

The background of the cover is a photograph of a vast, green field under a thick, white fog. The field is in the foreground, and the fog obscures the horizon, creating a sense of depth and mystery. The sky is a pale, uniform grey, blending into the fog.

# Plain Statements About the Character of God

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All Bible verses included are from the King James version unless otherwise noted

This book is dedicated to all who are responding to the loving drawing of our Father which is understood to mean that we are searching for Him with all of our hearts.

## Preface

When it comes to our understanding of the Bible, God wants us to take a literal and plain reading of the word whenever possible. However, there are times when a literal or plain reading can do violence to basic laws, like believing that when Jesus says “I am the vine” that He is literally a vine; or that He expected people to literally eat His flesh and drink his blood if they were to truly follow Him.

The wide array of denominations in Christianity is sufficient evidence to show that we have a difficult time understanding the Bible. Major misunderstandings have led to erroneous doctrines such as eternal hell-fire, immortality of the soul, the law of God is done away, legalism, a wrong view of the covenants, Sunday as the day of rest, the Godhead, and various widely held misunderstandings of the atonement. Over the centuries since the church of the Apostles of Christ, we as professed followers of Him have been confident in our ignorance.

What are we to learn from this? We should be humble regarding our certainty of our interpretation of the Bible and our cherished beliefs. I also pose that these misunderstandings have several things in common. First, they stem from a misunderstanding of God’s character and second, they have been developed without a systematic framework of study.

We all enter into the study of His word with unrealized prejudices and misconceptions. We don’t know ourselves as well as we think (Jer 17:9). God, who is infinite in knowledge, knows our prejudices and misconceptions and allows us to read into His word whatever we understand, but not without appealing to us by His Spirit.

While it is our heavenly Father’s desire and promise for us to know the truth, He knows that to reveal to us a true understanding before we are ready would cause us to reject Him and harden our hearts. He is simply too wise to err, and too good to do us harm, and so He won’t force our conscience, but He will do all He can without violating our free will to bring about opportunities for us to recognize the errors in our thinking and to ask forgiveness and repent of our misunderstandings.

Our deeply held and often subconscious beliefs influence the way we read the Bible and have been colored by our upbringing, which has shaped our view of authority and God as the ultimate authority. Our beliefs have also

been shaped by our cultures – eastern and western ways of thinking can be very different; experiential/intuitive vs analytical/scientific. Our understandings of the roles of men and women, and society at large through school, movies, and the internet – especially social media and youtube, and news outlets – have shaped our beliefs often times making it very difficult to read the Bible correctly.

With this in mind, God is doing all that He can to break down these walls that cause separation between us and Him without violating our freedom of choice. As we study the Bible we don't want to just take one verse or one passage, or even a handful of texts, and make it say what we want. We want a plain, logical, consistent reading of the Word – the whole Word.

To take what we read in the Bible to mean anything other than what is intended is to either spiritualize or over literalize its meaning. So how do we know what meaning is intended? And is it possible that some "plain statements" may not be as plain as we think?

This is what will set apart God's final people from every other denomination that already feels satisfied in their understanding. It is the patience, humility, and prayerful determination to take everything in the Bible into context, and the willingness to accept new truths that challenge our current understandings. This is the only way to arrive at the fullness of truth.

By beholding God's character our character is changed (2 Cor 3:18). A wrong understanding of His character will lead to sin, which not only hurts ourselves and those with whom we interact, but it also affects God. To a great degree we have been oblivious to the affect that our sins have had upon the heart of God.

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. Is 63:9

For those of us who believe Jesus will return again to save His people, and that He will return soon, I would like to leave you with the following thought: Why hasn't Jesus returned yet?

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}

The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. {COL 415.5}

Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. {COL 69.1}

## Introduction

Danutasn Brown

Are so-called “plain statements” as plain as we think they are?

The main attack people have against considering a deeper study of how God works is that we are destroying the “plainness” and “literalness” of scripture. To them, a verse like “I will destroy man whom I have created...” (Genesis 6:7) clearly means that God supernaturally and directly flooded the world. This is also true with “the LORD rained upon Sodom...brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.” But is there more to be said about these stories?

There are similar “plain statements” of God doing an action that the Bible itself reinterprets and expands upon. For example:

**The Lord said to Moses**, “Choose one of the leaders from each of the twelve tribes and send them as spies to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites.” (Numbers 13:1) (GNB)

There seems no other way to interpret this, according to Bible students who use the principle of a literal reading of plain statements, than to say that it was God's idea to send spies. But Moses gives a radical reinterpretation of the events in Deuteronomy:

I said to you, 'You have now reached the hill country of the Amorites that the LORD our God is giving us. Look! He has placed the land in front of you. Go and occupy it as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. Don't be afraid! Don't be discouraged!'

**"But you all came to me and said,** 'First, let's send out scouts to explore the land for us. They will advise us on the best route to take and which towns we should enter.'

"This seemed like a good idea to me, so I chose twelve scouts, one from each of your tribes." (Deuteronomy 1:20-23) (NLT)

Here it seems like it was their idea, not God's idea! But you would never get that sense from the original command of God, where it seems to very clearly and *plainly* state that it was God's idea.

Now the reader may wonder, how is it that we answer this contradiction? That is precisely the purpose of all the material we have written on the character of God! We have been trying to explain it...

But the purpose of this booklet is not to explain, but merely to show that what seems literal and plain on the surface may not be. God wants us to dig more – especially when the direct statement may seem at odds with the revelation of God given to humans in the person of His Son Jesus Christ.

Here is another example:

And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.' (2 Samuel 24:1) (KJV)

It is clear enough, isn't it? Plain as day! God was angry, so he tells David to number Israel. When David does it, God sent a pestilence to punish David's pride in doing so. 70,000 die. It is a strange story, but for those

born in the tradition that God kills directly there is no need to question it – God can do what He wants.

The problem comes when non-Christians read it. It was God’s idea, so why did He punish David for it? Do they not have a good point? Especially in light of such a verse like this:

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:” (James 1:13) (KJV)

It definitely seems like God tempted David. So what to do? Just live with the cognitive dissonance? Accept that some things are a mystery?

But the Bible does not allow you to do that. 1 Chronicles 21:1-3 tells the story differently:

Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, “Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then report back to me so that I may know how many there are.” (1 Chronicles 21:1-3) (NLT)

Now it says SATAN incited David to do the census, rather than God! What do we make of this? 1 Chronicles was written by Ezra, who lived long after Samuel. Would we accuse Ezra of “spiritualizing” Samuel’s plain “thus saith the Lord” statement? Not only spiritualized it...Ezra flipped it on its head!

Another famous example is the multiple times God “sends” evil spirits to trouble humans.

“But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.” (1 Samuel 16:14) (KJV)

Does God communicate with demons and work together with them to torment humans? Regarding God sending evil spirits on Saul and inciting David to take a census of Israel (“number Israel”), the SDA Bible commentary says this:



**“The Scriptures sometimes represent God as doing that which He does not specifically prevent.”** (SDA BC vol. 2, p531; on 1 Sam 16:14)

**“In the verse under consideration we have another instance in which God is said to do that which He does not prevent.”** (SDA BC vol. 2, p710; on 2 Sam 24:1)

Now this is a very different principle to the plain literal reading of God's actions that many use. In the Hebrew mind, God can be said to do something that he didn't prevent. So in the case of the numbering of Israel, Satan incited David, and because God didn't stop it, the Bible says that God incited David. *This raises the question...when can we know when God directly acts, and when He permits?*

Notice another verse. Shimei, the son of Saul, is cursing and taunting David for losing the kingdom to Absalom. David's soldier wants to go kill him for doing so. David says this:

**“And the king [David] said...let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, ‘Curse David.’ Who shall then say, ‘Wherefore hast thou done so?’ (2 Samuel 16:10) (KJV)**

The LORD had told Shimei to curse David? Really? When people in our world curse, is it because God told them to? What does David mean? Here is how the famous commentator, Adam Clarke, explains it:

*“No man can suppose that ever God bade one man to curse another, much less that he commanded such a wretch as Shimei to curse such a man as David; but this is a peculiarity of the Hebrew language, which does not always distinguish between *permission* and *commandment*. Often the Scripture attributes to God what He only *permits* to be done; or what in the course of His providence He does not *hinder*. David, however, considers all this as being permitted of God for his chastisement and humiliation” (Adam Clarke Commentary on 2 Samuel 16:10-11)*

For a further example see the passages that relate to the slaying of King Saul: 1 Chron 10:13,14 and 10:4

As we can see, there is often more detail needed to really get an understanding of what is happening in the story. In the above examples, if we were just to take a plain literal reading of God doing it, we would get the wrong impression.

“When God is said to harden men’s hearts,-to deliver them up to a reprobate mind,-to send them strong delusions, that they should believe that God is acting unrighteously – meaning He is *acting against His character* – it is infinitely far from being meant of an efficacious impulse in God Almighty. **That all those verbs,- to harden, to blind, to deliver up, to send delusions, to deceive, and the like,-are by an ordinary Hebraism only permissive in signification, though active in sound, is placed without all controversy.**” (Thomas Pierce, I, p23-24 edition of 1658 as quoted in Jackson, The Providence of God, p401)

But here is the heart of the issue. If the Bible is written with God doing acts using active verbs, yet it can signify permission, how can we know if God is doing something directly or through permission? **How can we know when they are written the same way? There is only one way – if doing it directly were to go *against His character*.**

It is not in God’s character, nor in His system, to give orders to evil spirits to torment men. Thus, “God sent an evil spirit to torment Saul” must mean God permitted an evil spirit to torment Saul, because Saul pushed the spirit of God away and therefore God wouldn’t protect Saul from evil spirits.

**So to rightly understand the word of God requires knowing who God is. And knowing who God is requires knowing His Son, and through Christ’s teaching putting the puzzle together piece by piece. God’s character is, through our carnal enmity, always naturally misunderstood by us.** We must be careful to think we understand how and why God acts. We should be patient, humbly and methodically seeking all the relevant data on a subject.

To understand massive events such as the Flood, shouldn’t we see if there are any other places in the Bible where the event is expanded upon? Here is one example:

“Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, **whose foundation was overflowed with a flood**: Which said unto God, **Depart from us**: and what can the Almighty do for them?” Job 22:15-17. (KJV)

This verse gives a different dimension to the event. It isn't just that God is angry and strikes out. Now it is portrayed as God being pushed away and respecting the free will of man – a very different impression to what most would have gotten from just reading Genesis 6.

**This is what the Character of God study is. It is not an attack on scripture. It is trying to understand and know God better, which is what Jesus says in John 17 is the key to eternal life.** This is not an easy subject, because each story in the Bible has to be understood in the light of how God works, how the people think God works, their cultural worldview as it relates to justice and mercy, the environment they are in, how much light they have had, etc. So just saying God permits Satan to do something is not always the case.

We have laid out various principles in different books. *Dominion of the Earth*, *God's Strange Act*, *Natural Justice and Atonement*, *Smiting Angels*. We suggest those for more detail. Available at [Maranathamedia.com](http://Maranathamedia.com)

Here we have collated important statements that must be taken into consideration before we decide if God is violent or not. Often when we share these texts, the proponent of the mainstream view of a “plain reading” will say it does not negate their text. They will say we are only portraying one side of the picture, and why don't we show the other texts?

The reason we haven't shown the texts where judgments come from God is because there is no denying that God's judgments occur. **We are trying to show the texts that shed more light on how those judgments work, that are often overlooked.** We leave it to the reader to think how to reconcile these texts with the texts that are not included. God has called us to reason together with Him (Isaiah 1:18), so let us do so.

And how will we know that we have arrived at the truth regarding God's character, or any doctrine for that matter? This is where a systematic method of Bible study is essential.

And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13 (KJV)

We happen to have been gifted with the method that will help us to resolve apparent contradictions. The value of this method cannot be overstated – it is the key to arriving at truth, through placing verses in their proper context without excluding anything.

## Millers Rules abbreviated and endorsed by the Spirit of Prophecy

Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted. In the little book entitled "Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology," Father Miller gives the following simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation:"1. **Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible;** 2. **All Scripture is necessary**, and may be understood by diligent application and study; 3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering; 4. **To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error;** 5. **Scripture must be its own expositor**, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible." The above is a portion of these rules; and in our study of the Bible we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth. (RH November 25, 1884)

For the complete list of Miller's Rules see the following article: Miller's Rules of Bible Interpretation. [link?] These same rules can be applied when studying the writings of Ellen White:

“The Testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture. Many will read

with eagerness the messages reproving wrong, that they may learn what they may do to be saved.” (ISM 42)

Some only will allow for the permissive view of God’s actions if Ellen White explicitly states it. Ellen White does give us hints, as we will see, but we must remember that the pioneers themselves had to study a topic before Ellen White would be given light. We must also expect to put some pieces together for ourselves, and not rely on them for complete exegesis.

For a deeper dive into understanding Miller’s Rules and how to apply them see *How Do You Read* by Daniel Bernhardt available at [fatheroflove.info](http://fatheroflove.info)

The aim of our study is to bring to the forefront plain statements from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy by which to reconcile everything that attributes violence, death, and destruction directly to God.

## The Origin of Death

Satan is the originator of murder, destruction, and death. He is the destroyer. God is the healer, the restorer, and the life-giver.

Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a **murderer** from the beginning..... John 8:44 (KJV)

God is unto us a God of deliverances; And **unto Jehovah the Lord belongeth escape from death.** Psalm 68:20 (ASV)

“For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. **Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him.**” 2 Samuel 14:14 NKJV

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...** Heb 2:14 NKJV

For God made not death: neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living. For he created all things, that they might have their

being: and the generations of the world were healthful; and there is no poison of destruction in them, nor the kingdom of death upon the earth: Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-14

In Isaiah's day the spiritual understanding of mankind was dark through misapprehension of God. Long had **Satan sought to lead men to look upon their Creator as the author of sin and suffering and death.** Those whom he had thus deceived, imagined that God was hard and exacting. They regarded Him as watching to denounce and condemn, unwilling to receive the sinner so long as there was a legal excuse for not helping him. The law of love by which heaven is ruled had been misrepresented by the archdeceiver as a restriction upon men's happiness, a burdensome yoke from which they should be glad to escape. He declared that its precepts could not be obeyed and that the penalties of transgression were bestowed arbitrarily. PK 311.1

Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, **he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death.** DA 24.2

**Satan is the author of death.** What did Christ do after He brought Satan under the dominion of death? The very last words of Christ while expiring on the cross were, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The devil saw that he had overdone himself. Christ by dying accomplished the death of Satan and brought immortality to light. FW 73.4

Herod and the wicked authorities killed the Just One, but **Christ never killed anyone**, and we may attribute the spirit of persecution—because men want liberty of conscience—to its origin—Satan. 4LtMs, Ms 62, 1886, par. 64

If Our Father is not the originator or author of death, it's logically inconsistent to believe that he would condescend to the tactics of Satan, who was a murderer from the beginning. Is His Son the full revelation of His character? If so, then for the above quote to say Jesus never killed anyone means the same about His Father, for Christ said to Philip, If you –

Philip – have seen me, you have seen the Father. We will look at this more from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy later on in this booklet.

## **Who is the destroying Angel?**

How angels interact with our world is a question that the righteous will wonder over for eternity. The issue of what angels exactly do to execute judgments is one of the most difficult issues in studying the Character of God. It requires studies into words like how God “visited” their iniquities upon them, what happens exactly when angels “smite” (sometimes death, sometimes run away, sometimes wake up), what is a “breach” opened in the “hedge” of protection, etc. We have merely collected quotes with brief explanation for the purpose of reference.

And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. (Revelation 9:11) [Apollyon and Abaddon mean “the destroyer”]

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. [10] **Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.** 1 Corinthians 10:9-10 [The Greek meaning for *destroyer* is venomous serpent]

Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. **Satan is the destroyer**; God is the restorer. CH 168.2

## **Ananias and Sapphira: God visited them and the Destroyer cut them down.**

Man is so corrupt that laws are made to throw the responsibility upon his own head. Some men do not fear to lie to their fellow man; but they have been taught, and the restraining Spirit of God has impressed them, that it is a fearful thing to lie to God. The case of Ananias and Sapphira his wife is given for an example. The matter is carried from man to God, so that if one bears false witness, it is not to man, but to the great God, who reads the heart, and knows the exact truth in every case. Our laws make it a high crime to take a false oath. **God has often visited judgment upon the false swearer, and even while the oath was on**

**his lips, the destroying angel has cut him down. This was to prove a terror to evildoers. 1T 202.2**

Satan uses men and women as agents to solicit to sin and make it attractive. These agents he faithfully educates to so disguise sin that he can more successfully destroy souls and rob Christ of His glory. Satan is the great enemy of God and man. He transforms himself through his agents into angels of light. **In the Scriptures he is called a destroyer, an accuser of the brethren, a deceiver, a liar, a tormentor, and a murderer.** Satan has many in his employ, but is most successful when he can use professed Christians for his satanic work. 5T 137.4

## **Satan slew the first born in Egypt**

This is another example of where God says He will execute judgment – destruction is coming, and if people are willing to have God protect them, He will.

[12]For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord... [23] For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, **the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.** Exodus 12:12,23

Just before the firstborn were slain in Egypt, the Lord instructed the Israelites to gather their children into their houses with them, and to strike the lintel and the two side posts of their doors with blood, so that **when the destroying angel went through the land,** he would recognize the houses thus marked as the dwelling places of Christ's followers, and pass over them. 2SAT 199.1

**Today we must gather our children about us if we desire to save them from the destructive power of the evil one.** The conflict between Christ and Satan will increase in intensity until the end of this earth's history. We are to have faith in the blood of Christ in order that we may pass safely through the perilous times just before us. 2SAT 199.2



Jesus knocks; will you open the door unto Him? Shall He be compelled to write upon the lintel of the doorway, in the place of His blood that cleanseth from all sin, the sentence that leaves you to the power of the destroying angels? **"He is joined to his idols." Guardian angels, "let him alone."** 7LtMs, Lt 30a, 1892, par. 29

The account above illustrates the concept of God's permissive will clearly. In the same chapter of Scripture God is spoken of as directly responsible for smiting the Egyptians (Ex 12:12) and then in verse 23 we see that He allowed or permitted the Destroyer to smite all those who aren't covered by Him.

Here is another example where God shows how it is His hand that is considered as doing the act when He removes His hedge of protection:

Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? **Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?** thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. **But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.**"

And the LORD said unto Satan, "**Behold, all that he hath is in thy power;** only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD." Job 1:9-12

Satan sees sinners as his subjects, and he will execute judgment on them according to his standard, which he sees as better than God's. We will get to this later.

What about good angels? What is their work?

**Angels do not come to the earth to denounce and to destroy,** to rule and to exact homage, but are messengers of mercy to cooperate with the Captain of the Lord's host, to cooperate with the human agents who shall go forth to seek and to save the lost sheep. Angels are commanded to encamp round about those who fear and love God. ST November 20, 1893, par. 3

**Angels are sent from the heavenly courts, not to destroy, but to watch over and guard imperiled souls,** to save the lost, to bring the straying ones back to the fold. "I came not to condemn, but to save," Christ declared. RH May 10, 1906, par. 15

## **Does God Condone Violence and Warfare?**

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, **Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*.** And they went to another village. Luke 9:51-56

Jesus' response here is crucial. He is saying that when humans think to call disasters on people as acts of God, that is the spirit of Satan.

And the soldiers likewise demanded of him [John the Baptist], 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

Then said Jesus unto him, 'Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' Mat 26:52

If God condoned violence, then why did He refuse David to build the temple?

But God said unto me, thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. 1 Chron 28:3

## **Were the Hebrews to gain the land of Canaan by warfare?**

And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. Exodus 23:28 KJV

And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow. Joshua 24:12 KJV

Moses was too fast in slaying the Egyptian. He supposed that the people of Israel understood that God's special providence had raised him up to deliver them. **But God did not design to deliver the children of Israel by warfare, as Moses thought;** but by his own mighty power, that the glory might be ascribed to him alone. 3SG 186.1

So terribly blinded had they become by transgression. The Lord had never commanded them to "go up and fight." **It was not His purpose that they should gain the land by warfare, but by strict obedience to His commands.** PP 392.3

## Does God use force?

If God gives us freedom to accept or reject Him and doesn't compel us to worship Him, would He use force to destroy the wicked at any point in history?

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, **Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government;** He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. DA 22.1

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

## Force also includes violence

Satan's representations against the government of God, and his defense of those who sided with him, were a constant accusation against God. His murmurings and complaints were groundless; and yet God allowed him to work out his theory. **God could have destroyed Satan and all his sympathizers as easily as one can pick up a pebble and cast it to the earth. But by so doing he would have given a precedent for the exercise of force.** All the compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. He would not work on this line. He would not give the slightest encouragement for any human being to set himself up as God over another human being, feeling at liberty to cause him physical or mental suffering. This principle is wholly of Satan's creation. RH September 7, 1897, par. 7

Force is the last resort of every false religion. ST May 6, 1897, par. 16

We are to observe carefully every lesson Christ has given throughout His life and teaching. He does not destroy; He improves whatever he touches. {1SM 118}

## **How was Satan cast out of Heaven? Through physical force?**

This is another interesting example of two Bible verses giving a different perspective on what happened:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. **And the great dragon was cast out**, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Rev 12:7-9

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. Rev 12:3-4

And the angels which kept not their first estate, **but left their own habitation**, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Jude 1:6

The meaning of Rev 12:7-9 is explained in Rev 12:3-4. The fallen angels were cast out by the tail of the dragon. This represents the lies that are told.

The elder and honorable, he is the head; The prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail. Isa 9:15

Satan caused the angels to leave their own habitation through the lies which he taught them.

....In the wilderness of temptation the destiny of the human race had been at stake. Christ was then conqueror. Now the tempter had come for the last fearful struggle. For this he had been preparing during the three years of Christ's ministry. Everything was at stake with him. If he failed here, his hope of mastery was lost; the kingdoms of the world would finally become Christ's; **he himself would be overthrown and cast out**. But if Christ could be overcome, the earth would become Satan's kingdom, and the human race would be forever in his power. With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God. DA 686.5

The implications here are telling as to the manner of his initial exit from Heaven. If Satan was violently thrown out like we have believed, then why was he allowed in to heavenly counsels until his character was fully revealed at the cross? And according to this statement there is no mention of violence used in casting him out. His ideas are overthrown in the minds of the angels and they refuse to have audience with him.

## God's Judgments

The above verses and statements from the Spirit of Prophecy indicate that death didn't originate with God and that He doesn't use coercion or force of any kind – conscience or lethal force. This means that He doesn't use Satan's tactics, which include killing. This brings us to the logical

conclusion that God is non-violent. But what about judgment and the destruction of the wicked? Doesn't God judge, condemn, and destroy? And what about His anger, vengeance, and wrath which are so often mentioned in the Old Testament?

The Lord is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: **the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.** Higaion. Selah. Ps 9:16

Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts. Jeremiah 2:19

The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but **the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.** Proverbs 11:5 KJV

I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to **give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.** Jeremiah 17:10

I was shown that the time was in the near future that these whom God had warned and reproved and given great light but they would not correct their ways and follow the light, **He would remove from them that heavenly protection which had preserved them from Satan's cruel power; the Lord would surely leave them to themselves to follow the judgment and counsels of their own wisdom;** they would be simply left to themselves, and the protection of God be withdrawn from them, and **they would not be shielded from the workings of Satan;** that none of finite judgment and foresight can have any power to conceive of the care God has exercised through His angels over the children of men in their travels, in their own houses, in their eating and drinking. Wherever they are, His eye is upon them. They are preserved from a thousand dangers, all to them unseen. Satan has laid snares, but the Lord is constantly at work to save His people from them. 14MR 2.3

But from those who have no sense of the goodness and mercy of God, those who refuse His merciful warnings, who reject His counsels to reach the highest standard of Bible requirements, who do despite to the Spirit of grace, the Lord would remove His protecting

power. I was shown that Satan would entangle and then destroy, if he could, the souls he had tempted. God will bear long, but there is a bound to His mercy, a line which marks His mercy and His justice. 14MR 2.4

**I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them,** but in this way: They place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them. 14MR 3.1

## **His vengeance, anger, and wrath**

Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: **their own way have I recompensed upon their heads,** saith the Lord God. Ezekiel 22:31

Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. Jeremiah 6:19

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: Romans 9:22

He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending [releasing] evil angels among them. Psa 78:49

## **An Example of God's Anger: Who chose the first King over Israel?**

In this story we observe the complicated relationship between what God desires and what His people desire.

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, 'Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me,

that I should not reign over them... Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.'

Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, 'Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.' And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.' And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, 'Go ye every man unto his city.' 1 Samuel 8:6-7,9,19-22 KJV

And Samuel said to all the people, '**See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen**, that there is none like him among all the people?' And all the people shouted, and said, 'God save the king.' 1 Samuel 10:24

And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, **ye said unto me, "Nay; but a king shall reign over us:** when the Lord your God *was* your king." 1 Sam 12:12

"Now therefore behold **the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired!** and, behold, the Lord hath set a king over you." 1 Sam 12:13

And all the people said unto Samuel, "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for **we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.**" 1 Sam 12:19

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help. I will be thy king: where *is any other* that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? **I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in my wrath.** Hosea 13:9-11

This complex idea is expressed by Jesus also in explaining why God gave laws regarding divorce: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not



so." We call this principle accommodation, and is explored more in this booklet: *Reaching Samson* available at [Maranathamedia.com](http://Maranathamedia.com)

## **God's withdrawal is catastrophic for us**

Our only safety is in being wholly on the Lord's side. We cannot with any safety give place to the enemy, for **if we are found on the enemy's side, we will perish with the wicked in the plagues the Lord shall allow Satan to create in the earth against men and against beasts.** This terrible calamity in Johnstown and surrounding towns should cause fear and trembling, but I fear that the impression will soon die away. {Lt54-1889.22}

**It is God that shields His creatures and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer.** But the Christian world have shown contempt for the law of Jehovah, and the Lord will do just what He has declared that He would—**He will withdraw His blessings from the earth and remove His protecting care from those who are rebelling against His law and teaching and forcing others to do the same. SATAN HAS CONTROL OF ALL WHOM GOD DOES NOT ESPECIALLY GUARD.** He 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

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

**The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.** The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God's hatred of sin and to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty. GC 36.1

But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown.** GC 36.1

Therefore, God's wrath, anger, and vengeance rightly understood is that He does not prevent us from experiencing the consequence of our choices. As much as God would like to this includes not being able to protect us from Satan when we chose to turn away from Him.

We read in a few quotes above about the point at which God withdraws His protection. Does this mean God ceases to be merciful?

## **The End of God's Mercy**

He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Ps 37:26

For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations. Ps 100:5

Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Ps 106:1

This last verse is repeated almost verbatim with several identical repetitions occurring eight times across four different psalms, and the whole of Psalm 136 ends each verse with "His mercy endureth forever". The word forever in Hebrew is *olam* which means "beyond the vanishing point" meaning there is no foreseeable end to it.

God bears long with the rebellion and apostasy of His subjects. Even when His mercy is despised and His love scorned and derided, He bears

with men until the last resource for leading them to repentance is exhausted. **But there are limits to His forbearance. From those who to the end continue in obstinate rebellion, He removes His protecting care. Providence will no longer shield them from Satan's power.** They will have sinned away their day of grace. {RH September 17, 1901, par. 7}

God keeps a reckoning with the nations. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. Those who work evil toward their fellow men, saying, How doth God know? will one day be called upon to meet long-deferred vengeance. In this age a more than common contempt is shown to God. **Men have reached a point in insolence and disobedience which shows that their cup of iniquity is almost full. Many have well-nigh passed the boundary of mercy. Soon God will show that He is indeed the living God. He will say to the angels, "No longer combat Satan in his efforts to destroy. Let him work out his malignity upon the children of disobedience; for the cup of their iniquity is full. They have advanced from one degree of wickedness to another, adding daily to their lawlessness. I will no longer interfere to prevent the destroyer from doing his work."** {RH September 17, 1901, par. 8}

**This time is right upon us. The Spirit of God is being withdrawn from the earth. When the angel of mercy folds her wings and departs, Satan will do the evil deeds he has long wished to do. Storm and tempest, war and bloodshed,—in these things he delights, and thus he gathers in his harvest.** And so completely will men be deceived by him that they will declare that these calamities are the result of the desecration of the first day of the week. From the pulpits of the popular churches will be heard the statement that the world is being punished because Sunday is not honored as it should be. And it will require no great stretch of imagination for men to believe this. They are guided by the enemy, and therefore they reach conclusions which are entirely false. {RH September 17, 1901, par. 9}

Is the Bible in conflict with itself or is the Spirit of Prophecy in opposition to the Bible? Here is an example where the Spirit of Prophecy is merely

using the language of the Bible and is revealing to us what the Bible means when it says:

And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And *God* said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. Hos 1:6

The end of God's mercy is merely His reluctant and painful obligation to give us over to the hands of the enemy. Why? He will not violate our free will. But we think if He is really loving, why won't He stop this suffering? Oh, how little we understand the invisible war that is being waged and the deceitfulness of our own hearts.

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. Is 63:9

## The Law is a Transcript of God's Character

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 1 John 4:8

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law. Rom 13:10

Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness. Ps 119:40

My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy **commandments are righteousness**. Ps 119:172

God is love and His law is fulfilled by love. God is righteous and His precepts or commandments are righteousness. Therefore they are love and fulfilled by Him because they reflect Him.

They repeated the two great maxims, that the law is a transcript of the divine perfections, and that a man who does not love the law does not love the gospel; **for the law, as well as the gospel, is a mirror reflecting the true character of God.** This peril leads to another, that of underrating the evil of sin, the extent of it, the demerit of it. In proportion to the rightfulness of the commandment is the wrongfulness of disobeying it.... GC 465.2

**The law is but a transcript of the character of God.** Behold in your heavenly Father a perfect manifestation of the principles which are the foundation of His government. MB 77.1

In setting aside the law of God, men know not what they are doing. **God's law is the transcript of His character. It embodies the principles of His kingdom.** He who refuses to accept these principles is placing himself outside the channel where God's blessings flow. {COL 305.3}

Those who present the law of God as a transcript of the divine character will blend with their teaching that which belongs with the subject, and will present the love of the Father and the Son. When this is done, the shadow of the evil one will be removed from the hearts of men, and the clear light of Christ's love, illuminating the understanding, will reveal the character of God as of one who is infinite in mercy. Sinners will behold Christ as one able and willing to cleanse from all sin. They will behold God not in his wrath, but in the sunshine of his love. His love will be seen as beyond all human love, and without a parallel. RH February 10, 1891, par. 1

The 6<sup>th</sup> commandment says thou shalt not kill (Ex 20:13). If the law reflects His character, then does God kill? If He did, would He be acting outside of His law or out of character? Does He do this?

For I *am* the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Mal 3:6

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Heb 13:8

## **Christ's Mission to the World**

Few of us have thought about this deeply, myself included until the last few years. Why? Because our understanding of His mission is so central to the plan of salvation that we have assumed the Christian church has to have this correct. If you give the following verses and quotes prayerful study, I believe you will see an altogether different picture form before your eyes.

**I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.** And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. John 17:4-6

This above statement was said by Jesus before He was arrested and taken to the cross.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? John 14:8,9

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, [Jesus Christ] are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18

The above verses make no mention of dying to fulfill the demands of the broken law, or the requirement of the Father's justice, or to appease His wrath. The work was finished before He died. So the question to consider is, what exactly did Christ finish before the crucifixion?

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of **the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God.** In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” **When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.** {ST January 20, 1890, par. 9}

The love and honor and perfection revealed in the Gospel are a revelation to man of the character of God. **The justice and goodness and benevolence that were seen in the character of Christ** are to be

repeated in the lives of those who accept the privileges of the Gospel. By a study of the word, we are to see Him as He is, and, charmed with the view of His divine perfection, we are to grow into the same image. **We need to understand that the Gospel fully reveals the glory of the Lord. It is the mirror that reveals the character of God to the converted soul. The likeness of God is revealed in the perfect character of His Son, that we may understand what it means to be made in the likeness of the image of God,** and what we may become if by constantly beholding we allow ourselves to be changed from "glory to glory." ST February 24, 1909, par. 3

**He spoke of God, not as an avenging judge, but as a tender father, and He revealed the image of God as mirrored in Himself.** His words were like balm to the wounded spirit. Both by His words and by His works of mercy He was breaking the oppressive power of the old traditions and man-made commandments, and presenting the love of God in its exhaustless fullness. {DA 204.4}

## **Jesus Revealed His Father's Character Completely**

Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. **This is the character of God. It is from the Father's heart that the streams of divine compassion, manifest in Christ, flow out to the children of men. Jesus, the tender, pitying Saviour, was God "manifest in the flesh."** 1 Timothy 3:16. SC 12.2

God requires perfection of His children. **His law is a transcript of His own character, and it is the standard of all character.** This infinite standard is presented to all that there may be no mistake in regard to the kind of people whom God will have to compose His kingdom. **The life of Christ on earth was a perfect expression of God's law,** and when those who claim to be children of God become Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God's commandments. {COL 315.1}

**All that man needs to know or can know of God has been revealed in the life and character of His Son.** "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1:18. Taking humanity upon Him, **Christ came to be one with humanity and at the same time to reveal our**

**heavenly Father to sinful human beings.** He was in all things made like unto His brethren. He became flesh, even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of men, and yet He was the blameless Son of God. He was a stranger and sojourner on the earth--in the world, but not of the world; tempted and tried as men and women today are tempted and tried, yet living a life free from sin. **Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God,** and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {8T 286}

**The whole character of God was revealed in his Son,** the whole range of the possibilities of heaven is displayed for the acceptance of man in the Son of the Infinite One. The way for man's return to God and heaven has no barriers. The matchless depths of the Saviour's love have been demonstrated; and if this manifestation of God's love for the children of men does not prevail to draw men to himself, there is nothing that ever will. {ST December 30, 1889, par. 6}

**In Christ God beheld the reflection of his own image. God was manifest in the flesh because of the entire identity of his character with Christ's character.** That God should be thus manifest in the flesh was a wonder to the heavenly host, "even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations." {ST, April 15, 1897 par. 10}

## **What Was the Object of Christ's Mission to the World?**

The object of Christ's mission to the world was to reveal the Father. {ST, April 11, 1895 par. 2}

It was to show that God's justice did not involve force, violence, or killing.

Christ never killed anyone. {CTr 248.4}

The work of the good Samaritan represents Christ's mission to the world. **Our Saviour came to reveal the character of God, to represent his love for man. He acted just as the Father would have done in ALL emergencies.** Christ manifested for us a love that the love



of man can never equal. He died to save those who were his enemies; he prayed for his murderers. When we were bruised and dying, he had pity upon us. He did not pass us by on the other side, and leave us, helpless, and hopeless, to perish. He did not remain in his holy, happy home, where he was honored by all the heavenly host, who loved to do his bidding. He beheld our sore need; he undertook our case, and identified his interests with humanity. He became “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” {HM, October 1, 1897 par. 7}

See the booklet [Christ's Mission to the World](http://maranathamedia.com) available at [maranathamedia.com](http://maranathamedia.com) for a more in-depth study.

## **Understanding the Atonement: Did God or His law require that Jesus must die in order to forgive us?**

It is often said that Jesus needed to die in order to fulfill a legal requirement of God or His Law. Do the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy support this? You will find no mention of the word “legal” in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy legal religion is denounced. Only an aspect of the Jewish economy was referred to as legal.

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Psalm 40:6

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. Hos 6:6

For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. Jeremiah 7:22-23 KJV

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what

that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Matthew 9:12-13

For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it : thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Psalm 51:16-17 KJV

The verses above point to a reality very different than what most have understood. We have unquestioningly assumed that God desired and required sacrifices, including the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Now let us see what we can find in the Spirit of Prophecy.

In his restless youth the prodigal looked upon his father as stern and severe. How different his conception of him now! So **those who are deceived by Satan look upon God as hard and exacting. They regard Him as watching to denounce and condemn, as unwilling to receive the sinner so long as there is a legal excuse for not helping him.** His law they regard as a restriction upon men's happiness, a burdensome yoke from which they are glad to escape. But he whose eyes have been opened by the love of Christ will behold God as full of compassion. He does not appear as a tyrannical, relentless being, but as a father longing to embrace his repenting son. The sinner will exclaim with the Psalmist, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Psalm 103:13 COL 204.2

In the parable there is no taunting, no casting up to the prodigal of his evil course. **The son feels that the past is forgiven and forgotten, blotted out forever.** And so God says to the sinner, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins," Isaiah 44:22. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jeremiah 31:34. "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. "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." Jeremiah 50:20. COL 204.3

**The Son of God clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world without parade or display,** that he might be accepted, not because of outward attractions, but because of his heavenly attributes of character, as revealed in his words and works. **He presented to men lessons whereby their souls were brought into comparison with the law of God, not in a legal light, but in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, that man by beholding might be changed into the divine image** ST November 5, 1894, par. 2

In the words of Abraham, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering,” (Genesis 22:8), and in God’s provision of a sacrifice instead of Isaac, it was declared that no man could make expiation for himself. **The pagan system of sacrifice was wholly unacceptable to God. No father was to offer up his son or his daughter for a sin offering.** The Son of God alone can bear the guilt of the world. {DA 469.2}

It was the transgression of the law that resulted in sin, sorrow, and death. Satan declared that he would prove to the worlds which God has created, and to the heavenly intelligences, that it was an impossibility to keep the law of God. **When Adam yielded to the temptation of the enemy, and fell from his high and holy estate,** Satan and his angels exulted. **But from the throne of God a voice was heard speaking words of mysterious import. “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.** Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” When man fell, Christ announced His purpose of becoming man’s substitute and surety. {RH September 3, 1901, par. 3}

During Christ's earthly ministry the lower class of Jews thought God needed to be appeased with a sacrifice in order to be forgiven.

As Jesus came into the temple, He took in the whole scene. He saw the unfair transactions. **He saw the distress of the poor, who thought that without shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness for their sins.** He saw the outer court of His temple converted into a place of unholy traffic. The sacred enclosure had become one vast exchange. {DA 157.2}

Do you catch the implications of this statement? The poor believed there would be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. If we are honest, we have nearly all believed and promoted this idea. The Bible itself says the following about the conditions required for the remission of our sins :

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. Heb 9:22

How do we reconcile what appears to be a point of confusion between the verses and Spirit of Prophecy above? Let's look at another statement and see if this can help us to harmonize the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

And as Christ draws them to look upon His cross, to behold Him whom their sins have pierced, the commandment comes home to the conscience. The wickedness of their life, the deep-seated sin of the soul, is revealed to them. They begin to comprehend something of the righteousness of Christ, and exclaim, **“What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim?** Was all this love, all this suffering, all this humiliation, demanded, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life?” {SC 27.1}

What is it that, according to this passage, required the sacrifice of the Son of God? Was it the Father, or was it sin? If sin “should require” it, dare we say that God requires it when there is no sin in Him? Then sin required the death of Christ on the cross, not God or His law. So it is us who have been enmity toward God that have required the shedding of blood. With this understanding, both the Bible and Spirit of prophecy are in harmony. Hallelujah. The implications are incredible!

## **The Atonement Seen in an altogether different light**

You may have seen something in regard to the righteousness of Christ, but there is truth yet to be seen clearly, and that should be estimated by you as precious as rare jewels. **You will see the law of God and interpret it to the people in an entirely different light from what you have done in the past**, for the law of God will be seen by you as revealing a God of mercy and righteousness. **The atonement, made by the stupendous sacrifice of Jesus Christ, will be seen by you in an altogether different light.** {ST November 13, 1893, par. 2}

For further study on this subject see *Cross Examined and Cross Encountered* and Pastor Adrian Ebens' new book *At-one-ment*.

## Does God Judge or Condemn?

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1 KJV

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. John 5:22

Ye judge after the flesh; I[Jesus] judge no man. John 8:15

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I[Jesus] judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. [48] He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. John 12:47-48

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." John 8:10,11

## The Source of Condemnation

And not as it was by one [Adam] that sinned, so is the gift: for the **judgment was by one [Adam] to condemnation**, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification... **Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation;** even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. Romans 5:16,18

Who made the judgment of condemnation? If Jesus came not to condemn, but to save (John 3:17), then it must be humans that condemn. Adam ate the fruit in anger, hopelessness and rebellion; He then blamed and condemned everyone else rather than accepting fault – most particularly the Son of God, who he said should die instead of him for making the woman who brought Adam the fruit.

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: **but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life**, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” Acts 13:46

## **Who pronounces the sentence upon the wicked in the final judgment?**

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Matthew 7:1-2

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. James 2:13

[28]And that he held neither sword, nor any instrument of war, but that the rushing in of him destroyed the whole multitude that came to subdue him; this is the interpretation:...[34]And an innumerable multitude shall be gathered together, as thou sawest them, willing to come, and to overcome him by fighting....[37]And this my Son shall rebuke the wicked inventions of those nations, which for their wicked life are fallen into the tempest;[38]And shall lay before them their evil thoughts, and the torments wherewith they shall begin to be tormented, which are like unto a flame: and he shall destroy them without labour by the law which is like unto me. 2 Esdras 13:28,34,37,38

## **Why quote from the books of the Apocrypha?**

I then saw the Word of God pure and unadulterated, and that we must answer for the way we received the truth proclaimed from that Word. I saw that it had been a hammer to break the flinty heart in pieces, and a fire to consume the dross and tin, that the heart might be pure and holy. **I saw that the Apocrypha was the hidden book, and that the wise of these last days should understand it.** {Ms4-1850.13}

**Satan will be judged by his own idea of justice.** It was his plea that every sin should meet its punishment. If God remitted the punishment, he said, He was not a God of truth or justice. Satan will meet the judgment which he said God should exercise. 12MR 413.1

As the Holy One upon the throne slowly turned the leaves of the Ledger, and his eyes rested for a moment upon individuals, **his glance seemed to burn into their very souls, and at the same moment every word and action of their lives passed before their minds as clearly as if traced before their vision in letters of fire.** Trembling seized them, and their faces turned pale. Their first appearance when around the throne was that of careless indifference. But how changed their appearance now! The feeling of security is gone, and in its place is a nameless terror. A dread is upon every soul lest he shall be found among those who are wanting. Every eye is riveted upon the face of the One upon the throne; and as his solemn, searching eye sweeps over that company, **there is a quaking of heart, for they are self-condemned without one word being uttered. In anguish of soul each declares his own guilt, and with terrible vividness sees that by sinning he has thrown away the precious boon of eternal life.** PH043 3.1

The time when we are judged is the time when God is judged. At that time all the dealings of God with his creatures will come up before the universe. The character of God as expressed in his government, and the whole story of his dominion, will come up there. Every man will have to participate in pronouncing judgment, for it is written, "Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess," "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father." **Every man shall pronounce his own judgment, and, in pronouncing his own judgment, will declare the righteousness and justice of God's character.** E.J. Waggoner GCDB 1897, page 55.8

**When we condemn or criticise others, we declare ourselves guilty; in the very act of judging them, we are breaking God's law.** Our own character is revealed in the way we treat others. He who is censorious, self-sufficient, in judging others, shows that he himself is devoid of the grace of Christ. It is those that are blinded by the enemy to their own defects of character who are forward in criticising and condemning. Their own lack of the spirit of forbearance and love leads them to make a world of an atom. He who is watching for the defects of others, ready to accuse and condemn, is doing the same work in which Satan has been engaged since his rebellion. He links himself with him who is the accuser of the brethren. ST March 21, 1892, par. 5

According to the above statement, criticism is a form of judgment and in so doing we condemn ourselves (Rom 2:1). How can this be? It is second nature for us to criticize one another – family, friends, coworkers, government. This is not after God’s character; as we have seen, He doesn’t do this. In fact, He never thinks a single evil thought towards us (Jer 29:11). In the final judgment we judge ourselves. God and His Son don’t utter a single word. The implications of this are massive. For a detailed study on this subject see the book As You Judge.

### **What is God’s judgment and how do we understand the relationship between His justice and mercy?**

Are His mercy and justice in opposition to one another? Is there a counterfeit form of justice that we have succumbed to?

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith 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. Is 55:8,9

Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face. Ps 89:14 KJV

“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.’ Zech 7:9,10 NKJV

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

The above verses give us something foreign to our understanding. They show a remarkable relationship between justice and mercy. Rather than being opposed to one another, true justice is to give mercy.

And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and



right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. **Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!** And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. **And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.** 2 Samuel 15:2-6 KJV

Absalom thought to instill in the hearts of the people doubt as to his father David's ability to execute justice and usurped his authority offering his own idea of justice and judgment. In the process he stole the hearts of the people. Does this sound familiar? Could this give us a window into the great controversy and the rebellion in heaven? What was Satan seeking to instill in the hearts and minds of the angels?

The condemning power of Satan would lead him to institute a theory of justice inconsistent with mercy. **He [Satan] 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

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}

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

**Christ's mission to the world made it evident that the human race was standing under the menace of incensed justice**, on the verge of eternal ruin, in helplessness and ignorance. To our help Jesus came, bringing the fullest assurance of relief. What has the Father done?—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." ST February 5, 1894, par. 5

Christ came to give to the world an example of what perfect humanity might be when united with divinity. **He presented to the world a new phase of greatness in his exhibition of mercy, compassion, and love. He gave to men a new interpretation of God.** As head of humanity, he taught men lessons in the science of divine government, whereby **he revealed the righteousness of the reconciliation of mercy and justice.** The reconciliation of mercy and justice did not involve any compromise with sin, or ignore any claim of justice; but by giving to each divine attribute its ordained place, **mercy could be exercised in the punishment of sinful, impenitent man without destroying its clemency or forfeiting its compassionate character, and justice could be exercised in forgiving the repenting transgressor without violating its integrity.** RH December 22, 1891, par. 11

Until the cross Satan was successful in pitting justice and mercy at odds with one another in the minds of the angels. His idea of justice was that every sin must be punished, which was abhorrent to God. This counterfeit justice system is so deeply instilled in our own minds today, and is continually being reinforced in our systems of law, within our families and schools, and in all of the media that we consume.

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. James 2:13

## **The Mirror Principle**

In the very beginning of this booklet we suggested that our worldview colors or influences our understanding of the Bible, and that this is happening primarily on a subconscious level. We read into the character of God or interpret His character based upon our own ideas of justice, judgment, love, mercy, and law. God allows us to do this in hope that in

bringing us face to face with our own destructive ideas in contrast to the character of His Son, that we will see the error of our ways and ask for forgiveness and repentance. Our sin is exposed, and just as a mirror shows us what we look like when we are otherwise unable to see ourselves, so does the character of God as seen in the life of His Son.

What does the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy have to say about this? How did Jesus handle the misunderstandings of the people, including His own disciples?

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. Romans 2:1

Paul is saying that the very act of criticizing or condemning someone else for a certain behavior proves that we are doing the same thing.

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. James 1:23-25

With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward. Psalm 18:25-26

Does God act forwardly, or perversely, to those who are perverse? God is good all the time:

For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Malachi 3:6

His actions and character are *seen* as perverse by those who are perverse. They imagine bad intentions behind his actions, misread the Bible, and project man's evils onto God. Because God accommodates man in order to raise him up, men often accuse Him of unrighteousness. God speaks to us in human language that we can understand, which cannot perfectly

describe His will and His ways due to the limitations of our understanding. Sinful humans, rather than trying to patiently comprehend what the Bible means by declaring God to be jealous and vengeful, quickly declare that such adjectives and actions don't seem so Godly! But that is how man is, and when God allows these words in the Bible, we need to use Miller's rules to understand what He means by them.

You give your mouth to evil, And your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes. Ps 50:19-21

Christ gives an example of this in His life in how he dealt with the Canaanite Woman with *apparent* indifference and racism

And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

But he answered her not a word. His disciples came and besought him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us."

But he answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Then came she and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me."

But he answered and said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

And she said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. Matthew 15:22-28

For this He had brought His disciples into this region. He desired them to see the ignorance existing in cities and villages close to the land of Israel. The people who had been given every opportunity to understand the truth were without a knowledge of the needs of those around them. No effort was made to help souls in darkness. **The partition wall**

**which Jewish pride had erected, shut even the disciples from sympathy with the heathen world. But these barriers were to be broken down.** DA 400.1

Christ did not immediately reply to the woman's request. He received this representative of a despised race as the Jews would have done. **In this He designed that His disciples should be impressed with the cold and heartless manner in which the Jews would treat such a case, as evinced by His reception of the woman,** and the compassionate manner in which He would have them deal with such distress, as manifested by His subsequent granting of her petition. DA 400.2

Another example of Jesus using the preconceptions of those around him to teach a lesson is the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he [the rich man] cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

But Abraham said, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

Then he [the rich man] said, "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Luke 16:20-28

**In this parable Christ was meeting the people on their own ground. The doctrine of a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection was held by many of those who were listening to Christ's words. The Saviour knew of their ideas, and He framed His parable so as to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions. He held up before His hearers a mirror wherein they might see themselves in their true relation to God.** He used the prevailing opinion to convey the idea He wished to make prominent to all—that no man is valued for his possessions; for all he has belongs to him only as lent by the Lord. A misuse of these gifts will place him below the poorest and most afflicted man who loves God and trusts in Him. COL 263.2

Above are several examples of Jesus reflecting the erroneous ideas of the people, including His own disciples, in order to convey important truths.

So in the reading of His Word, He does not remove all opportunity for us to misunderstand. The prophets and the disciples who wrote the books of the Bible were inspired but they also had their own individuality. They had different levels of education and experiences that shaped their understanding. This holds true for the translators of the Bible as well.

The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men. These men were inspired of the Holy Spirit. **Because of the imperfections of human understanding of language, or the perversity of the human mind, ingenious in evading truth, many read and understand the Bible to please themselves.** It is not that the difficulty is in the Bible. Opposing politicians argue points of law in the statute book, and take opposite views in their application and in these laws. 1SM 19.3

**Only like can appreciate like. Unless you accept in your own life the principle of self-sacrificing love, which is the principle of His character, you cannot know God. The heart that is deceived by Satan, looks upon God as a tyrannical, relentless being; the selfish characteristics of humanity, even of Satan himself, are attributed to the loving Creator.** "Thou thoughtest," He says, "that I was altogether such an one as thyself." Psalm 50:21. His providences are interpreted as the expression of an arbitrary, vindictive nature. So with the Bible, the

treasure house of the riches of His grace. The glory of its truths, that are as high as heaven and compass eternity, is undiscerned. To the great mass of mankind, Christ Himself is "as a root out of a dry ground," and they see in Him "no beauty that" they "should desire Him." Isaiah 53:2. When Jesus was among men, the revelation of God in humanity, the scribes and Pharisees declared to Him, "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil." John 8:48. Even His disciples were so blinded by the selfishness of their hearts that they were slow to understand Him who had come to manifest to them the Father's love. This was why Jesus walked in solitude in the midst of men. He was understood fully in heaven alone. MB 25.2

**The heart in love with sin clothed Him with its own attributes, and this conception strengthened the power of sin. Bent on self-pleasing, men came to regard God as such a one as themselves—a Being whose aim was self-glory, whose requirements were suited to His own pleasure; a Being by whom men were lifted up or cast down according as they helped or hindered His selfish purpose. The lower classes regarded the Supreme Being as one scarcely differing from their oppressors, save by exceeding them in power. By these ideas every form of religion was molded. Each was a system of exaction. By gifts and ceremonies, the worshipers sought to propitiate the Deity in order to secure His favor for their own ends. Ed 75.2**

## **God assumes the character of a judge**

Must He give up the people for whom such a provision has been made, even His only-begotten Son, the express image of Himself? God permits His Son to be delivered up for our offenses. He Himself assumes toward the Sin Bearer the character of a judge, divesting Himself of the endearing qualities of a father. TM 245.2

Can God stop being a Father? I thought He changes not? It is by allowing Himself to be *perceived* as a judge and not as a loving father that it appears as though He is different. Why does He do this? It's for our own good, because sin causes us to perceive a loving father as not being capable of exercising judgment and justice. We tend not to follow a father, whose love is gentle or not take Him seriously, and thus we lose a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

The final quote here presented shows a progression of conditional accommodations across Israel's history. Had God's people been faithful history would have been markedly different.

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. PP 364.2

## **The Writings of Our Pioneers on the Character of God**

Did those who have come before us speak to this issue, or have we strayed from the foundation of truth? Have we gone too far in our understanding of God's character? Do we have any statements from the writings of the pioneers to confirm our findings and to build upon?

### **George Fifiield**

Here is a name that might be not be familiar to many of us. His views on the character of God are found in two primary places: the transcripts of a series of sermons he gave in 1897 at the General Conference session and a book that he wrote in 1897, God is Love.

Thus every attribute of God is simply the attribute of love. And love includes the all in all of our Father. His laws are simply the laws of a kind Father, intended to promote the happiness of his children. They are not arbitrary. It is not that God, sitting up on some high throne, said to mankind, You do thus and so, and I will let you live; but you do otherwise, and I will kill you. God does not kill. He is the Fountain of life. {GCDB February 19, 1897, p. 90.1}



The word “atonement” means *at-one-ment*. **Sin had brought misery, and misery had brought a misunderstanding of God’s character.** Thus men had come to hate God instead of loving him; and hating him, the one Father, men also hated man, their brother. Thus, instead of the one family and the one Father, men were separated from God and from each other, and held apart by hatred and selfishness. There must be an atonement.

**An atonement can be made only by God’s so revealing his love, in spite of sin and sorrow, that men’s hearts will be touched to tenderness; and they, being delivered from Satan’s delusions, may see how fully and terribly they have misunderstood the divine One, and so have done despite to the Spirit of his grace. Thus they may be led, as returning brethren, to come back to the Father’s house in blissful unity.**

**The atonement is not to appease God’s wrath, so that men dare come to him, but it is to reveal his love, so that they *will* come to him.** It was not Christ reconciling God unto the world, but God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. – God is Love (1897)

For more on God’s Character See *God is Love* by George Fifiield.

## **A.T. Jones**

In self-surrender, the only thing that can be employed is love.

In self-preservation, by self-defense, through the employment of force, force meets force, and this means only war.

In self-sacrifice, by self-surrender, through love, force is met by love, and this means only peace.

Self-preservation, then, means only war: while self-sacrifice means only peace.

But war means only death: Self-preservation, then, meaning only war, means only death. While self-sacrifice, meaning only peace, means only life. AMS March 4, 1897, page 129.6 -129.10

Sin and righteousness, nature and grace, are directly opposite and antagonistic elements. They occupy realms absolutely distinct. Nature, self-preservation, self-defense, force, war, and death, occupy only the realm of sin. Grace, self-sacrifice, self-surrender, love, peace, and life,

occupy only the realm of righteousness. AMS March 4, 1897, page 129.13

The realm of sin is the realm of Satan. The realm of grace is the realm of God - AMS March 4, 1897, page 129.14

## **E.J. Waggoner**

The idea of a propitiation or sacrifice is that there is wrath to be appeased. But take particular notice that it is we who require the sacrifice, and not God. He provides the sacrifice. The idea that God's wrath has to be propitiated in order that we may have forgiveness finds no warrant in the Bible. It is the height of absurdity to say that God is so angry with men that He will not forgive them unless something is provided to appease His wrath, and that therefore He Himself offers the gift to Himself, by which He is appeased... {PTUK August 30, 1894, p. 549.8}

“But,” someone will say, “You have made the reconciliation all on the part of men; I have always been taught that the death of Christ reconciled God to man; that Christ died to satisfy God’s justice, and to appease Him.” Well, we have left the matter of reconciliation just where the Scriptures have put it; and while they have much to say about the necessity for man to be reconciled to God, they never once hint of such a thing as the necessity for God to be reconciled to man. To intimate the necessity for such a thing is to bring a grave charge against the character of God. The idea has come into the Christian Church from the Papacy, which in turn brought it from Paganism, in which the only idea of God was of a being whose wrath must be appeased by a sacrifice. {PTUK September 21, 1893, p. 386.7}

Just a thought concerning the idea that Christ’s death was necessary to satisfy outraged justice. Christ death was necessary to satisfy the love of God. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Justice would have been met by the summary death of the sinful race. But God’s love could not suffer that. So we are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Through faith in His blood, God’s righteousness-which is

His life-is declared upon us, and thus He is just, and at the same time the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Romans 3:21-26. The reason why it was necessary that Christ should die, in order that men might be saved, will be considered in the next edition of this article. {PTUK September 21, 1893, p. 387.2}

Just here somebody has remembered that it is said in Hebrews 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission;" and this makes him think that after all God did demand a sacrifice before He would pardon man. It is very difficult for the mind to rid itself of the idea received as a legacy from Paganism, through the Papacy, that God was so angry at man for having sinned, that He could not be mollified without seeing blood flow, but that it made no difference to Him whose blood it was, if only somebody was killed; and that since Christ's life was worth more than the lives of all men, He accepted Him as a substitute for them. This is almost a brutal way of stating the case, but it is the only way that the case can be truly presented. The heathen conception of God is a brutal one, as dishonouring to God as it is discouraging to man; and this heathen idea has been allowed to colour too many texts of Scripture. It is sad to think how greatly men who really loved the Lord, have given occasion to His enemies to blaspheme. {PTUK September 21, 1893, p. 387.8}

## Conclusion

After reading what we have presented, can you say with confidence that God drowned everyone, including all the animals in a flood, and that He rained fire down from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorah? What about the atonement? God's Law nor His justice demanded the death of the transgressor. There was no incensed wrath that needed to be appeased. I pray we can see there are numerous plain statements in the evidences put forth that show us a completely different picture than what we have been taught.

We are building on the platform of those who have come before us in the Spirit of the 1888 message. What we are finding supports and expands upon the direction that we believe God was leading His people, as the writings of Ellen White, A.T. Jones, E.J. Waggoner, and George Fifiield attest

to. And it is through a sincere application of Miller's Rules that has led us to this point.

God is far better than we thought and we are much more wicked than we were previously aware of. The glory of man is being laid in the dust so that we can receive the glory of God; His non-violent and non-condemning character. May this draw us to confess our wrong understandings to our Father, and ask for forgiveness and repentance.

## Plain Statements About the Character of God

“When God is said to harden men's hearts,-to deliver them up to a reprobate mind,-to send them strong delusions, that they should believe that God is acting unrighteously – meaning He is *acting against His character* – it is infinitely far from being meant of an efficacious impulse in God Almighty. **That all those verbs,- to harden, to blind, to deliver up, to send delusions, to deceive, and the like,-are by an ordinary Hebraism only permissive in signification, though active in sound, is placed without all controversy.**” (Thomas Pierce, I, p23-24 edition of 1658 as quoted in Jackson, The Providence of God, p401)

This Bible scholar is addressing an issue that has bothered followers of God for millennia. Is it according to God's character to harden hearts, to send delusions, to deceive, to kill, to burn, to flood? Especially in the light of the life of Jesus?

God's ways are higher than our ways. It is not easy to comprehend how He interacts with the world He has created, and with sinful humans, while respecting our free will and the law of cause and effect.

In this booklet we have gathered together quotes summarizing all the important aspects of the study of the Character of God. May it bless you and be of great help to all seekers after truth and understanding.