roman Catholic Church—but they are by no means the sole promoters of this moral law. The serpent “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). The most recent edition of the moral law of Good and Evil has a very benign and appealing title—Social Justice. Ignatius de Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order of the Roman Catholic Church, started this movement based on the reward and punishment principle of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

We need not be deceived anymore, however. If anything contains violence we know it is not of God, since violence has its origins in iniquity, the thing that was “found in” Lucifer. If anything causes or uses fear as a tool for control, we can know it is not of God.

John said “there is no fear in love:” “perfect love casts out fear.” Earlier in the chapter he says, “he who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1John 4:8). What can we deduce from these passages?

No one would question that God is perfect love. Here we learn that fear and perfect love do not mix. In fact, “perfect love casts out fear.” This means that if we have any fear towards God, we don't really *know* Him and His perfect love. This also means that once we come to know God's perfect love fear will be cast out from us and we will no longer be afraid of Him.

John is making a profound statement here. He is saying in essence that there is nothing in God to cause us to be afraid of Him. If we are afraid of Him, it is not because He is fearful, but because *we* have misunderstood and misjudged Him. According to this verse, if there were anything in God that could make us respond to Him in fear, then God would cease to be perfect *agape* love.

What grand conclusion do we arrive at? If there is no fear in love, and if fear is caused by punishment, then God, being perfect love, does not, in fact, *cannot*, ever punish. Period. A fearful response is simply not compatible with *agape* love. It would be impossible for us to be made perfect in love if there was any fear involved in our relationship with God.

John also states that, “we love God because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Would we ever have been able to respond to God in love, if He had not first shown us His *agape* love? No. Why not? Without the knowledge of His love, we would always respond to Him in fear. If God hadn’t shown us *agape* love, we would never know what true, unconditional love is—we would only know the conditional love that comes from the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

We know that human love is fickle, changeable; and we *thought* that God had the same love as ours. Therefore, God had to first show us His love so that we would see the difference between the two — and He did this through His Son, Jesus Christ. Notice how Paul explains this:

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us** (Romans 5:6-8, emphasis added).

“When we were still without strength” — morally weak through the moral law of Good and Evil, (we were made weak by him who “weakened the nations”), Christ died for us, “the ungodly” (“the ungodly” are *unlike* God). We can see here that God was not acting by a merit system. He was dying for the undeserving—the ungodly—and our merits had no part in it.

But Paul takes this point even further. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.” In the selfish and conditional system of Good and Evil hardly anyone would dare to give his life for another, whether he is righteous or not. But perhaps we would dare to give our lives for someone that is good—someone who has been good to us, who *deserves* our love. We certainly would not give up our lives for an unworthy person, much less for an “ungodly,” evil person; this is *conditional* love.

“But God demonstrates *His own love* toward us”—God demonstrates His absolute, unconditional love for us. How? By sending His Son to die for sinners, for the worthless. We didn’t deserve God’s love; we didn’t merit it. Yet He loved us anyway and gave His life for us. What greater proof do we need of His love for us?

Once we see the love God poured on us through Jesus Christ, then all traces of fear of punishment should be removed from our minds. There is no punishment from God, and knowing His *agape* love, this alone can cast out our fear.

Let’s analyze fear in more detail. Fear is a distressing emotion caused by the belief that an impending bad experience is about to happen. Fear creates panic in our minds and bodies, and causes us to engage in all sorts of desperate and even irrational behaviors.

Besides being an emotion, fear also serves as a powerful *motivator*. How many

times have we been motivated to act, simply out of fear? We cannot count the times. Every single human being has had to deal with fear in one form or another since childhood, and fear has caused us to feel insecure, unsafe.

John is saying that “perfect love casts out fear,” and what that means is that in God’s kingdom there is no place for fear—that is indeed good news! Satan’s system brought in fear, but by showing us His *agape* love, God removes our fear and replaces it with love, assurance, security and safety.

Fear came into the earth immediately after Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The fruit of that Tree caused them to dread God for fear of punishment. Fear caused them to hide from God. They ran away from Him needlessly—God hadn’t come to punish them. But their minds had become imbued with Satan’s moral law, and fear had obscured, masked God’s love.

Since then, God has been dealing with a race of people who are running away from Him, and He only wants their friendship. The Father of the prodigal son watched the road day after day in hope of seeing His son appear in the horizon. The moment He distinguished the form of His child in the distance, He ran to him and not one thought of condemnation or punishment came into His mind.

Is God, the Creator who lovingly gave us all things, such a monster that He should evoke such terror? Did Jesus’ revelation of the Father promote such dread? The answer is no, quite the contrary. The problem is not with God, but with *our view* of Him. In fact, we have noticed that throughout the Bible, when heavenly beings communicate with humans, the first thing they say is “fear not,” “do not fear” or “be not afraid.” God has been trying to reach us, but first He has to remove our fear so that we will come to Him and accept life.

Having said as much, whom do you think the following verse is talking about? Is it God or Satan?

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

Those who “kill the body but cannot kill the soul” are human beings, are they not? Human beings don’t have the power to destroy our soul. But who is the one able to deceive us and thus destroy both our souls and bodies forever? It is Satan, of course; but do we need to fear Satan when God is on our side? Look at the next words of this passage:

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31).

Some read this whole passage and claim that it is God we are to fear, that it is God “who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” But the context shows that Jesus is telling us exactly the opposite: He is telling us not to fear the Father, for we are “of more value than many sparrows,” who are each individually and carefully noted by the Creator at any one time. If God has such loving concern for sparrows, a lower life form, what about us? We are of much more value to Him than many sparrows put together.

We are to be cautious of those who do not understand perfect love, because they will not hesitate to take us down into eternal perdition along with them. Satan is able to destroy both soul and body in hell through his lies, and he will do so if we hang on to his deceptions about God.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem sitting on the donkey, John quoted the prophecy of that event given by the prophet Zechariah:

Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt” (John 12:14-15).

If we go back to Zechariah we see that the original prophecy says something altogether different:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9).

Why did John take out the words “rejoice greatly” and insert instead the words “fear not”? Did he interpret the words “rejoice greatly” to mean, “rejoice greatly instead of fearing greatly?”

God was coming to earth in the person of Jesus, and His message was, loud and clear: “God is coming; don’t be afraid of Him! Look at Him; He is bringing salvation, not punishment! He is lowly, humble, and is even riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey, a baby donkey that has never been broken in, and yet... look, how that little donkey trusts Him, fearlessly! Even the animals trust Him; had they any reason to fear Him they would not come near Him!” The animals get it. When will we?

The kingdom of fear is described in Isaiah 14:

It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you **rest from your sorrow, and from your fear** and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: “How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased! The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers; he who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he who ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted and no one hinders. The

whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing. Indeed the cypress trees rejoice over you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, ‘Since you were cut down, no woodsman has come up against us’” (Isaiah 14:3-8, emphasis added).

Who is the “king of Babylon”? Who is he who has oppressed the people of the earth, ruling them with a scepter of continual wrath, anger? The answer is given a few verses down, in verse 12:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol [GRAVE], to the lowest depths of the Pit (Isaiah 14:12-15, emphasis added).

Lucifer’s grand scheme to overthrow God’s law of *agape* love will come to nothing, because God’s law is truth and it is eternal. God’s law of love is the only answer for peace, coexistence and life. Lucifer will be brought down to Sheol, the grave. His system of violence itself will kill him and those who choose to follow him.

A future without fear is coming soon, because the kingdom of violence, which uses fear to motivate us into Good behavior, is about to implode and is coming to an end. Then there will be no more fear:

But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and **no one shall make them afraid**; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken (Micah 4:4, emphasis added).

A time will come when there will be no one to make us afraid. This means that there will be no more punishment because there will be no moral law of Good and Evil and no more Satan.

If God used punishment now, then He would have to continue using punishment forevermore, because God doesn’t change. And if God used punishment eternally then fear would also exist eternally. But thankfully God does not resort to such despicable and cruel measures to achieve order.

Take a look at the verses that precede the above verse:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; **He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.**” For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; **they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.** But everyone shall sit under his vine

and under his fig tree, and **no one shall make them afraid**; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken (Micah 4:1-4; emphasis added).

How interesting that it is in the last days, our days, that God's mountain, a symbol for "kingdom," will finally be exalted above Lucifer's kingdom! Lucifer has ruled for six thousand years, and we had thought that his rule of wrath was coming from God! But in the last days, God's kingdom will be established. This means it hasn't been established or exalted yet, which in turn means that the rule of the past six thousand years proceeded from Satan's kingdom, not God. Satan had certain boundaries that he could not pass, but he has been the god of this world until now.

Notice what happens when God's kingdom is established: the people go to Him to learn His ways, His paths, His law. The law of *agape* love will go forth from Zion, God's city, and "the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," the city of peace. God will judge us in righteousness, with His *agape* love. He will have mercy on us and His love will heal us.

And notice too, what happens when we learn His ways, His paths, and His law: we take those instruments used for violence and death and turn them into instruments of peace and life. Plowshares and pruning hooks are gardening tools used to grow life, not destroy it. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." Why? Because we have learned the ways of the Lord, we have learned His paths, His law of love! We will sit under our trees without any fear that someone will come and destroy our houses and us. What good news!

Can you imagine how this verse will speak to some communities in the world that have no such peace? Communities whose homes are bombarded in the middle of the night? What this verse is really telling us is that Lucifer will be gone, along with his system of violence that caused fear in us.

Look at this next verse, from Zephaniah:

The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and **no one shall make them afraid** (Zephaniah 3:13, emphasis added).

Who are "the remnant of Israel?" The verse itself tells us: they are those who "do no unrighteousness"—no iniquity. These tell no more lies about God—"no deceitful tongue." They see God's true character of love and allow Him to transform them back into His image—*agape* love. These will live in the kingdom of love, where no one will make them afraid.

Perfect love will have cast out all fear. We will see that God is not in the business of forcing anyone into compliance through threats of punishment.

But all this is so foreign to us, you might say. How can we understand it, if all we know is this system of punishment? True, how can we know God's ways?

God has one solution to this problem: His Son. God sent us Jesus Christ. Looking at Him we can learn God's ways.

Zacharias' prophecy on the occasion of his son's birth (John the Baptist) says that Jesus Christ would deliver us from the fear we have been in bondage to:

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,
 For He has visited and redeemed His people,
 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
 In the house of His servant David,
 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
 Who have been since the world began,
 That we should be saved from our enemies
 And from the hand of all who hate us,
 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers
 And to remember His holy covenant,
 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
 To grant us that we,
 Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
 Might serve Him without fear,
 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:68-75).

And about his own son, Zacharias says:

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;
 For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,
**To give knowledge of salvation to His people
 By the remission of their sins,**
 Through the tender mercy of our God,
 With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;
 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
 To guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:76-79, emphasis added).

John the Baptist would “prepare” the “ways” of the Lord by preparing the people—all people—to receive Him who would give us a true revelation of the God of love. John the Baptist would give them “the knowledge of salvation”—he would help them see that their sins have always been forgiven “through the tender mercy of our God.” This is the light he would give “to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death”—those who sit under the *shadow* of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Did Jesus use punishment in any way to accomplish His ways? Did He ever use fear? The answer is no, not once do we see Him doing that. But, you might say, what about the cleansing of the temple? Didn't Jesus use fear there?

Jesus didn't throw tables around; He only tipped them over. This

was a *symbolic* act, not a violent one. By overthrowing the tables of the money changers Jesus was overthrowing their false concepts of God's character, i.e. that God demanded animal sacrifices before He could forgive us. Jesus was upsetting their traditions and rituals. Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit; that is Jesus' Spirit, therefore Jesus must have had self-control. A person who is in a rage behaves differently—they are out of control, and Jesus was never out of control. When Jesus cleansed the temple, He didn't whip anyone or throw tables around in a rage. By overturning the tables He was making a point—he was overturning their temple traditions.

Had Jesus used fear in the cleansing of the temple, the children would have been the first ones to flee the scene. Those who were afraid were coming from a paradigm of violence and fear, and they perceived Jesus from their own paradigm. We see the same thing happening at the second coming; the Bible depicts two groups then. One will be mortally afraid of Jesus, asking for the mountains to fall on them:

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:15-16).

God picked the most peaceful and nonviolent animal to symbolize Jesus. How wrathful is a lamb? The fear felt by this group is not caused by the Lamb—it is caused by what is inside them, their false understanding of God. They believe in a God of reward and punishment and suppose that He is coming to punish them—just like Adam and Eve in the Garden when they hid from God.

Those who know God will rejoice greatly at the sight of Jesus:

And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).

In 2 Thessalonians, Paul says that they will "admire" Him because they have believed the testimony of Jesus Christ about God's love:

These [WHO DO NOT KNOW GOD, AND WHO DO NOT OBEY THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST] shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10, emphasis added).

Is God able to change our wrong perceptions of Him? Yes, but He has only one way to do it—through His Son Jesus Christ. If we don't believe the Son's testimony, there is nothing else God can pull out of His resources. Jesus is the ultimate revela-

21

LET THERE BE
LIGHT

The first few verses of the Hebrew Scriptures reveal a metaphor deserving of much consideration and study. Genesis chapter one, verses one to five, states:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, “**Let there be light**”; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day (Genesis 1:1-5, emphasis added).

It is highly significant that the metaphor of light and darkness, Day and Night, is the first theme presented to us in the Bible. These opening words reveal not only the *creation* of the earth but also the grand theme of the *great controversy* between God and Satan—the war that had begun in heaven when iniquity was found in Lucifer, and which was about to be introduced on earth through Adam’s choice to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. *Light* and *darkness* are the metaphors chosen by God to help us see the truth which has been hidden from our eyes by the deceptions of our common enemy. As we have seen, these deceptions have had primarily to do with God’s *character*.

Notice the same use of these two words in the following verse from the New Testament:

For it is the God who commanded **light to shine out of darkness**, who has shone in our hearts to give the **light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ** (2 Corinthians 4:6, emphasis added).

In this verse, Paul makes a direct reference to Genesis chapter one, verse three. God commanded “light to shine out of darkness” on the first day of creation when He said “Let there be light.” “Light” shining “out of darkness” implies that darkness was already there, and since darkness represents Satan (“God is light, in whom there is no darkness at all,” 1 John 1:5), this signifies that he had already rebelled against God and His law. His presence at the creation of the earth is revealed in the above five verses through the word “darkness.” He was already actively operating by his law of Good and Evil, which was spreading confusion about God throughout the entire universe.

What was the light God commanded to shine out of darkness, according to 2 Corinthians 4:6? It was “the light of the **knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**” This means that on the first day of creation, Jesus, “through whom also He [GOD] made the worlds, (Hebrews 1:2)” was revealing “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” to the universe and to the future human race. The light that He commanded to shine out of darkness (Satan’s accusations against God’s character) was the very process of *creating the earth*—this was “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.” What does this mean?

The Bible indicates that it was the creation of the earth itself that revealed that Jesus, along with the Father, was the Creator. The intelligent beings in the universe knew that the Father was the Creator, but they didn’t know that Jesus too was a Creator. The very act of revealing Jesus as the Creator became necessary for the precise reason that no one knew He was the Creator. How can this be, you might ask?

If the reader recalls, the war in heaven was between Michael and the dragon:

And war broke out in heaven: **Michael and his angels fought with the dragon;** and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation [THE CROSS], and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the **blood of the Lamb** [THE CROSS] and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Revelation 12:7-12, emphasis added).

Who is Michael? This passage itself reveals who He was: He was God’s “Christ,” “the Lamb” who conquered and destroyed the lies of “the accuser” by revealing the true character of God through His own blood, “the blood of the Lamb:”

Inasmuch then as the children [HUMANITY] have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself [THE LAMB, CHRIST] likewise shared in the same, **that through death [THE CROSS] He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil** (Hebrews 2:14, emphasis added).

In heaven, Michael and Lucifer stood next to each other as covering cherubs. Although Michael was God—and the word Michael means “who is like God?”—He took on the form of His creatures, just as He did here on earth when He became a man.

The war in heaven was fought between the two covering cherubs, the two protectors, guardians of the law. One of them had turned against the law and wanted to change it. Michael, the Son of God, would not go along with Lucifer’s proposed changes. Michael “loved righteousness and hated iniquity.” He knew—He, the true Lawgiver—that His law was as eternal as He and the Father were eternal.

A time came, after iniquity was found in Lucifer, that God gathered all the angels of heaven in order to reveal Christ true identity, and the Father Himself made the announcement:

The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. The Son of God shared the Father’s throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. About the throne gathered the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng—“ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” (Revelation 5:11.), the most exalted angels, as ministers and subjects, rejoicing in the light that fell upon them from the presence of the Deity. Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven **the King declared that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will. The Son of God had wrought the Father’s will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants.** But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God’s plan, but would exalt the Father’s glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love {PP 36.2, emphasis added}.

“The King of the universe,” the Father, “summoned” all the angels “that in their presence He might set forth the *true position* of His Son,” Michael. They had known Him as one of their own, an angel, a covering cherub. Now they see His true identity for the first time, and the creation of the earth would confirm God’s announcement. It was thus that the Father said:

For to which of the angels did He ever say:
 “You are My Son,
 Today I have begotten You”?
 And again:
 “I will be to Him a Father,

And He shall be to Me a Son”?
 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:
 “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”
 And of the angels He says:
 “Who makes His angels spirits
 And His ministers a flame of fire.”
 But to the Son He says:
 “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
 A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.
 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness
 [INIQUITY];
 Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
 With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

And:

“You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,
 And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
 They will perish, but You remain;
 And they will all grow old like a garment;
 Like a cloak You will fold them up,
 And they will be changed.
 But You are the same,
 And Your years will not fail.”
 But to which of the angels has He ever said:
 “Sit at My right hand,
 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool” (Hebrews 1:5-13, emphasis added)?

Why is God making a distinction between His Son and the angels, if not for the reason that the Son had been under the guise of an angel prior to the announcement? God had not revealed His Son’s true position prior to this announcement. How is this possible? you might ask.

According to the Bible, when Jesus created, He *spoke*, and things came into being.

By faith we understand that **the worlds were framed by the word of God**, so that the **things which are seen were not made of things which are visible** (Hebrews 11:3, emphasis added).

“The worlds were framed by the word of God,” and “things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” This suggests that prior to the creation of the earth, Christ’s creative process was an *invisible* one. Perhaps one could even say that the universe was made *incognito* by the Son—no one knew it was made by the Son.

Once Satan challenged and defamed God’s character it became of paramount necessity (not only for the salvation of the earth, but of the entire universe) that

God reveal His Son's true nature. Why? Because He was the only One who would be able to unmask the lies of the deceiver, and reveal the Father's pure character of *agape* love. Jesus' credentials must be disclosed and His authority established. Truth was the only weapon God used in this cosmic war.

The Bible does disclose Christ's true position in various places:

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in **God who created all things through Jesus Christ** (Ephesians 3:8-9, emphasis added).

...For by Him [THE SON] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. **All things were created through Him and for Him** (Colossians 1:16, emphasis added).

Satan had spread lies about God; thus, God commanded that truth, light, be given, and He did it through His Son.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, **has in these last days spoken to us by His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they (Hebrews 1:1-4, emphasis added).

God "made the worlds" through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Son is "the express image of His person." And the Son upholds "all things by the word of His power." It is through the "word of His power" that Jesus creates—"Let there be..."

This first piece of evidence, given at the beginning of the Bible, reveals who Christ is and what His true position is. But it also reveals who God is—His character—because Christ is the "express image of the Father." How are both the Father's and the Son's characters revealed in verse one?

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," (Genesis 1:1). The Father did this through His Son, who had the responsibility of executing all the work of creation. In the beginning, right in verse one, the Son is revealing that He is the Creator. Jesus is the Creator— this is the light, the truth about who He is, "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning," James 1:17. Jesus is "the Father of lights." What this means is that He is the ultimate light regarding who the Father is. Jesus is "the light, the way, and the life."

“I am the **light of the world**. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12, emphasis added).

In Genesis chapter one, verse two, darkness sets in—this is not the work of the Creator. Darkness is death and destruction, and is the work of the Destroyer; but God is the light, the giver of life; He is the Creator, not the Destroyer. The “light” is restated again in verse three: “Let there be light; and there was light.”

What light did God create on the first day if the sun was created later, on the fourth day? Which “light” is referred to in verse three? This light could only be coming directly from God, and since this light is not a light we can see with our eyes today, as we can see the rest of creation (we don’t see it today in a literal sense as we see the light from the sun) this light could be metaphoric.

If this is true, then the light God created on day one was this: that as God rolled up His sleeves, so to speak, as He began the process of creating this planet, He began *revealing* who He was, giving the light, the truth, about *Himself*. This was the light the universe had never before seen with their own eyes—the *Creator* at work.

For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead (Romans 1:20).

We are told that the universe, angels and intelligent beings, the “stars” and “the sons of God,” shouted for joy when they saw God the Son in the process of creating the earth:

“... Who is this who darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?
Now prepare yourself like a man;
I will question you, and you shall answer Me.
“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Tell Me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements?
Surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
To what were its foundations fastened?
Or who laid its cornerstone,
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:2-7, emphasis added)?

We saw earlier that the Bible refers to Jesus as “the cornerstone the builders rejected” and we saw the meaning of the word “stone” and its meaning in the context of erecting God’s kingdom. Here, in Job 38:6, and Genesis 1 is this “cornerstone” being laid. In the beginning, when the sons of God shouted for joy, it was because they saw Jesus—the metaphoric Cornerstone—*creating*. By

creating, Jesus was laying down the corner stone, the foundation of all our understanding about God. He was laying the groundwork upon which the entire “building” of the knowledge of God was to be erected—He was giving “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.” He was showing the entire universe that God is the *Creator*. And as He did so, the universe stood in awe and “sang together,” and “shouted for joy.” What a chorus that must have been! Someday we too will hear them singing, and what a joy that will be! We will join them, and sing together the praises of our Creator!

If we follow the trail of the word “light” in the Bible we will find all the evidence needed to exonerate God from all of Satan’s false accusations. Here is exhibit number one for the defense: “God is light.” It is doubtful that anyone will dispute that throughout the Bible the word “light,” when used metaphorically, is always used in reference to God. The numerous uses of this metaphor creates such a complex network of information that it is hard to keep up with its complexity!

The Psalmist declares regarding the Creator:

For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light (Psalm 36:9).

He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday (Psalm 37:6).

These two verses tell us that God’s light is intricately connected with life, with righteousness and with His merciful justice. God’s light is His righteousness, and His righteousness is His justice, which is entirely opposed to Satan’s “justice.”

In Genesis chapter one, verse two, we see darkness already at work—“the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.” What is this darkness, if God is light? This darkness can only represent Satan and his principles. And we must always keep in mind that Satan’s darkness contains a confusing and deceptive duality—a mixture of a supposed light and darkness. In fact, it is this confusing duality that causes the earth to become “without form” and “void,” as we shall soon see.

How are we to interpret Genesis chapter one, verses one, two and three? Did God create the earth in verse one, and then did Satan destroy it in verse two? And then did God begin recreating the earth again in verse three? This does not make sense—especially if we look at the Hebrew meaning of the words “without form” and “void” in verse two.

These words imply that there was life, during this period of darkness, intelligent life, which at some point ceased to exist. The only way to think

of these two opening verses in a logical way, then, is to think of them as the shortest and most concise *prophetic history* of the great controversy. This means that verses one and two encapsulate the history of the earth from creation to the millennium—seven thousand years. God created the earth, verse one, and in seven thousands years Satan and his system of Good and Evil destroyed it, verse two. God was predicting what Satan’s Knowledge of Good and Evil would do to the earth and its inhabitants.

Verse three then starts at the beginning again—now we are going to get the *details* of the story. It is as if God first gives us the big picture, and then He breaks it down for us to see the smaller parts. And the big picture is: God *created* the earth and Satan *destroyed* it.

When God created the earth, Satan had already rebelled in heaven. God is pure light, but darkness was already present through Satan in the beginning of our earth’s history. The proof is that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was in the Garden of Eden. Then what happens in verse two is that an enemy comes in and destroys the earth: “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep” (Genesis 1 2). This process of the destruction of the earth takes six thousand years. In the seventh thousandth year earth lies in complete and ultimate chaos.

The apostle Peter says:

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that **with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day**” (2 Peter 3:8, emphasis added).

Creation week is not only a *literal* week, from which we get our weekly cycle, but a *symbolic* and *prophetic* period of seven thousand years—“with the Lord one day is as a thousand years.” Each day of creation week equals one thousand years of human history. In this one-day-for-a-thousand-years week, God revealed to us, in a nutshell, the history of the earth in the context of the great controversy. Thus the literal creation week is also one whole symbolic week showing us the history of the great controversy.

Each day of creation week ends with the phrase: “So the evening and the morning were the second day.” “Evening and morning” represent night and day, which represent darkness and light. This symbolizes that throughout the six thousand years Satan’s and God’s principles, the “two principles contending for the supremacy,” would run parallel on the earth. There would be darkness and there would be light.

On day one God divides light from darkness—He reveals He is a cre-

ator. He is indicating that as we see destruction taking place throughout the ensuing millennia, we are not to become confused, thinking that this is His work. By dividing “the light from the darkness” and calling “the light Day,” and the darkness “Night,” God was separating His work, of *giving life*, from Satan’s work of *destroying life*. This lays the *foundation, the corner stone*, for our understanding of His character.

On day two, God divides the waters above from the waters below—the flood took place in the second millennium (the only day Moses did not write “And God saw that it was good”). On day three, dry land appears and vegetable life springs up—the lower life forms. Land, earth, signifies solid ground, as opposed to water, which is unstable. This is the rise of God’s truth on the earth as it was given to the descendants of Abraham. Israel was to spread the knowledge of God as vegetation covers the earth and Israel appeared on the third millennium. Israel’s limited knowledge of God’s character is symbolized by vegetation—a lower understanding, because the *Sun of Righteousness* had not yet come to earth.

On day four, God creates the sun, the moon and the stars — this represents Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, who came to earth at the end of the four-thousandth year to “give the light of the knowledge of God.” The moon, which reflects the light of the sun, represents the early church, out of which the seven churches of Revelation arise. These great lights in the firmament divide the light from darkness: truth from error, the Tree of Life from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

On day five, God creates the water creatures and the fowls of the air. This is the period of the early church and the beginning of the dark ages. What is interesting, is that water creatures and fowls of the air are symbols used in the Bible to depict Satan and his angels—the great fish that swallowed Jonah (Jonah 1:17), Leviathan (Job 41:1), the dragon and “every unclean bird” (Revelation 18:2).

In the beginning of the sixth day we read:

Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind”; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind (Genesis 1:24-25).

This is, again, symbolism related to Satan. In Romans chapter one the exact same symbols are employed:

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds

and four-footed animals and creeping things (Romans 1:22-23).

These are symbols of pagan gods. Many ancient gods were worshipped as birds (*Isis* and *Horus*), four-footed animals (*Baal*, *Osiris*), and creeping things (numerous snake gods). The sixth thousandth year begins with the Dark Ages and goes into the Renaissance and then the Age of the Enlightenment. Creeping things (serpents) are another symbol of Satan, who was behind these different movements. The Age of the Enlightenment is filled with teachings from the ancient gods of Egypt, Greece and Rome. Their teachings were entirely based on the reward and punishment doctrine of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. During this time, the church of God, the Tree of Life, was underground, in the wilderness (Revelation 12:6-14).

Then God made man in His image at the end of the sixth day. This is also symbolic that it is at the end of the great controversy (the end of six thousand years) that God's people are sealed with His true character. The fact that on the sixth day God creates both the creeping things and man is significant. This represents the polarization, the dividing of mankind into both sides of the great controversy. The division of the people of the earth is explained in Revelation through the *sealing* and the *mark* of the beast. The sealing signifies those who are on God's side—they are made in His image; they have the seal of the Father in their foreheads—His character of unconditional, impartial *agape*, merciful love. They have the same *seal* that Lucifer *used to have*.

Those on Satan's side receive the mark of the beast. His people are marked in that they have chosen his principles of force and violence and their characters reflect his moral law of reward and punishment.

The seventh-day is the millennium, the Sabbath of creation week—a thousand years of rest for the earth, which lies in utter destruction, void and formless. Those who have sided with Satan, who have had “no rest day or night” (Revelation 14:11), are also resting in death for a thousand years. Before this last “day” begins, at the end of the sixth thousandth year, Jesus comes and takes with Him all who have accepted God's unconditional grace. They shall reign with Him for a thousand years, (Revelation 20:4), while the earth lies desolate. This is a painting put together with broad strokes and the Bible develops these themes in greater detail in different places.

A little study of the word “was” in Genesis chapter one, verse two, affirms these conclusions. This verse says “the earth was without form, and void;” the Hebrew word *hâyâh*—was—also means *became*. *Hâyâh* means:

to exist, i.e. be or become, come to pass (Strong's Dictionary).

So we could possibly restate this verse this way: “the earth became without form, and void,” or “and it came to pass that the earth became without form, and void.” This opens up a complete new line of understanding How did it “come to pass” that the earth became “without form and void”? If we look at the words “without form” and “void” we will be able to show how.

“Without form”—*tôhûw*—means:

to lie waste; a desolation (of surface), i.e. desert; figuratively, a worthless thing; adverbially, in vain: — confusion, empty place, without form, nothing, (thing of) nought, vain, vanity, waste, wilderness (Strong's Concordance).

Notice the word *confusion* in that definition. “Void”—*bôhûw*—means:

to be empty; a vacuity, i.e. (superficially) an undistinguishable ruin: — emptiness, void.

These two words imply that *there used to be* life before where now are only ruin and desolation. So why did the earth reach this state of *formlessness* and *voidness*? Because for six thousand years Satan's reign of violence brought the earth to a state of complete ruin—he achieved this through his mixed principle of Good and Evil—confusion.

Now, these two words, *tôhûw* and *bôhûw*, are also used later on in the Bible to depict the earth's condition at the end of Satan's rule, at the end of six thousand years and during the millennium.

The prophet Jeremiah stated:

I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form (*tôhûw*), and void (*bôhûw*)
 And the heavens, they had no light.
 I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled,
 And all the hills moved back and forth.
 I beheld, and indeed there was no man,
 And all the birds of the heavens had fled.
 I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness,
And all its cities were broken down
 At the presence of the Lord,
 By His fierce anger (Jeremiah 4:23-26, emphasis added).

The prophet Isaiah also described what will happen to the earth after six thousand years of living by Satan's moral law of Good and Evil:

Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste,

Distorts its surface
 And **scatters abroad its inhabitants.**
 The land shall be entirely **emptied and utterly plundered,**
 For the Lord has spoken this word.
 The earth mourns and fades away,
The world languishes and fades away;
The haughty people of the earth languish (Isaiah 24:1, 3-4, emphasis added).

Isaiah goes on to tell us why the earth is in this condition:

The earth is also **defiled under its inhabitants,**
Because they have transgressed the laws,
Changed the ordinance,
Broken the everlasting covenant.
Therefore the curse has devoured the earth,
 And those who dwell in it are desolate.
 Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned,
 And few men are left (Isaiah 24:5-6, emphasis added).

The earth was destined for self-destruction from the moment Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The reason the earth suffers destruction is because its inhabitants have gone away from God's law of love, "they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" by living by Satan's violent law of Good and Evil. As a result we have become like Satan, and like him, we became *destroyers*. It is we, through his mixed principle, who are destroying the earth.

Notice what God said to Noah regarding the people living before the flood:

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for **all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.** And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for **the earth is filled with violence through them;** and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6:11-13).

The earth was filled with violence through man, who, without exception, had become completely steeped in violence. The earth itself, our physical world, was "filled with violence through them." The cause of its destruction is clearly not God, even though Moses wrote so.

Our self-destruction is a direct result of transgressing God's law of *agape* love, of breaking the eternal, "the everlasting covenant," the nonviolent law of love. The complete destruction of the earth is a *direct result* of putting God's law aside and replacing it with Satan's law of arbitrary reward and punishment.

Isaiah goes on to describe how all joy is taken away from the people of the

earth, the “city of confusion.” Interestingly, in this verse, the word “confusion” is the same word we saw earlier—the Hebrew word *tôhûw*, translated in Genesis chapter one, verse two, as “without form.”

The city of confusion (tôhûw) is broken down;

Every house is shut up, so that none may go in.
 There is a cry for wine in the streets,
 All joy is darkened,
 The mirth of the land is gone.
 In the city desolation is left,
 And the gate is stricken with destruction.
 When it shall be thus in the midst of the land among the people,
 It shall be like the shaking of an olive tree,
 Like the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done (Isaiah 24:10-13, emphasis added).

The prophet then sums up what will happen to our little planet as a consequence of adopting Satan’s confusing moral law:

Fear and the pit and the snare
 Are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth.
 And it shall be
 That he who flees from the noise of the fear
 Shall fall into the pit,
 And he who comes up from the midst of the pit
 Shall be caught in the snare;
 For the windows from on high are open,
 And the foundations of the earth are shaken.
The earth is violently broken,
The earth is split open,
The earth is shaken exceedingly.
The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard,
And shall totter like a hut;
Its transgression shall be heavy upon it,
And it will fall, and not rise again.
 It shall come to pass in that day
 That the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones,
 And on the earth the kings of the earth.
 They will be gathered together,
 As prisoners are gathered in the pit,
 And will be shut up in the prison;
 After many days they will be punished.
 Then the moon will be disgraced
 And the sun ashamed;
 For the Lord of hosts will reign
 On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
 And before His elders, gloriously (Isaiah 24:10-13, 17-23, emphasis added).

Here are depicted the kings of the earth, ruling the people through Satan's law. They are "exalted" within the hierarchy of Good and Evil and they rule the earth through force and violence. "They will be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit"—"the pit" in biblical language means death. Isaiah says that Satan shall be brought down to Sheol [THE GRAVE], to the lowest depths of the Pit" (Isaiah 14:15). But "the pit" implies more than just death—it implies eternal death. The Psalmist states:

That he should continue to live eternally, and not see the Pit (Psalm 49:9).

Satan and his followers will be spared the full experience of the second death until after the second resurrection. His followers will be "shut up in prison"—death—and "after many days they will be punished"—after a thousand years. At the end of the millennium they will be resurrected, and it is then that they will receive the full brunt of the condemnation of Satan's law—"after many days they will be punished." They will not be punished by God, but God will allow them to fully reap the results of their choice of clinging to Satan's punitive moral law. Notice Jesus' words regarding their resurrection, the second resurrection:

For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to **the resurrection of condemnation** (John 5:26-29, emphasis added).

"Those who have done good" have accepted love, grace and mercy as the ruling principles of their lives, regardless of their religion, race, status, or age. "Those who have done evil" have rejected *agape* love; they have chosen to live by Satan's violent moral law. Who will punish them? The very system of judgment they use; they will condemn *themselves*. Theirs is the resurrection of condemnation—they will be condemned by Satan's condemning system, which they have espoused. They "are condemned already," John 3:18.

In Revelation, John expands this picture and says:

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." **And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.** Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who

received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh (Revelation 19:17-21, emphasis added).

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. **But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.** This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-6, emphasis added).

This entire history of the earth is what Genesis chapter one, verse two is describing. This is the history of sin from its beginning to its end. Then in verse three God divides the light from darkness. Light is again contrasted with darkness when God points to the two Trees in the midst of the Garden—the Tree of Life, light, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, darkness.

What has kept the earth in complete confusion is the fact that Satan's darkness is comprised of a contradictory duality: Good and Evil, light and darkness. To take away all confusion, Jesus Christ gave a distinct and precise message to the Apostle John. He first gave this message to His disciples and now at the end of the world, He is opening our minds to the same. This message is of particular importance at this exact point in history—God is giving it because He knows we desperately need the pure and undefiled revelation of His character.

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

In his writings, the apostle John uses two words to describe God's character. The first is "light" (1 John 1:5) and the second is "love" (1 John 4:8). Love is the essence of God, and light is a symbol of this truth in relation to His character of love. What does "there is no darkness at all in God" mean? How does the Bible, not human beings, define darkness?

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not prac-

tice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:6-7).

If say we love God—that we have fellowship with Him—but walk in darkness, we lie not only to others but also to ourselves. Walking in the light as God is in the light, “we have fellowship with one another”—that is, with God. *Then* we also have fellowship with human beings, because God’s unconditional, impartial love transforms us.

The knowledge of God always comes *first*. From this knowledge springs our relationship to our fellow human beings. Likewise, the first four commandments have to do with knowing and appreciating God first. The remaining six portray how we treat our fellow human beings.

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. **He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes** (1 John 2:3-11, emphasis added).

According to these verses “light” is love and “darkness” is hatred. *Agape* love is the fruit of righteousness and hatred is the fruit of Good and Evil. We hate because we don’t have unconditional love, and we don’t have unconditional love because we operate by Good and Evil. Good and Evil then is darkness. When John says that “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all,” he must mean that God’s love is pure and contains absolutely no particle of darkness from the domain of Good and Evil.

“No darkness at all” also implies that there was a need for this message—a false belief had existed before truth came in. It implies people had thought there was darkness in God. Jesus Christ’s message was to inform the world that it had seriously erred in attributing any aspect of the kingdom of darkness onto God’s character.

Darkness is complete in itself. When used in reference to darkness, the words “at all” are a deliberate *over-emphasis*. “No darkness at all” asserts we are not to have any mixture in our view of God—at all. It is imperative that we not attribute both the light (so-called) and the

darkness of Good and Evil onto His character.

John's message was to a people who believed, from the Bible, in a God tainted with darkness. Jesus taught that darkness is a character trait of the *evil one* and not of the *Holy One*. This is the message humanity needs to hear.

The apostle Paul states that Darkness has to do with an incorrect knowledge of God's character:

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the **light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ** (2 Corinthians 4:6, emphasis added).

This passage presupposes that darkness prevailed in the minds of the people regarding God, and in particular in the minds of those who were given His oracles, the Old Testament. The 'light' given here is "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Thus Christ said:

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life (John 8:12).

Jesus Christ, the light of life, removes the darkness—He removes our false understanding that God is involved with punishment and death. This has been the predominant belief of the human race. The glory of God is His goodness, His mercy, His essence of *agape* love, which is reflected in the person of Jesus Christ who said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). And the apostle John says the following concerning John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus:

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, **to bear witness of the Light** that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. **That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world** (John 1:6-9, emphasis added).

By saying that Jesus Christ is "the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world," John implies that a false light had been given until the "true light" came.

The healing of the man who was blind from birth was a merciful act to undo Satan's work in that man's life. But his healing also has great spiritual significance for the whole human race because blindness is a metaphor for the darkness that has permeated the human mind.

Now as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world' (John 9:1-5).

Like us, the apostles were imbued with the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Jesus answered, 'Neither this man sinned nor his parents sinned.'" What was Jesus saying? Weren't this man and his parents, sinners like the rest of us? Aren't all human beings sinners?

What the apostles were really asking was, "Whose sin had caused such punishment to come upon this man—his or his parents'?" They believed his blindness was a punishment from God. They were thinking by the law of Good and Evil, the conditional law of merit/demerit, reward/punishment.

Although both the man and his parents were sinners, Jesus wanted to get the message across that his blindness was not a punishment *from God*. His answer denies that God works by the law of arbitrary reward and punishment. Instead, He shows that what Satan had meant for evil, God could turn around for good—"that the works of God should be revealed in him." This is God's glory.

By reversing Satan's destructive works, in this case blindness, Jesus revealed that God is not the cause of illnesses or infirmities. Had He been, Jesus would not have acted contrary to His Father's will. Jesus never worked contrary to the Father; He was in complete harmony with Him.

Most of us are born spiritually blind from birth, blind to the true knowledge of God's character. Jesus came to open our eyes and give us spiritual sight so that we can see the unconditional love of God for us. This is the *dividing line* between eternal ruin and eternal salvation:

There are but two classes in the world, — **the class that know God, and the class that know him not.** The spiritual man belongs to the first class, the natural man to the other; **and it is according to our estimate of the character of the Father and the Son that our class is determined. It is natural for the man whose soul is flooded with the love of Jesus, to see in God his father and his friend. He can and will teach others in harmony with the light which shines into the chambers of his heart.** He will teach men the one way from sin to righteousness, revealing to the world the character of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life. Through the plan of redemption, a way has been provided whereby the sinner may be led from the depths of ruin upward to the paradise of God. This provision has been wrought out through an infinite sacrifice on the part of the Father and the Son. The love of God is expressed to man in the priceless gift of his Son; but Christ was given to a lost world, that we might be saved, not in our sins, but from our sins {RH February 10, 1891, Par. 2, emphasis added}.

Isaiah had prophesied that Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, would correct our wrong view of God. The apostle John quoted the

prophet's words at the beginning of His ministry:

And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles: **the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned**" (Matthew 4:13-16, emphasis added).

Here "darkness" is equated with "shadow of death." Those who sit in "the region and shadow of death" are in darkness regarding the character of God. The "shadow of death" is governed by the death principle. If death is darkness, it cannot be of God, who is light and "in whom there is no darkness at all."

The phrases "have seen a great light" and "light has dawned" both refer to Jesus. He revealed that "darkness" and "shadow of death" do not belong in God's Kingdom.

The philosophers of the Age of the Enlightenment claimed that there can be no freedom without contrasts—that light and darkness must exist at the same time. This is exactly what Satan had claimed in the beginning of his rebellion.

Emmanuel Kant, for instance, believed that the fall of man represented a shift from instinctual behavior to conscious rational thought, thus allowing humanity to have true choice. What Kant meant by "instinctual behavior," was the single, pure principle of *agape* love that ruled Adam before he ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and by "rational thought" he meant the new mindset of Good and Evil, which after eating from the forbidden Tree, Adam passed on to the entire human race. But since the fall, *agape* is no longer our *instinctual* behavior—Good and Evil is now our default. Furthermore, conscious rational thought, that is, the choice between Good and Evil, is a mirage. Such choice does not really exist, because both Good and Evil are two sides of the same coin.

To Kant, the idea of contrasts, having Good and Evil, was better than God's original design—the singleness of *agape* love. To him, having a mind ruled by Good and Evil enabled us to have *rational thought*, rather than just being mere robots, governed by a single principle. Thus in his opinion, the fall was absolutely necessary, even though he acknowledges that it may have caused evils and vices that were not known to mankind prior to the introduction of the duality of Good and Evil. Regardless of the evils, to him this new condition was preferable to the previous innocence and ignorance that existed before the fall.

In a book that discusses the philosophers and poets of the Age of the Enlightenment, M.S. Abrams quotes Kant's assessment of mankind's fallen state,

from the essay *Conjectural Origin of the History of Man*:

The first step out of this condition was, on the moral side, a fall, and on the physical side the result of this fall was a host of evils in life (consequently, a mode of punishment) never known before (Meyer Howard Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc, 1971, p. 205)

Kant could see that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil brought in “a host of evils in life” and he could even see that it brought in punishment (although he, like the rest of us, must have thought it was God who was punishing us), and yet he still thought this new status quo was better than the previous one.

Another thinker, William Blake, states:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell (William Blake, *The Early Illuminated Books*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 144).

And Schiller writes:

This fall [Abfall] of man from instinct—which to be sure brought moral evil into the creation, but only in order to make moral good therein possible—is, without any contradiction, the most fortunate and greatest event in the history of mankind (Meyer Howard Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc, 1971, p. 208, 209)

Thus in the world’s reasoning, if God is light and only light, what choice does He offer? Human wisdom argues that in order for true choice to exist there must be contrasts. This means that there must be light and darkness in order for true choice to exist. And yet the Scriptures tells us that in God, there is *no darkness at all*:

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

Lucifer devised an idea he considered brilliant. This idea filled him with pride, for he thought it was the ultimate wisdom: he devised a principle that contained both “light” and “darkness.” However, the biblical metaphor of light and darkness refers to not only truth and error, but life and death as well. Since his Tree of Knowledge is responsible for death, what this means then, is that his principle that mixes a so-called “light” with darkness turns out to be entirely “darkness.”

But Satan claimed that his law offered freedom of choice, otherwise none of the angels would have accepted it. Good and Evil did appear to represent two dif-

ferent concepts, because it seemed to convey the idea that a choice existed within the principle itself. But inherently, Good and Evil could not offer the choice it appeared to suggest, because both its Good and its Evil culminated in chaos, destruction and death. What choice is there between two so-called opposites that end in death? True choice is between life and death which means that true choice is between the Tree of Life and Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Had Satan taken control of the universe, freedom would have been a thing of the past. If he had absolute authority, he would have had absolute, autocratic control over the universe's government, and as such he would not have allowed anything else to exist aside from his law of Good and Evil. He would have done away with God Himself if he could.

Satan's law guarantees that there would be no available alternatives, because lack of freedom is inherently established through his principle's arbitrary nature. That is why the Bible characterizes his kingdom as *slavery*. Knowing this, Jesus came to give us the true alternative, the way of life, without which we would be eternally lost.

In the Bible, Egypt is a type of sin and iniquity, which is the principle of Good and Evil. Israel's slavery in Egypt symbolizes the slavery of the entire human race under Satan's principle of reward and punishment. Why was Egypt chosen as a symbol of Satan's government? There are some very good reasons for this.

In ancient Egypt, "wisdom" was directly given to the Egyptian priests by the gods. The gods of Egypt taught them the law of Good and Evil and called it "civilization." Reward and punishment is the law that ruled Egypt, and the proof is found in their symbols: Pharaohs are depicted as holding the "crook and the flail"—symbols of the reward and punishment system. Their head regalia depict the cobra (serpent) in attack mode. Humanity has been held in slavery to the Knowledge of Good and Evil since Adam and Eve partook of it—we are all in spiritual Egypt, shackled as slaves to our carnal, dualistic moral nature of Good and Evil since birth.

Moses, who took the people out of Egypt and to whom the law was given, was a type of Jesus, the Lawgiver Himself. Jesus would lead the people away from the condemning law of the serpent and would bring them into the safety of God's law of mercy—His kingdom of unconditional, impartial love—the Promised Land. By giving us the truth about the God of *agape* love Christ can free us from Satan's system of reward and punishment and lead us to Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey, where *agape* love and righteousness reigns.

God grants freedom of choice to all His intelligent beings. The proof is that without freedom, Satan would not have been able to introduce the deadly Knowledge of Good and Evil in the universe. But Jesus promised, as we embrace the truth about

God's character, that we would be set free from Satan's deceptions that lead us to death. Christ gives the truth, but our choice to believe and accept it still remains.

The truth Christ came to give is the fact that God is life, and as such is not involved in any taking of life. Remember the definition of "good" and "evil:"

Behold! I have set before you today **life and good**, and **death and evil**.

Life equals good, and death equals evil. Clearly, God is the God of life. Thus, according to this biblical definition, if God was involved with death in any way, God would be evil. The Bible does point to the being that has the power of death, however:

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14-15).

It is our hope that the evidence provided in this book will help the reader to make choices that lead to hope, peace, love and life. God loves each one of us with an infinite love, and it is His will that we will be eternally together with Him.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to **separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Romans 8, 38 to 39, emphasis added).

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have **boldness in the day of judgment**; because as He is, so are we in this world. **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.** But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 3:17-19).

God's unconditional *agape* love as revealed in Jesus Christ is a firm foundation from which nothing can shake us. The knowledge of His immutable love will enable us to get through the difficult prophetic times ahead of us and to meet Him face to face without fear. May we all accept the light of His unconditional *agape* love as revealed in Jesus Christ.



APPENDIX

KEY TO ELLEN G. WHITE BOOK ABBREVIATIONS

AH	Adventist Home, The
1BC	Bible Commentary, The SDA , Vol. 1 (2BC for Vol. 2, etc.)
CCh	Counsels for the Church
COL	Christ's Object Lessons
Con	Confrontation
CT	Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students
CTr	Christ Triumphant
DA	Desire of Ages, The
DD	Darkness Before Dawn
Ed	Education
EP	From Eternity Past
Ev	Evangelism
EW	Early Writings
HF	From Here to Forever
LHU	Lift Him Up
MB	Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing
MM	Medical Ministry
Ms	Manuscript, E. G. White
PP	Patriarchs and Prophets
RC	Reflecting Christ
RH	Review and Herald
1SM	Selected Messages, Book One (2SM for Book 2, etc.)
1SP	Spirit of Prophecy, The, Vol. 1 (2SP for Vol. 2, etc.)
ST	Signs of the Times
SW	Southern Work, The
YRP	Ye Shall Receive Power