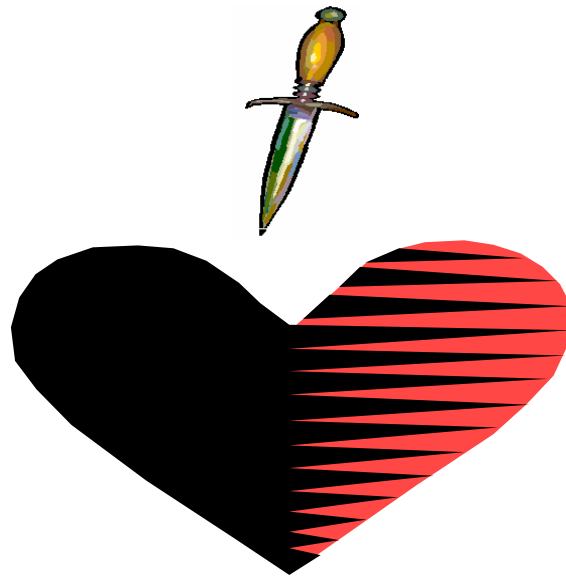


Volume 2

Revealing the Myth of the Double-Minded God

The Assassination



of
God's
Character

Gentle Jesus – Violent God?

Last Updated – 19 June, 2008

Objections.....	5
#1 - Eternal Life in the Scriptures - John 5:39.....	5
#2 - All Scripture is Inspired - 2 Timothy 3:16.....	6
#3 - Holy Men of God Spoke - 2 Peter 1:20, 21.....	16
#4 - The Old and the New Testaments are Infallible.....	25
#5 - Kill the Soul - (Matthew 10:28).....	41
#6 - God Kills and Wounds – Deuteronomy 32:39.....	42
#7 - Parable of the Vineyard.....	43
#8 - The Parable of the Wedding Garment.....	44
#9 - Other Parables of Jesus.....	45
#10 - Tempting the Faithful - Harassment of the Wicked.....	52
#11 - The Wicked Consumed - (2 Thessalonians 2:8).....	62
#12 - God is Angry with the Wicked – (Psalm 7:11).....	73
#13 - Abraham and Isaac - (Genesis 22:1, 2).....	75
#14 - God's Strange Act - (Isaiah 28: 21).....	79
#15 - Christ Executes Judgment - (Jude 1:14, 15).....	80
#16 - Open or Closed Probation.....	83
#17 - I Came to Send a Sword - (Matthew 10:34).....	84
#18 - Buy a Sword - (Luke 22:36).....	86
#19 - Thou Shalt Surely Kill - (Deuteronomy 13:6-13).....	89
#20 - God Has a Right to Destroy Heretics – EGW (4 Spiritual Gifts p 5).....	96
#21 - Korah's Death.....	99
#22 - The Lord Shall Judge His People – Deuteronomy 32:20-36.....	102
#23 - To Me Belongeth Vengeance and Recompense - Deuteronomy 32:35.....	107
#24 - My Fury Upheld Me - Isaiah 63:1-6.....	109
#25 - Samson a Suicide Killer – David a Warlord?.....	112
#26 - Kill to Prevent Contamination.....	131
#27 - Self-Defence.....	134
#28 - God Will By No Means Clear the Guilty - Exo 34:7; Num 14:18.....	149
#29 - Denying the Sanctuary Doctrine?.....	150
#30 - My House – Clearing the Temple – Matthew 21:12-13.....	161
#31 -.....	168
The Angel Wants to Kill Balaam – Numbers 22:33.....	168
#32 - I Make Peace and Create Evil - Isaiah 45:7.....	174
#33 -.....	176
The Lord Has Done Evil - Amos 3:6.....	176
#34 - The Sanctuary Services.....	177
#35 - Jesus called the Syrophenician Woman a Dog - Mark 7:27.....	189
#36 - Fire Consumes the Disrespectful - 2 Kings 1:8-15.....	191
#37 -.....	195
Cain and Abel's Sacrifices - Genesis 4:3-5.....	195
#38 -.....	200
A Time to Kill – Ecclesiastes 3:3.....	200
#39 - Picking up Sticks on Sabbath – Numbers 15:32-36.....	201
#40 - Nadab and Abihu – Ananias and Sapphira – Lev 10: Acts 5.....	206
#41 - God Commanded Genocide - The Amalekites – 1 Samuel 15.....	213
#42 - The Red Sea Closed on the Egyptians – (Exo 15:4).....	222
#43 -.....	225
Does God Change the Rules to Suit Himself – Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18.....	225
#44 - They are Enemies of God for your Sake – Romans 11:28.....	229
#45 - Jesus Told the Leper to Offer Sacrifices – Matthew 8:4.....	230
#46 -.....	232
Let Him Die the Death – Matthew 15:4.....	232

#47 - Tread Down the Wicked - Job 40:9-12	236
#48 - The Wine of the Wrath of God - Revelation 14:8-10.....	238
#49 - Uzzah Slain by God – 2 Samuel 6:6-8.....	240
#50 - Gideon – Judges 6, 7.....	243
The Last Message.....	255
Appendix.....	266
Statements from Catholic Authorities	271
To Meet the Bridegroom.....	293

Objections

#1 - Eternal Life in the Scriptures - John 5:39

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

Objection:

The Bible is the only true way to eternal life.

Answer:

Jesus told the Pharisees that **they supposed** they could find eternal life in the Scriptures. The Pharisees already thought they had eternal life, through traditions and rituals. Christ told them that the Scriptures revealed His messiahship. He continues:

John 5:45-47

“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. 46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. 47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

Jesus knew that the Pharisees professed to believe in Moses' writings, but that in reality they rejected what Moses had prophesied about the predicted arrival and birth of the Messiah. The Jews denied that Christ was the Messiah. So the searching of the Scriptures was only carried out to support their rituals and traditions.

Matthew 15:9

“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Christ revealed that eternal life does not come from the Scriptures, but from the Messiah identified and revealed in the Scriptures. Eternal life comes only from knowing Christ – knowing His character.

John 6:63

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

- Who is the Spoken Word – the Logos - of God? (John 1:1)
- Who is the Wisdom of God? (Proverbs 8:22).
- Who is the spirit of God? (Romans 8:9).

It is Christ.

Christ's words are the spirit and they are eternal life.

Christ's life, His words, His actions, His example, is the key to our eternal life.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me (John 14:6).

- Jesus is the **ONLY** way to the Father;
- Jesus is the **ONLY** complete truth about the Father; and
- Jesus is the **ONLY** source of Life that comes from the Father.

#2 - All Scripture is Inspired - 2 Timothy 3:16

Objection:

¹⁶All^{<3956>} scripture^{<1124>} is given by inspiration of God^{<2315>}, and^{<2532>} is profitable^{<5624>} for^{<4314>} doctrine^{<1319>}, for^{<4314>} reproof^{<1650>}, for^{<4314>} correction^{<1882>}, for^{<4314>} instruction^{<3809>} in^{<1722>} righteousness^{<1343>}:

Answer:

It is interesting that several religions claim to have “holy books.”

- **Christianity** – **The Holy Bible** – It is believed by Christians that the Holy Bible reveals the inspired will of God in each and every word. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible>
- **Islam** - **The Qur'an** (Koran) –. It is believed by Muslims that every word in the Islamic Holy Book, the Qur'an (Koran) was completely inspired and protected by Allah.

*“The Qur'an ("Qor-Ann") is a Message from [Allah](#) to humanity. It was transmitted to us in a chain starting from the Almighty Himself (swt) to the angel Gabriel to the [Prophet Muhammad \(saas\)](#). This message was given to the Prophet (saas) in pieces over a period spanning approximately 23 years (610 CE to 622 CE). The Prophet (saas) was 40 years old when the Qur'an began to be revealed to him, and he was 63 when the revelation was completed. The language of the original message was Arabic, but it has been translated into many other languages. The Qur'an is one leg of two which form the basis of Islam. The second leg is the [Sunnah](#) of the Prophet (saas). What makes the Qur'an different from the Sunnah is primarily its form. Unlike the Sunnah, **the Qur'an is quite literally the Word of Allah, whereas the Sunnah was inspired by Allah but the wording and actions are the Prophet's. The Qur'an has not been expressed using any human's words. Its wording is letter for letter fixed by no one but Allah. Prophet Muhammad (saas) was the final Messenger of Allah to humanity, and therefore the Qur'an is the last Message which Allah has sent to us. Its predecessors such as the Torah, Psalms, and Gospels have all been superseded. It is an obligation - and blessing - for all who hear of the Qur'an and [Islam](#) to investigate it and evaluate it for themselves. Allah has guaranteed that He will protect the Qur'an from human tampering, and today's readers can find exact copies of it all over the world. The Qur'an of today is the same as the Qur'an revealed to Muhammad (saas).”** **University of Southern California – USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts:** <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/>*

- **Confucianism** - **Analects** A collection of Confucius' teachings. Confucius was a Chinese sage and philosopher. His writings focus primarily on secular ethics and morality. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism>
- **Buddhism** - Buddha's teachings are not bound in a single volume of a holy book, but instead the sacred writings exist as a collection of stories and legends;

- **Hinduism - The Vedas – The Sacred Scriptures of the Hindu religion**

Hinduism is often referred to as Sanātana Dharma... a Sanskrit phrase meaning "the eternal law." It is the world's oldest major religion that is still practiced. Hinduism contains a vast body of scriptures. Divided as Śruti (revealed) and Smṛiti (remembered) and developed over millennia, these scriptures expound on theology, philosophy and mythology, and provide spiritual insights and guidance on the practice of dharma (religious living). In the orthodox view, among such texts, the Vedas and the Upanishads are the foremost in authority, importance and antiquity. Other major scriptures include the Tantras, the sectarian Agamas, the Purāṇas and the epics Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa. The ***Bhagavad Gītā***, a treatise excerpted from the Mahābhārata, is sometimes called a summary of the spiritual teachings of the Vedas.

*“The **Bhagavad-gita** is universally renowned as the jewel of India’s spiritual wisdom. Spoken by Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to His intimate devotee Arjuna, the Gita’s seven hundred concise verses provide a definitive guide to the science of self-realization. Indeed, no work even compares in its revelations of man’s essential nature, his environment and ultimately, his relationship with God...So Bhagavad-Gita contains the complete knowledge of Vedic wisdom. **All Vedic knowledge is infallible and all Hindus accept Vedic knowledge to be complete and infallible.**” (Bhagavad-Gita **As It Is** by His divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness; the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles:1997, introduction p xxxix and back cover)*

- **Satanism - Thelema**- Aleister Crowley’s writings are revered by members of the religious system he founded and called **Thelema**. Crowley wrote ‘The Book of the Law’ which he claimed was authored by an entity name Aiwass, whom he later indicated was his ‘holy guardian angel’. His other ‘holy books’ are True Will, Magick, Cosmology, Practices and Observances, Ethics, Liber Oz, Duty <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thelema>. Crowley claims to have received the contents of the books while in ‘high mystical trance, or through direct-voice dictation from a praeternatural intelligence.’ These books are considered to be ‘divinely-inspired theophanies that defy rational criticism.’ (The Holy Books of Thelema, The Equinox Vol 3 #9, introduction)

With so many religions claiming that THEIR books are the ONLY genuine, divinely inspired holy books, how can it be determined which writings actually are holy, according to the One True God’s standard of holiness?

A Christian has evidence of supernatural authorship of at least certain passages in the Bible. This evidence lies in its many fulfilled prophecies. Christ is shown to be the Messiah, according to prophecy and His teachings are also clearly inspirational, prophetic and consistent.

The Bible itself informs its readers to ‘test the spirits’ in a certain manner so as to be able to distinguish genuine divine inspiration from imitation divine inspiration. The Bible sets this standard as this: all writing that is genuinely divinely-inspired, must speak according to the word and testimony of Jesus Christ who lived according to the divine principles of righteousness.

“To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not, according to this word, there is no light in them” - Isaiah 8:20.

“Keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” - Rev 14:12

“Keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ - Rev 12:17

“On these (2 principles of love-laws) hang all the law and the prophets” - Matt 22:40

“The words that I (Jesus) speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life” - John 6:63

Hebrews 1:1-3

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, (2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (3) Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul is interpreted as writing basically that ‘all scripture is inspired.’ Christians assume that Paul restricted his statement to include only those books in the Old Testament (and perhaps what was taking shape as the New Testament writings). We certainly do not understand that Paul is claiming that other books which were regarded as ‘holy’ and ‘sacred’ in other religions, were also to be regarded as divinely inspired.

It is interesting to examine Paul’s often-quoted statement.

¹⁶All^{<3956>} scripture^{<1124>} is given by inspiration of God^{<2315>}, and^{<2532>} is profitable⁽⁵⁶²⁴⁾ for^{<4314>} doctrine^{<1319>}, for^{<4314>} reproof^{<1650>}, for^{<4314>} correction^{<1882>}, for^{<4314>} instruction^{<3809>} in^{<1722>} righteousness^{<1343>}:

While I believe that in this instance, Paul intended ‘all’ to the entire contents, it is interesting to not that ‘all’ (in Thayer's Greek Lexicon) doesn't always mean “all.” Sometimes, it means “some of all types.” Note the following Biblical examples.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

#3956 pas “all” including all the forms of declension; ; adj

King James Version translates **pas** as “all” 748 times; all things 170, every 117, all men 41, whosoever 31, everyone 28, whole 12, all manner of 11, every man 11, no + <3756> 9, every thing 7, any 7, whatsoever 6, whosoever + <3739> + <302> 3, always + <1223> 3, daily + <2250> 2, any thing 2, no + <3361> 2, not translated 7, misc 26; 1243

1) individually

1a) each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything

2) collectively

2a) some of all types

Scriptural Examples

..." the whole world has gone after him" (John 12:19) Did all the world go after Christ? "then went all Judea, and were baptized of him in Jordan. (Matt 3:5,6) " Was all Judea, or all Jerusalem, baptized in Jordan? "Ye are of God, little children", and the whole world lieth in the wicked one" (1 John 5:19) . Does the whole world there mean everybody? The words "whole" and "all" are used in some seven or eight senses in Scripture, and it is very rarely the "all" means all persons, taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed some of all sorts --some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor, and has not restricted His redemption to either Jew or Gentile ... (C.H. Spurgeon from a sermon on Particular Redemption).

In the given context of this verse, it seems extremely likely that Paul did intend the passage to refer to all of the Old Testament and parts of the New Testament writings. His statement is remarkable, but logical. It became a special safe-guard to the new believers.

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

"2 Timothy 3:16 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.'
This sentence is not well translated. The original
πασαγραφηθεοκνευστοςωφιλιμοςπροσδιδασκαλιανκτλ should be rendered:
Every writing Divinely inspired is profitable for doctrine etc."
(end quote Adam Clarke)

Strong's Greek Concordance

01124: - Scripture

graphe graf-ay' **a document**, i.e. holy Writ (or its contents or a statement in it):--scripture.

02315: -inspiration

theopneustos theh-op'-nyoo-stos from 2316 (and a presumed derivative of 4154 - **to breathe hard**); **divinely breathed in**:--given by inspiration of God. see GREEK for 2316 see GREEK for 4154

Green's Literal Translation reads:

2 Timothy 3:16

"Every Scripture (is) God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"

2 Timothy 3:16 - Young's Literal Translation (1898)

16 every Writing (is) God-breathed, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for setting aright, for instruction that is in righteousness

"All writing **that is** 'God-breathed' - or, all writings **which are originated by the spirit of God – these** are the writings that are profitable for doctrine etc.

The obvious message that Paul is making in 2 Timothy 3:16 is that all writings which claim to be inspired by God, will be identifiable by their Godly spirit.

Barnes' New Testament Notes (on 2 Timothy 3:16)

"Is given by inspiration of God. *All this is expressed in the original by one word θεοπνευστος theopneustos. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, God-inspired--from θεος, God, and πνεω, to breathe, to breathe out. The idea of breathing upon, or breathing into the soul, is that which the word naturally conveys. Thus God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life, Gen 2:7; and thus the Saviour breathed on his disciples, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," Jn 20:22. The idea seems to have been, that the life was in the breath, and that an intelligent spirit was communicated with the breath."*

It seems clear that Paul is stating that all divinely inspired writing comes from God. This statement is definitely correct, but how can it be determined, which writing that is *said* to be divinely inspired, *is* indeed divinely inspired? It is not proof of divine inspiration to have human beings collect certain writings, put them into a book and call it “The Divinely Inspired Writings.” (Or they might call it “the Holy Bible” or “the Koran,” or “the Egyptian book of the Dead”). **If any writing is truly divinely inspired, then the thoughts expressed will reflect the holy character of God.** The divinely expressed writings will not contradict the divinely originated 10 commandments!

There is much in the Bible that is obviously divinely inspired because it aligns with the 10 commandments, fulfils prophecies, and aligns with the words of Jesus Christ, but there are also writings that are completely opposed to God's law of love - on which hang all the law and the prophets.

Could vengeful, death-commanding writings have originated from the mind of God? If ALL writings are divinely inspired, what about the spurious verses that are now found in the King James Version e.g. sections of 1 John 5:7, 8? It is known and acknowledged even by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Bible Commentators and historians, that sections of these verses found their way into the Bible for political or doctrinal reasons.¹

What about the many different and often conflicting versions of the Bible available today? Would Paul be pleased to have his statement that ‘all scripture is given by God’ applied to all the various versions of the Christian Bible, which claim to be inspired scriptures?

In 2 Timothy 3:16, did Paul intend his readers to understand, that in order to retain a 100% inspired scripture, God would never permit any erroneous alterations to be made to the Bible text? Obviously not, or he would be contradicting the vision that Ellen White received.

Ellen White states in Early Writings p 220

“I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition.”

It is widely accepted by archaeologists and historians, that the writers and editors who reproduced the Old Testament down through the centuries – prior to Hezekiah's time - 'adjusted' the Biblical texts to reflect their own particular theology and added these notes to the Bible record (Who Wrote the Bible, Robert Beckford, Compass, ABC 9 April, 2006). Could it be logically supposed that the personal views of the scribes, whose job it was to copy the inspired books by hand – not to alter them - were **not** strongly influenced by the theology of the surrounding pagan nations and by their savage environment? The evidence demonstrates that this type of editing certainly did occur.

The Torah (first five Old Testament books) originated from four sources. Each source displayed the individual writer's perspective of God and His government, in much the same way as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John describe four different accounts of the gospel.

¹ *Regardless of man's best intentions, Satan would have encouraged the placement of such passages to intentionally distort the character of God.*

The four sources are:

1. Jaweh – emotional – God communicates directly with humanity.
2. Elohiym – God communicates with men via the mediation of angels, through dreams, the burning bush
3. Priestly – God communicates with humanity through laws and sacrifices
4. Deuteronomic – The dominant theme is that God must be worshipped as one God - monotheistic religion.

(Who Wrote the Bible, Robert Beckford, Compass, ABC 9 April, 2006).

Perhaps Beckford's opinion is correct, or perhaps he is misguided, so regardless of Beckford's opinion, how can God's people determine whether a particular writing or document is inspired by His spirit and to discriminate which is spurious? This skill is necessary, for as Ellen White informs us, some Bible texts have been altered.

These alterations become a serious issue for Christians, for we need to see a clear, correct portrayal of God's character. This is vital, because our characters will reflect what we perceive to be the divine character – and our characters determine our eternal destiny.

The additions and alterations to the Biblical record appear to have greatly confused and affected our views on the One True God's character. If every part of the entire Bible is truly divinely inspired, then all thoughts expressed in its pages, will reflect the holy character of God. The divinely expressed writings will not contradict the divinely originated 10 commandments!

There is much in the Bible that is obviously divinely inspired because it aligns with the 10 commandments, but there are also writings that appear completely opposed to God's law. Is it possible that such passages are those which were altered by well-meaning scribes?

We have already noted that some Bible texts did not originate in the mind of God, but like 1 John 5:7,8, have been erroneously "divine-ised." Perhaps this was done in a similar manner that Ellen White describes in Review and Herald 25 March, 1890 p 4 - through genuine error, human weaknesses of character; or for political or doctrinal reasons. Whatever the human reasons for adding to the divinely inspired writings, it is obvious that this work has contributed to the distortion of the character of God.

The Bereans didn't accept a blind assertion that Paul's words were inspired. They checked **the prophecies** to see if Jesus really was the Messiah. Christ through Isaiah tells us how to determine which character concepts are inspired and which isn't inspired. All writings relating to the character of God, must line up; every thought must line up with the 10 commandment law and the testimony - the life of Jesus Christ, predicted in the prophecies and confirmed in the gospels.

Christians are not at liberty to "throw out the Old Testament," however, Christians, in order to demonstrate the true character of the Father to the world, are under obligation to line up every Scripture and compare it with the life of Jesus.

Isaiah 8:20

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

The law of God is His 10 commandments – a transcript of His character; the foundation of His government. The testimony is the True Witness - the life of Jesus Christ. God will not leave His obedient disciples in spiritual darkness or ignorance.

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible - **Isaiah 28:10**:

For precept must be upon precept] The original is remarkably abrupt and sententious. The hemistichs are these:-

latsav tsav latsav tsav ki

lakav kav lakav kav sham zeeir sham zeeir

For,-Command to command, command to command.

Line to line, line to line. A little there, a little there.

*“Kimchi says **tsav**, precept, is used here for **mitsvah**, command, and is used in no other place for it but here. **tsav** signifies a little precept, such as is suited to the capacity of a child; see Isa 28:9. **kav** signifies the line that a mason stretches out to build a layer of stones by. After one layer or course is placed, he raises the line and builds another; thus the building is by degrees regularly completed. This is the method of teaching children, giving them such information as their narrow capacities can receive; and thus the prophet dealt with the Israelites.”*

All writings, whether in the Bible or outside the Bible, need to undergo the ultimate test - do they **line up** with the **precepts** set down in the 10 commandments and the testimony (words and life) of Jesus Christ?

God will not leave His truth-seeking disciples in ignorance.

John 7:17.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

But, popular doctrines should not be accepted just because they are popular or orthodox for this practice might lead to the acceptance of “doctrines of men” instead of God's law.

Matthew 15:9

“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Exodus 23:2

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

The position held by the majority is not always correct. Some majorities “do evil” based on their incorrect doctrinal positions.

John 16:2

“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”

Followers of Jesus need to study AND to ask God to reveal to them how to correctly understand His character from the revelations in the Bible.

Isaiah 28:10

“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”

2 Timothy 2:15

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**"

According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, the phrase translated "***rightly dividing***" (#3718) means to "***teach truth directly and correctly.***"

All correct doctrine is founded on Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18) not on the faulty perceptions of human beings.

Seventh-day Adventist minister Doug Batchelor uses an illustration concerning another subject, but which is helpful in this context also.

When a young man in the army and was away from home for a long time, the mother would often go to the son's photo and kiss it. The photo made her feel closer to her son. However, as soon as the son arrived back home, would the mother meet him at the door, but then turn away to kiss the son's photo? Of course not! She would kiss and embrace her son – not his photo.

In the same way, before God sent His Son to the world, humanity did not have even a true photo of God. They possessed perhaps a "black and white sketch" in the writings of the prophets. Then the Father sent His Son and the world saw the glory (the true character) of "the image of God" veiled in human flesh. Humanity saw a "full colour photo" of the Father's character in Jesus.

John 1: 16, 17, (Syriac translation)

"For the law was given by Moses, but the reality came by Jesus Christ."

We need to understand that our concept of God's character has likely become corrupted by the doctrines and traditions of men; and by dedicated, but erring human beings who try to explain their perception of God's character.

We need to focus again on the perfect reflection of God's character as illuminated by the Son of God Himself.

Ministry of Healing, (continued) p 419-423

"Let us study the words that Christ spoke in the upper chamber on the night before His crucifixion**The disciples did not yet understand Christ's words concerning His relation to God. Much of His teaching was still dark to them.** Christ desired them to have a clearer, more distinct knowledge of God. 'These things have I spoken unto you in parables,' He said; 'but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.' John 16:25, margin. **When, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, they understood more fully the truths that Christ had spoken in parables. Much of the teaching that had been a mystery to them was made clear. But not even then did the disciples receive the**

complete fulfillment of Christ's promise. They received all the knowledge of God that they could bear, but the complete fulfillment of the promise that Christ would show them plainly of the Father was yet to come. Thus it is today. Our knowledge of God is partial and imperfect. When the conflict is ended, and the Man Christ Jesus acknowledges before the Father His faithful workers, who in a world of sin have borne true witness for Him, they will understand clearly what now are mysteries to them.”

The Bible records many faithful people who served God *to the best extent of their knowledge, but who were nevertheless, very wrong in their perceptions of God's character.* Some devout followers of God were sadly lacking in knowledge of the truth, but God did not refuse to help them because of their misperceptions. Some believers in this situation were:

- **Job** - Despite his holy life, Job was completely wrong about God's character. Job thought that God originated evil and destruction upon him, but note that God did not forsake or even chide Job about his misunderstanding. God did not attempt to defend His character to Job. God valued the intention of Job's heart and pointed out to him, that there were some things that were 'too high for him.' Job's knowledge remained incomplete. The Bible never reveals whether Job was ever shown that Satan had been his attacker and that God was completely innocent of any wrong-doing, but the main focus of God's speech to Job, was that Job simply did not understand. Job 38:1, 2; 42:1-3 *"Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 'Who [is] this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?' (42:1) Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do every [thing], and [that] no thought can be withholden from thee. Who [is] he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not."* When face to face with God, Job was quick to admit that he didn't know many things about God, but he repeatedly asserted that God knew his heart and that he truly wanted to serve the Lord.
- **Jephthah** the Gileadite, an Israelite leader (Judges 11) thought that if he 'devoted' something important to God, it would persuade God to 'fight' for him against the Ammonites, but Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world, or else would my servants fight" (John 8:36);
- **Moses and Joshua, Samuel, Gideon, Samson** and other Israelite leaders listed by Paul in Hebrews 11 – the 'by faith' chapter - were supposedly instructed by God to violently and mercilessly kill the pagan inhabitants of Canaan, (1 Sam 15; Num 31; Deut 21; Judges 14:4) but Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world, or else would my servants fight" (John 8:36). Whose servants were the Israelites when they were committing genocide against the Canaanites?
- **David**, (prophet and king) believed that God would be pleased if he built a temple for the Lord. God refused this offering (despite the genuine motivation that inspired it), because David was a man of war (1 Chron 28:3);
- Both **Jonah** (a true prophet), **and** the pagan sailors thought that God was very angry with them and would kill them (Jonah 1:14), but God preserved them all from the storm at sea. An obvious example that Jonah was ignorant of spiritual principles was demonstrated when he expressed his desire God destroy his Assyrian 'enemies,' regardless of their genuine repentance;
- **Abraham** (patriarch and visionary) thought it was in accordance with God's will that he take another wife while Sarah was still alive. He thought that God would be pleased to fulfil His promise to give him an heir through Hagar (Genesis 16:15). Though in Eden, God ordained a man to have only one wife at a time, He did not give Abraham a vision to reveal His perfect will concerning marriage; nor

did He condemn Abraham's polygamy though it was an obvious demonstration of his lack of faith. Abraham was so sure that God was involved in the conception of his first son, that he called his son *Ishmael* which means 'God will hear' (Strong's # 3458), but God revealed that Abraham's innocent assumptions were not divinely inspired. Despite his genuine love for God, and the frequent communications he received from God, Abraham made several faulty decisions. These errors were made because he did not know God's character well enough.

- **Sarah** thought the Lord had especially intervened to prevent her from having children (Genesis 16:2), when in fact, God performed a miracle so that Sarah could have a child (Romans 4:19).
- **Nathan** the prophet was so sure that God would be pleased to have David build a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant, that he did not hesitate to grant his approval for David to begin the project. Although genuine in his approval, Nathan nevertheless gave David faulty information because he misunderstood how negatively God viewed war and bloodshed. God later instructed Nathan to relate to the king that his acts of killing actually disqualified him from building the temple. The conclusion is somewhat confusing: ***If God had indeed instructed David to commit these acts of war and bloodshed, and David obediently carried out the killings, how could his obedience disqualify him from building the temple?*** Did the killings make him somehow unholy? ***Furthermore, Moses was also a man of war and bloodshed, killing heretics by 'divine' command, yet he was not prohibited from building the first sanctuary. Where is the consistency?*** Should not the restrictive principle that applied to David, apply to Moses also?
- **Saul** thought he was doing God's will by persecuting Christians, but Jesus corrected him with a question, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Despite their love for God, these people were wrong in their understanding of God's character and will. This was not a sin, but it was a dangerous situation when their writings or doctrines were considered to be completely inspired and the perfect representation of God and His righteousness.

Ellen White, Pacific Union Recorder, 31 December, 1903

"I am instructed to say to our people, Let us follow Christ. We may safely discard all ideas that are not included in His teachings."

Hebrews 1:1-3

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, (2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (3) Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

#3 - Holy Men of God Spake - 2 Peter 1:20, 21

2 Peter 1:19-2:2

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2:2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

Objection:

Everything that God related to holy men who wrote the Bible, is truth.

Answer:

There is no question that everything which comes from God is absolutely correct and truthful. When God conveys any message, it is truth. It is faultless. When God instructs a prophet with a dream or vision or special message, then we can trust that God has spoken truth to the prophet. ***The question is, "How do we determine IF a prophecy comes from God? How do we know that a message has its origin with God and not with man, or the anti-christ?"***

All statements, messages, prophecies, spirits must be tested.

1 John 3:24 - 1John 4:1

"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

Against which standard should all statements, messages, prophecies and spirits be tested?

Isaiah 8:20

*"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not **according to this word**, it is because there is no light in them."*

In the New Testament, the same principle is outlined by Paul to the Corinthian believers. If two or three prophets suggested that they had a "message from the Lord" then Paul exhorts the older prophets, (experienced men) to examine the message – prior to accepting it as being from the Lord - to see if it aligns and harmonises with the truth that has already been established by God in the past. This truth is the 10 commandments given by the Lord God Himself and written with His own finger and spoken aloud in His own voice (Exodus 20). If the "new" prophecy did not harmonise with God's commandments then God would be the author of confusion and Paul warns against falling into the error of suggesting that God's character is contradictory.

1 Corinthians 14:29

“Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. (30) If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. (31) For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. (32) And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. (33) For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

Please note what the verses (2 Peter 1:21, 22) do state and what they do not state. They state that all **prophecy** is given by God, and all prophecy is inspired by God. Peter does not state that all the activities listed in the Bible were commanded by God and inspired by God.

The Bible records that there were many false prophets among the Israelites, claiming to have a message “from the Lord” but those prophets lied to the people.

Jeremiah 14:14; 23:25-27, 31, 32

“Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. 15 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not... 23:25 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26 How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; 27 Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.... 31 Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues... 32 Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.”

Ezekiel 13:16

“To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord GOD.”

Micah 3:5

Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err...”

Jeremiah 28:9

“The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him.”

Clearly some instructions that were **said** to have been given as a “Thus saith the Lord,” are not in harmony with God's own expressed 10 commandment laws (Numbers 31:17). The commandment supposedly given by “the Lord” to the Hebrew people, ordering them to kill men, women and infant children, but to keep the virgins for themselves, is clearly in conflict with the other inspired writings that **do** align with the 10 commandments – the commandments that teach us how to love God and how to love to humanity.

Proverbs 24:17

“Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.”

When a prophet professes to receive a message from the One True God, the spirit (thoughts and concepts) of that prophet needs to be tested by the law of the One True God – the God who **is** Love.

1 John 5:2, 3

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”

Ellen White demonstrates the fact that even “holy men of God” can speak and yet have their own personalities and preconceived ideas might effect the accuracy of their writings.

Review and Herald 25 March, 1890 p 4

*"I am the vine, ye are the branches," said Jesus. We do not half understand the preciousness of this lesson; we must learn more and more the significance of these words. We need our eyes anointed that we may see the light of truth. We must not think, "Well, we have all the truth, we understand the main pillars of our faith, and we may rest on this knowledge." **The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light. A brother asked, "Sister White, do you think we must understand the truth for ourselves? Why can we not take the truths that others have gathered together, and believe them because they have investigated the subjects, and then we shall be free to go on without the taxing of the powers of the mind in the investigation of all these subjects? Do you not think that these men who have brought out the truth in the past were inspired of God?" I dare not say they were not led of God, for Christ leads into all truth; but when it comes to inspiration in the fullest sense of the word, I answer, No. I believe that God has given them a work to do, but if they are not fully consecrated to God at all times, they will weave self and their peculiar traits of character into what they are doing, and will put their mold upon the work, and fashion men in religious experience after their own pattern. It is dangerous for us to make flesh our arm. We should lean upon the arm of infinite power. God has been revealing this to us for years. We must have living faith in our hearts, and reach out for larger knowledge and more advanced light.**"*

Ellen White differentiates between “inspired” and “led by God.” She states that “inspired, in the fullest sense of the word” is different to being “led by God.” In the fullest sense of the word, “inspired” refers to **prophecy** which was given to human beings directly from the Lord. Other writings might have merit, but prophecy, visions and other direct communications from God are “inspired” in the highest sense.

If it was possible that “men led of God” in 1890, were able to “put their own mold upon the work” and to “weave self and their peculiar traits of character” into what they were doing, is it not possible that the same could be said of the “men of God” who fashioned the writings known as the Holy Bible? Not all writings in the Bible were prophecy (or as Ellen White states – **inspired in the fullest sense of the word**). The prophecies were fully inspired, direct communications from God. Other writings in the Bible might logically have been at risk of having the writer's “peculiar traits of character” woven into them.

Ellen White demonstrates that even those who wrote the Bible could err in judgment.

Sketches from the Life of Paul (1883) p 213, para 2

“The disciples themselves yet cherished a regard for the ceremonial law, and were too willing to make concessions, hoping by so doing to gain the confidence of their countrymen, remove their prejudice, and win them to faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer. Paul's great object in visiting Jerusalem was to conciliate the church of Palestine. So long as they continued to cherish prejudice against him, they were constantly working to counteract his influence. He felt that if he could by any lawful concession on his part win them to the truth, he would remove a very great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places. **But he was not authorized of God to concede so much as they had asked. This concession was not in harmony with his teachings, nor with the firm integrity of his character. His advisers were not infallible. Though some of these men wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, yet when not under its direct influence they sometimes erred.**”

Again, in the following quote, Ellen White portrays a similar problem with divine character being tainted with human traits.

Gospel Workers, 1892 p 319

“He was giving them an opportunity to become acquainted with him, and to see the marked contrast between his life and teachings and those of the Pharisees. **As professed followers of Christ, we have much to learn.** There is with many an icy chilliness, a reserve like that of the Pharisees, that must be broken down. They are not willing to become learners, but, like the Pharisees, desire to be dictators, teachers. **God sent his Son to give his people a better knowledge of the truth,** to show them the best way to help their fellow-men. But the Pharisees refused to receive the divine instruction. **They thought that Christ was too liberal. His ways did not agree with theirs; and instead of seeking to come into harmony with Christ, they sought to bring Christ into harmony with them.** While he differed from them so widely, his influence would, they thought, lessen theirs, **and would counteract their teachings.** In order to carry out their own purposes, they set themselves in opposition to Christ, and thus brought darkness upon themselves.”

Review and Herald, 29 August, 1899 p 5

“As we trace the course pursued by the scribes and Pharisees, and see the light and privileges granted them, we are led to inquire, How could those teachers read the word of God without perceiving the truths which it teaches? Upon these men was placed the responsibility of explaining the law in the synagogue; but Christ declared, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." Ye teach for doctrine the commandments of men. The sayings of men, coming down through the rabbis from age to age, had molded their religious worship. Traditions were constantly increasing, which kept the mind in a state of questioning and controversy over the most trivial matters. **New laws were constantly being enacted, and the people were taught to regard them as the requirements of God, until a mechanical service became the sum of their religion and their worship. Many of these laws were not committed to writing, and exaction after exaction was added until a most unreasonable mass of maxims and fables was brought together. He who attempted to bring forward scriptures that conflicted with these laws and traditions, was condemned as if he had refused to accept a "Thus saith the Lord." This education of the rabbis was well-pleasing to Satan; for through them he was preparing the way so that when Christ should come to the world, he would be rejected by his own nation.**”

Signs of the Times, 20 March, 1901 p4

"The men who have the oracles of God not only break the law themselves but teach those who would investigate and obey the light to do the same. The men who claim to be teachers deceive the people, as did the leaders in Israel in Christ's day. He, the great Teacher, was in the world; He was the light of the world; but Satan interposed his hellish shadow between Him and the souls whom Christ came to save. When accused by the Pharisees, He said, 'Ye make void the law of God by your tradition.' 'Ye teach for doctrines the commandments of men.' Again He said to those so-called teachers, 'Ye are both ignorant of the Scriptures and the power of God.'"

On the road to Emmaus, Christ demonstrated *which* writings were vital for humanity to study. It was the typical law and the prophecies which identified Him as the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God.

Signs of the Times, 6 October, 1909 p 7,8

"Jesus did not first reveal Himself in His true character to them, and then open the Scriptures to their minds; for He knew that they would be so overjoyed to see Him again, risen from the dead, that their souls would be satisfied. They would not hunger for the sacred truths which He wished to impress indelibly upon their minds, that they might impart them to others, who should in their turn spread the precious knowledge, until thousands of people should receive the light given that day to the despairing disciples as they journeyed to Emmaus. He maintained His disguise till He had **interpreted the Scriptures, and had led them to an intelligent faith in His life, His character, His mission to earth, and His death and resurrection. He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, not because it was supported by His personal testimony, but because the typical law, and the prophets of the Old Testament, agreeing with the facts of His life and death, presented unquestionable evidence of that truth.**"

Where is the danger in not recognising truth from error? An example from Dr Joseph Goebbels' life will demonstrate why God's people must be cautious and prayerful before they consider accepting any writing that is claimed to be 'inspired by God.'

Dr Paul Joseph Goebbels

Mass Deception - Changing 'Sacred' Writings to Gain Political Control

In 1926, Dr Joseph Goebbels was Adolph Hitler's Berlin Gauleiter (political party leader). Two years later he was elected to the Reichstag (the German parliament). In 1929 Goebbels became propaganda leader of the Nazi party and in this capacity he actively persecuted Jews and "non-Aryan" groups. Goebbels was most successful in aiding Hitler's rise to power in 1933, by his work as a propagandist. Goebbels wore the title "Reichsminister for Propaganda and National Enlightenment." He basically convinced many German people that the Aryan race was supreme; that Hitler was a veritable god to be explicitly obeyed on punishment of death, and that the Nazi party were the rightful rulers of the world.

Determined to leave his glorious mark on society, Dr Goebbels engineered strategies to manipulate an entire nation to believe ridiculous falsehoods and to act on those beliefs.

How did one man achieve such a high degree of control over so many intelligent people? How did he programme many normal, fellow citizens, so that they murdered innocent men, women and children?

Hans-Otto Meissner, in *Magda Goebbels: First Lady of the Third Reich* (1978:217, 218), reveals one of Dr Goebbels' most successful, deceptive strategies.

*“Goebbels successfully exploited the German propensity for mysticism and superstition....he made use of Nostradamus, the erudite scholar and astrologer, quoted by Goethe in **Faust**, who died in Paris in 1566. As Goethe had ensured Nostradamus' undying fame, his words were particularly credible. Quite fortuitously a passage in his prophecies was found to read as follows:*

‘And war will break out in Europe on so vast and fearful a scale as never before. Death and destruction, conflict and bloodshed, will descend on princes and people alike, and press hard on the people of the middle kingdom until in the end the cities of Paris and London and those that be far to the East will be engulfed in a sea of flame. But that people which stands under the sign of the crooked cross, that people will triumph, to live in peace; prosperity and happiness, a proud dominion for a thousand years.’”

It goes without saying that Nostradamus did not write a word of all this. Goebbels himself was the author. Authentic reproductions of the old prophet were secretly circulated, eagerly read and seriously believed. They were credible even to would be sceptics, inasmuch as responsible men, solemnly averred that they had read these words in an original volume of Nostradamus of the year 1550. Nostradamus must indeed have prophesied thus, since it could be read in the leather-bound original volumes to be found in a number of State libraries. The brilliant propagandist of the Thousand Year Reich had thought of everything. He was no dilettante. With all the facilities of modern counterfeit technique at his disposal, he had had a few folios from the mid-sixteenth century carefully copied and the operative sentences, in Latin text and Gothic script, laboriously inscribed on genuine parchment. Goebbels made the deception all the more complete by falsifying further passages in order to show that Nostradamus had correctly prophesied other things, such as ‘giant fish which swim around in the sea with sailors in their bellies’ or ‘birds of iron’. When the forgeries had accomplished their objective, the volumes in question disappeared from the libraries, so that a more thorough examination was no longer possible. Because of the great value of such so-called presentation books, which could not be taken away, but only consulted under supervision, even experts were deceived in this way by the Fuhrer's Mephisto.”

Dr Goebbels proved that millions of normal, intelligent people could easily be manipulated by the use of a simple strategies, because these people were vulnerable in one area – that they believed some particular writings were inspired; they had ‘faith’ in the prophecies of Nostradamus and this proved to be their Achilles’ heel.

Dr Goebbels realised that if he ‘adjusted’ or ‘altered’ the text in Nostradamus’ original parchments, he could deceive millions into believing that the altered prophecies were also more-than-humanly inspired.² The great propagandist indeed caused ‘Nostradamus’ to predict that the Nazi party would introduce Germany to one thousand years of peace. In reality, because of the false belief that a virtuous ‘super-human intelligence’ had inspired the writings, normal people were persuaded to act against their consciences – to the point of assisting the Third Reich in the murder of the non-Aryan races.

² Nostradamus was inspired by Satan (see <http://www.lamblion.com/articles/doctrinal/Cults/Cults-09.php>) for an interesting portrayal of the ‘prophet’s’ source of inspiration.

What was necessary to equip Dr Goebbels to deceive so many intelligent, but superstitious people?

It was necessary that people put their faith in some 'divinely inspired' writings – in this case the popular writings of Nostradamus.

Many committed followers of Nostradamus might have thought that no-one would stoop to alter their 'prophet's' writings in order to achieve political power. To do so would be immoral and intentionally deceptive.³

Trusting that the 'Nazi' prophecies were truly penned by Nostradamus, because the experts reassured them that the parchments were certainly originals, the common people believed or put their faith the altered writings.

As soon as the German people believed that the altered writings were divinely inspired through Nostradamus, they eventually acted out their faulty faith. The sickening record reveals that many well-educated, intelligent German people silenced their consciences and assisted the Nazi party to achieve their persecutions against innocent people.

Not all German people believed the prophecies of Nostradamus. Not all the German people believed or co-operated with the Nazi party. Some people elevated the law of God to its proper place, and obeyed the law of kindness which Jesus demonstrated to be the mark of a true Christian.

John 15:13

"Greater love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Many Germans who had been able to withstand Dr Goebbels delusions, actually risked their lives to save the persecuted non-Aryan people. It was the ability to determine truth from error that distinguished the deceived Germans, from the wise Germans.

The wise Germans did not abuse their consciences by trying to justify the murder of other human beings, but worked in dangerous situations to assist the Nazi victims.

If Dr Goebbels was able to create perfect 'authentic, original' parchments in order to gain political control over Germany for the Nazi party, isn't it possible to consider that a similar process might have occurred to the Christian Bible over the years?

Dr Goebbels employed the 'divinely inspired' writings to convince people that they should support Hitler's evil Nazi party.

Isn't it conceivable that in ancient times, power-hungry Israelites or even dedicated Israelites might also have altered certain holy writings in the Bible in order to manipulate people and achieve political power and control - or to nurture stability of government?

³ Dr Goebbels was famous for his multiple adulteries, amorality and for being intentionally deceptive. He did not appear to have a conscience at all. E.g. In order to 'go down in history as a great leader, Dr Goebbels made the decision along with his wife, that, rather than to escape from doomed Berlin, or to send their children to safety, they would kill themselves and their 6 children in the ultimate act of loyalty to the Fuhrer. As with other violent organisations and leaders, Dr Goebbels believed that the end justified the means – murderous means - which he deemed necessary to achieve his selfish goals of self aggrandizement.

Ellen White indeed saw that the Bible texts had been altered.

Early Writings p 220:

“I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition.”

Summary

Hebrews 1:1

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, (2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son....”

The author does not deny that 'in times past, God spoke through the prophets.' However, it is of concern to find that some prophets were not instructed by God or were not speaking the words given them by God eg. Baalim, Barjesus (Jer 6:13; 8:10:14:14-16; Lam 2:14; Matt 7:15-20; 24:11, 24; Mk 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1).

How are these false prophets identified so that their messages can be prevented from causing confusion to the people of God? Christians need to be able to differentiate which words are spurious from those which did in fact, 'proceed from the mouth of God.'

That holy men of God spake as they were moved with the thoughts of the Son of God is not in question. That every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God is absolute truth, is not contested. Jesus quoted from MANY of the Old Testament Scriptures, thus sanctioning them. Jesus fulfilled and thus sanctioned the Messianic prophecies which revealed that He was the Messiah. He sanctioned the 10 commandment laws and quoted from Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18 – establishing the law's two great principles – upon which hang all the law and the prophets. By these words, Jesus assured us that IF any law was from God, it would be in harmony with those two principles - of love to God; and love to humanity.

The vital question is, “Did all the words now found in the Old Testament, (which were *said* by the Jewish leaders to have proceeded from the mouth of God), actually originate from God - or were some words enhanced by Jewish leaders (perhaps to enable religio-political control) – which they then authorised by saying that “God” instructed them to perform?

From the Old Testament it can be seen that great legitimacy was applied to 'commands' that were said to have been given by God through Moses or Joshua - and the opportunity for enormous political 'clout' which such a belief imparted to theocratic (religio-political) governments, cannot be ignored.

With such obvious potential for political abuse, how can Christians be sure that a certain writing or words, originated from the mouth/mind of God?

Isaiah 8:20 reminds us that if ANYONE speaks NOT according to THIS word – the law and testimony of God – then there is no light in those words.

“This Word.” To what does the term, “this word” does refer?

It refers to the Word which proceeded from God.

Revelation 19:13 says that Christ is the Word of God.

Revelation 19:13

“And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and **his name is called The Word of God.**”

John 1:1

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Ellen White states that Christ is the thought of God made audible.

Desire of Ages, 1898, p 19

“By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,--God's thought made audible.”

It is Christ's **life** - His pure, loving words and actions - which constitute the true Word of God. **According to the Bible itself, in EVERY occasion the expression ‘the Word of God’ is used, it uses the Greek word LOGOS – which means the SPOKEN Word – not the WRITTEN words in the Bible.** God related truths to the prophets, in particular, truths to demonstrate through prophecy that the Son of God was the true messiah, but the Word of God is the title given to Jesus Himself (Rev 19:13, John 1:1) According to the Bible itself, Jesus Christ is the Word of God. It is His life - which is comprised of His actions and words of truth which are recorded in the Bible - but it is Christ the Son of God who is the only Word of God.

1 John 1:1

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (2) For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; (3) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

In the New Testament, Christ Jesus Himself – the Word of God - confirmed that the principles found in Isaiah 8:20, (to the law and to the testimony) is the solution to this on-going dilemma.

Matthew 7:15

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (16) Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? (17) Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. (18) A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. (19) Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (20) Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

A true prophet's message and life will be in harmony with the law and the testimony. The 'fruit' or works of a true prophet and his/her message, will give evidence that such a person upholds the law of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Therefore, no true prophet will ever state that God has commanded them to instruct others to murder or kill their enemies.

#4 - The Old and the New Testaments are Infallible

Objections:

(a) *I stand firmly on the entire Old and New Testaments;*

(b) *Jesus said in John 55:46,47 "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"*

Answer:

(a) *I stand firmly on the entire Old and New Testaments*

The statement is made: "*I stand firmly on the entire Old and New Testaments,*" but that statement generates a question: Why? Shouldn't the Christian's faith be anchored in Christ? It is Christ's character that **is** the 10 commandments in very essence. Both the Old and New Testaments are recognised as sacred if the principles they uphold and demonstrate the Messiahship of Christ, His character and that of His Father as declared in the 10 commandments.

Hebrews 1:1-3

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners [spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets](#), (2) [Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son](#), whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (3) Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high..."

Was Christ a commandment-keeper, as He claimed to be? (John 15:10) Or was He, in His pre-incarnated form, a commandment-breaker who commanded others to break His law also (Numbers 31; Deut 21; 1 Sam 15 et)?

To insist that Christ was responsible for the massacres in the Old Testament is to accuse Christ of attacking the very foundation of His Father's government.

Is it safe to put faith in a being who breaks his own laws or is such a faith misplaced? Putting faith in an inanimate object is placing faith in an idol. Some Biblical verses appear to claim that God sanctions murder. In other places it insists that God does not break His commandments. Isn't the evidence that supports the supposition that God keeps His laws, stronger than those which claim He breaks them?

For further study on this subject, please refer to the Answer to Objections question number 4 which deals with the text: **All Scripture is Inspired - 2 Timothy 3:16**

Regarding Moses:

(b) John 5:45-47

"Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, **in whom ye trust**. (46) For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. (47) But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

In this instance, Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees. The passage is quite often misinterpreted as if Jesus was sanctioning ALL of Moses' writings, but this is definitely not the case.

The only Mosaic writings which Jesus sanctioned in these specific verses, were those which prophesied of His coming as the Messiah.

Jesus said the Jewish leaders trusted in Moses. The Jews claimed to believe in every word written by Moses, much as some devout Christians claim to believe in all the Old and New Testaments. But Moses, under the spirit of Christ, had received **prophesies** concerning the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. When Jesus came, the Jews rejected Him as the Messiah - in spite of Moses' prophetic evidence to the contrary (Gen 49:10; Deut 8:18).

The **divinely inspired prophetic writings** were ignored by the Pharisees. The Jews **trusted** that a legalistic religion – the Mosaic rites and ceremonies- a works gospel - would save them, but they wouldn't accept Moses' teachings and trust in the Messiah to whom the prophesies pointed.

Christ was stating that the Jews were rejecting the divinely inspired prophecies that revealed Him to be the Messiah. He was not stating that the Jews had difficulty accepting Moses' "legalised" (supposedly divine) command to murder, rape, and commit genocide recorded as history in the same Mosaic writing. These sins were no problem for the Jewish leaders. 'Legalised' commandment-breaking was not difficult for them. The Pharisees had made legalised sinning an art form. They accepted the violent Hebrew's history as normal and were proud of their ancestors' conquests. But Jesus told them that they did the works of their father the devil (John 8:44) and that they did not know His Father's character (John 8:55). Jesus condemned their legalised sinning.

Matthew 23:27, 28

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

These verses can not be used to show that Jesus gave support to **all** the writings in the books of Moses. Jesus regularly gave support to **the divinely inspired prophecies and the 10 commandment law in the Old Testament**, – but it is not demonstrated that Christ endorsed the evil commandment-breaking commands that were supposedly given by Himself prior to His incarnation. To such suggestions, Christ rebukes. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:55).

There is no question that God inspired the Old Testament writings which uphold the 10 commandments and the prophecies identifying the Son of God as the Messiah. This is the value of the Old Testament emphasised by Ellen White.

Ellen White, 2 Spirit of Prophecy, p 254, 255

*"The Saviour inquired of his disciples if they understood these things. They answered, 'Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.' In this parable, Jesus presented before his disciples the responsibility of those whose work it is to give to the world the light which they have received from him. The Old Testament was all the Scripture then in existence; but it was not written merely for the ancients; it was for all ages and for all people. **Jesus would have the teachers of his doctrine diligently search the Old Testament for that light which establishes his identity as the Messiah foretold in prophecy, and reveals the nature of his mission to the world** (continued over page).*

(Ellen White – continued)

*“The Old and the New Testament are inseparable, for both are the teachings of Christ. The doctrine of the Jews, who accept only the Old Testament, is not unto salvation, since **they reject the Saviour whose life and ministry was a fulfillment of the law and the prophecies. And the doctrine of those who discard the Old Testament is not unto salvation, because it rejects that which is direct testimony of Christ.** Skeptics begin with discounting upon the Old Testament, and it takes but another step to deny the validity of the New, and thus both are rejected. (p 255) The Jews have little influence over the Christian world in showing them the importance of the commandments, including the binding law of the Sabbath, because in bringing forth the old treasures of truth, **they throw aside the new ones in the personal teachings of Jesus.**” “On the other hand, the strongest reason why Christians fail to influence the Jews to accept the teachings of Christ as the language of divine wisdom, is because, in bringing forth the treasures of his word, they treat with contempt the riches of the Old Testament, which are **the earlier teachings of the Son of God,** through Moses. **They reject the law proclaimed from Sinai, and the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, instituted in the garden of Eden.** But the minister of the gospel, who follows the teachings of Christ, will gain a thorough knowledge of both the Old and the New Testament, that he may present them in their true light to the people an inseparable whole--the one depending upon and illuminating the other. Thus, as Jesus instructed his disciples, they will bring forth from their treasure ‘things new and old.’”*

The value in the Old Testament was that the prophecies verified beyond any shadow of doubt, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah – the Son of God. Christ repeatedly admonished the disciples to refer to the prophecies of the Old Testament to determine whether or not He fulfilled the Messianic predictions. On this basis, Christ led them to become established on the truth that He was the true Messiah.

Another important feature of the Old Testament which Christ endorsed, was the law of God. In the New Testament, Christ quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 thus sanctioning those principles which required love to God and love to one's fellowman.

Matthew 22:36-40

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? (37) Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Jesus demonstrated that His Father's law – the 10 commandments - is the embodiment of His Father's holy character.

Furthermore, Jesus stated that God's love is freely given to all people - both the evil and the good – friend and enemy - regardless of their spiritual allegiance.

Matthew 5:44, 45

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

If the Old Testament – or any other ‘divinely inspired writings’ contain anything that contradicts these great commandments, then perhaps Ellen White's insight can suggest how that situation arose.

However, Ellen White also states in Early Writings p 220:

“I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition.”

It is widely accepted by archaeologists and historians, that the writers and editors who reproduced the Old Testament down through the centuries – prior to Hezekiah's time - 'adjusted' the Biblical texts to reflect their own particular theology and added these notes to the Bible record (Who Wrote the Bible, Robert, Compass, ABC 9 April, 2006).

Perhaps Beckford's opinion is correct, or perhaps he is misguided, so regardless of Beckford's opinion, how can God's people determine whether a particular writing or document is inspired by His spirit and to discriminate which is spurious? This skill is necessary, for as Ellen White informs us, some Bible texts have been altered.

These alterations become a serious issue for Christians, for we need to see a clear, correct portrayal of God's character. This is vital, because our characters will be reflect what we perceive to be the divine character – and our characters determine our eternal destiny.

Could it be logically supposed that the personal views of the scribes, whose job it was to copy the inspired books by hand – not to alter them - were **not** strongly influenced by the theology of the surrounding pagan nations and by their savage environment? The evidence demonstrates that this type of editing certainly did occur.

It is widely accepted that 1 John 5:7,8 was added to the Bible. The evidence is overwhelming that this was done and many **historians** and Bible translators and researchers agreed on this fact. However, should Christians take the word of scholars, theologians and historians as being “gospel truth?” NO! Even if scholars, theologians and historians agree that some writing is divinely inspired, Christians are repeatedly warned **not** to put trust in human beings but to evaluate all writings according to the 10 commandments of love.

The Bereans didn't accept a blind assertion that Paul's words were inspired. They checked **the prophecies** to see if Jesus really was the Messiah. Christ through Isaiah tells us how to determine which character concepts are inspired and which isn't inspired. All writings relating to the character of God, must line up; every thought must line up with the 10 commandment law and the testimony - the life of Jesus Christ.

Please Consider

If the famous interpolation 1 John 5:7,8 found its way into the Bible, can we be sure that no other verses were added or altered over the centuries? Wasn't God carefully guarding the Bible? Of course He was! But then how did 1 John 5:7,8 get into the Protestant Bible?

God guarded His Bible by making sure that His principles of truth were still to be found in the Bible, despite this truth becoming buried in erroneous human thinking. The prophecies, the 10 commandments, the identification of the Messiah, the record of creation – all these vital truths were carefully preserved.

Some people appear to confuse the important issues. They seem to think that defending the Bible's total accuracy is a vital issue. Christ did not share this concern, nor did He seem to promote the concept of infallible written scripture.

Christ did state 'the Scriptures cannot lie,' but this was stated in a question to the Pharisees, who believed that the Scriptures were infallible. It did not represent Christ's position, for in Matthew 5, Christ forbade several 'regulations' and traditions in the Mosaic law (refer to section entitled **Jesus Corrected Traditional Mosaic Law**).

Christ always reminded His followers that it was their love (for God and their neighbours) which was the most important issue in salvation. By loving perfectly, they would be keeping of the commandments. Christ prophesied that the time was coming when people would think that breaking the commandments of God would please Him.

John 16:2, 3

"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. (3) And these things will they do unto you, **because they have not known the Father, nor me.**"

Jesus prophesied that some people who think they know the Father and Son will think that killing people would please God. The 'wise man' Solomon says, "There is nothing new under the sun." For centuries, the ancient Israelites were killing thousands of people, (called pagans - heretics) thinking it would please God.

Jesus said, if you know the Father and Son, then you won't kill. "If you love me, (you will) keep my commandments.... as I kept My Father's commandments. You will also "love one another as I have loved you." Jesus said that His followers would "Love their enemies." (John 14:15; 15:10; 13:34; Matthew 5:44).

Did Jesus lie when He said He kept His Father's commandments or did He only mean He kept His Father's commandments **when He lived on earth as a human being?** If Christ ordered and assisted the Hebrews to destroy other nations, then He did not keep His Father's law prior to the incarnation. The faith that overcomes the world is not in any inanimate object. The Word of God is not a "thing" - He is a commandment-keeping divine Person.

Ellen White appears to make some significant comments in The EG White 1888 Materials p 526, 527; MS Rel #1037 (MS 25, 9 Jan, 1890). She states that when Christ came to the earth as a human being, He recognised that the truth about God's character had been "*buried and had apparently become extinct.*" It was "*placed in a framework of error*" and "*disconnected from its true position.*"

The Jewish religious leaders, despite being in possession of the Old Testament scrolls, and despite having committed it to memory and teaching the books of Moses to their youth, despite having all that knowledge, Christ recognised that they did not possess the “*gems of truth.*” For this reason, Christ endeavoured to bring the essential truths about God's character to the minds of the people. Ellen White, from the same manuscript, reveals a significant teaching strategy which Christ employed to achieve His tutorial goal.

The EG White 1888 Materials p 526, 527; MS Rel #1037 (MS 25, 9 Jan, 1890)

“As Christ presented these truths to minds, He broke up their accustomed train of thought as little as possible. *Nevertheless a new and transforming economy of truth must be woven into their experience. He therefore aroused their minds by presenting truth through the agency of their most familiar associations. He used illustrations in His teaching which called into activity their most hallowed recollections and sympathies, that he might reach the inner temple of the soul.”*⁴

It can be easily seen that Ellen White's comment harmonises with Christ' own statement that He could not reveal all the truth to the disciples as they “could not bear it.”

John 16:12

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”

Paul also recognised that instructing others requires a 'holding back' and regulated release of the 'gems' of truth, which if given 'all in one go' would have a negative, perhaps disillusionary effect on the seekers of truth.

4 The full quote from the EG White 1888 Materials Vol 2. p 526, 527; Manuscript Release #1037 (MS 25, 9 January, 1890) reads as follows:

“Christ was the originator of all the ancient gems of truth. Through the work of the enemy these truths had been displaced. They had been disconnected from their true position, and placed in the framework of error. Christ's work was to readjust and establish the precious gems in the framework of truth. The principles of truth which had been given by Himself to bless the world had, through Satan's agency, been buried and had apparently become extinct. Christ rescued them from the rubbish of error, gave them a new, vital force, and commanded them to shine as precious jewels, and stand fast forever. Christ Himself could use any of these old truths without borrowing the smallest particle, for He had originated them all. He had cast them into the minds and thoughts of each generation, and when He came to our world He rearranged and vitalized the truths which had become dead, making them more forcible for the benefit of future generations. It was Jesus Christ who had the power of rescuing the truths from the rubbish, and again giving them to the world with more than their original freshness and power. As Christ presented these truths to mind, He broke up their accustomed train of thought as little as possible. Nevertheless a new and transforming economy of truth must be woven into their experience. He therefore aroused their minds by presenting truth through the agency of their most familiar associations. He used illustrations in His teaching which called into activity their most hallowed recollections and sympathies, that he might reach the inner temple of the soul.”

1 Corinthians 3:1, 2

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. (2) I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.”

It appears likely, according to Christ's own words, Paul's teaching strategies and Ellen White's statements, that Christ purposely did not expose and confront all the false beliefs which the people held as truth. Instead Christ endeavoured to establish correct concepts of God's character initially and then as the believers were converted by recognising the love of God, they would grow spiritually and be able to 'bear' more 'cutting away' of their errors and be open to receiving more of the true gems of truth. Christ promised that the holy spirit of God would lead them into **all** truth (John 16:13).

Who Decided Which Writings Were Inspired by God?

As Ellen White (in Early Writings p 220) and the Bible itself warns that to find truth, the Bible student must dig deeply as for buried treasure (Matthew 13:44) – linking line upon line and precept upon precept; here a little there a little' (Isaiah 28:9, 10), until it all harmonises as a perfect chain which uphold the foundational principles of God's government – the 10 commandments which express infinite, unselfish love. According to Ellen White, anything else can be safely discarded.

Ellen White, Pacific Union Recorder, 31 December, 1903

“I am instructed to say to our people, Let us follow Christ. We may safely discard all ideas that are not included in His teachings.”

The Old Testament

It is accepted that Christ definitely authorised certain passages of the Old Testament scriptures. These passages are primarily those which were prophetic and which predicted certain aspects of the Messiah and the moral law of God. But, aside from these numerous passages which Jesus confirmed Himself and by indeed being the promised Messiah, how 'sacred' is the Old Testament record?

Jeffrey H. Tigay from the University of Pennsylvania, in an article dated 13 October, 1999, called, **The Bible “Codes”: A Textual Perspective** comments:

“ It is not that we lack good texts. All forms of the Tanakh used today are forms of what is known as the Masoretic Text, abbreviated “MT,” named after the medieval scholars (the Masoretes) who labored for several centuries to produce the most accurate text they could. The MT in use today is based on Masoretic manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries C.E., themselves based on older manuscripts. It has been largely unchanged since late Second Temple times (ca. the third century B.C.E., as reflected in the earliest of the Dead Sea scrolls from Qumran).”

<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jtigay/codetext.html>

The article below is taken from **The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge**, Edited by Samuel Macauley Jackson (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908-1912).

*“The extant Hebrew text of the Old Testament text is commonly called the Masoretic, to distinguish it from the text of the ancient versions as well as from the Hebrew text of former ages. **This Masoretic text does not present the original form but a text which within a certain period was fixed by Jewish scholars as the correct and only authoritative one.** When and how this official Masoretic text was fixed was formerly a matter of controversy, especially during the seventeenth century. One party headed by the Buxtorfs (father and son), in the interest of the view of inspiration then prevalent, held to the absolute completeness and infallibility, and hence the exclusive value, of the Masoretic text. They attributed it to Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue, who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were supposed to have purified the text from all accumulated error; added the vowel points, the accents, and other punctuation-marks (thus settling the reading and pronunciation); fixed the canon; made the right division into verses, paragraphs, and books; and, finally, **by the providence of God and the care of the Jews, the text thus made was believed to have been kept from all error, and to present the veritable Word of God.** This view of the text prevailed especially when Protestant scholasticism was at its height, and may be designated as the orthodox Protestant position.”* <http://www.bible-researcher.com/hebrewtext.html>

John H. Skilton, **The Transmission of the Hebrew Text**

*“The text of our Hebrew Bible goes back, first of all, to the Masoretes, a succession of Jewish scholars, notably connected with a school at Tiberias, whose painstaking work on the text began about A.D. 600 or before. The Masoretes introduced into the text an intricate system of accent and vowel notations. Since the Hebrew alphabet was entirely consonantal and since in earlier times no full-fledged system of vowel notation had been employed in the manuscripts, readers had been required to supply vowels to the text. The Masoretes also provided notes on the text, notes of such abundance and detail that from them alone it is possible to a considerable extent to reconstruct the text. 9 They mentioned even what they regarded as unusual accents, vowel points, and spelling. They recorded a number of variant readings — on the average of about one to a page of a printed Hebrew Old Testament 10 — and they made reference to eighteen corrections attributed to the scribes before them. 11 But the Masoretes did not originate the Hebrew traditional text. 12 They received from their predecessors a text already traditional which they treated with great reverence. Their high regard for the text that had come down to them is evidenced by their placing in the margin readings which they believed to be correct and leaving the text itself unaltered. The Masoretes were heirs of the text in use when the Talmud was written, a text which, as is clear from the Talmud itself, had previously been in a relatively fixed condition...We may be confident, according to Albright, that the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with remarkable accuracy. He maintains that the Masoretic text of the earlier books of the Bible can be followed back **to the Babylonian Exile, when he believes they were edited.** After the Exile, he holds, these fixed texts were taken back to Palestine. There the consonantal text was copied and transmitted with exceptional fidelity...”* <http://www.bible-researcher.com/skilton1.html#28>

Menachem Cohen, Professor of Bible, Bar-Ilan University; Director, Miqraot Gedolot HaKeter Project writes in **The Idea of the Sanctity of the Biblical Text and the Science of Textual Criticism**:

“The Hebrew vorlage of the Septuagint text-type was undoubtedly used by the Jews of Alexandria in the late centuries BCE, as this was the version chosen for the Greek translation. The ...“Samaritan text-type” found at Qumran was also common in the Land of Israel, adopted by the Samaritans who added their ideological changes to that version. It can also now be proven beyond doubt that the author of Chronicles used a version of Samuel different from the MT and closer to the Lucianic version of the Septuagint, whose Hebrew prototype was found at Qumran. All the evidence we possess points to textual pluralism in the Second Temple era, as opposed to the notion of a single sacred consonantal text as later conceived. ... There are several signs that Pharisaic circles attempted to reject the multiple text-types long before the destruction of the Temple, while at Qumran there are no such signs until close to the destruction of the Temple, when the sect ceased to exist..... It can be said that the unification of the text was hastened by two parallel processes: (1) rejection and removal of “deviant” text-types like the Septuagint and the Samaritan texts, which left the MT as the single legitimate text-type; (2) the formulation of one particular consonantal text and its prevalence in as wide a circle of transmission as possible. A realistic examination of matters shows that the first process was the main cause for the relatively sudden and swift changeover to the single-text-type reality; the second process rapidly spread the notion of a sacred consonantal text, but it did not succeed in uprooting the variety of sub-types which existed within the MT framework even before an official text was fixed. The battle between the Authorized Text or the textus receptus and other shadings of this text-type continued another 1,500 years, until the era of print.”

<http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/opinions/CohenArt/>

Net Ministries (1996):

“It is not known how the original collection process happened, although there is reference to the early collections of books, and the authors of the books in the Babylonian Talmud. Apparently various books were accepted as scripture by the early rabbis and gathered for reading and study in the synagogue. Scripture was determined based on the fact that the author was considered to be a prophet, that is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This fact was accepted by Jesus as evidenced by his use of the Old Testament. The term ‘Old Testament’ makes sense only to Christians, who declare that there is indeed a ‘New Testament’. Although much of the ‘Holy Scriptures of Judaism’ are the same as the Old Testament, they are not identical. Aside from the order of the books being different, there are additional books included in the Roman Catholic Old Testament canon, the ‘reformed’ Old Testament canon, and the Orthodox collection. This uncertainty about what is part of the Old Testament still exists today, although some official canons were declared over the past centuries. In 170 A.D., Melito of Sardis declared the collections of Jewish scriptures found in the Jerusalem church to be the official OT canon for Asia Minor. This also became the OT canon for the Egyptian church. But later, in 348, Cyril of Jerusalem, declared the OT canon to additionally include the book of Baruch, and the Letter of Jeremiah. The African churches at the synods of 393 (Hippo) and 397 (Carthage), had an enlarged collection of books which include what we today call the ‘deutero-canonical’ books of the Roman Catholic Church. Protestant churches rejected this canon however accepting only the Scriptures of Judaism.”

<http://netministries.org/Bbasics/BBOOrig.htm>

“Very few manuscripts are said to have survived the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Soon after that disaster, therefore, the Jewish religious leaders set about defining the canon and finally standardizing the text. This last process went on for many centuries and resulted in the production of an eclectic text based on arbitrary rather than scientific principles. This was the Massoretic (so called from the Hebrew massorah, 'tradition') or traditional text found in all Hebrew Bibles....The Old Testament consists of a collection of works composed at various times from the twelfth to the second century B.C.; and much of it, e.g. genealogies, poems and stories, must have been handed down by word of mouth for many generations. It contains, however, scattered references to written texts; but how extensive or widely current these may have been cannot be said, as no manuscripts have survived from the period before the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Jews into exile in 587/6 B.C. The text therefore is not infrequently uncertain and its meaning obscure.”
<http://www.bible-researcher.com/driver1.html>

It can be seen that even by the time of the second temple, there were various renditions of the sacred text. Jesus obviously recognised which sections were authentic and chose to quote and confirm those passages which coincidentally, harmonise with the 10 commandments, the Messianic prophecies and the loving character of God.

The New Testament

While the New Testament is much more recent than the writings of the Old Testament, a glance at the historical record reveals that even the New Testament was not without threat from editors.

Ellen White, *Early Writings* p 220

“I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, **learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition.**”

From an excerpt from *The Bible the Book the Bridges the Millennia*, Maxine Clarke Beach (1998) outlines the formation of the Holy Bible – the canonised Scripture.

*“The early church made decisions about which writings should be considered authoritative first in local councils of elders, and later, as the church became institutional, through councils of bishops. **Criteria used for selection of texts included orthodoxy, apostolic origin, general acceptance by the churches, and whether they had been cited by bishops.** The earliest list we know of Christian books judged as Scripture is the Muratorian Canon from the late second century. **Its stated criterion is that a book must be suitable for reading in church.** This canon did not include the letter to the Hebrews or those we know as James, 3 John, and perhaps 1 and 2 Peter. ...By A.D. 200 there was general agreement by the major Christian communities on the core of our New Testament canon: the four Gospels, Acts, Paul’s epistles, 1 Peter, and 1 John. By the late fourth century, the twenty-seven books we now have had been generally accepted, with Revelation the last and most controversial...”*

It is interesting to note that Athanasius, the man who introduced the doctrine of the trinity into the church, was the very same man who took it upon himself to declare **which** writings were canonical – (i.e. divinely inspired) and **which were not inspired**. In short, Athanasius declared which writings were able to be considered as part of the New Testament Bible. Prior to Athanasius' decree, all sacred writings had been determined by investigating whether they were upholding Godly principles e.g. **Its stated criterion is that a book must be suitable for reading in church.** **Why should that criteria be suspect today? Why should Christians believe Athanasius that the books belonging to the Arians or semi-Arian “heretics,” were not divinely inspired messages from God?**

Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria was born around 293 AD in Alexandria and he died in 373 AD. He was the 'saint' who was made famous by triumphantly introducing the doctrine of the trinity, vanquishing the Arian (and semi-Arian) opposition. Athanasius was the **defender of the trinity doctrine**.

The Arians and Semi-arians were persecuted and killed as heretics for holding a non-trinitarian position, which prior to the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, had been the orthodox position i.e. the non-trinitarian position which was held by the majority of the population. (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol 3 p 627, 628).

Arians believed that:

“The son is not unbegotten, nor part of the unbegotten in any way, nor is he derived from any substance; but that by his own will and counsel he existed before times and ages fully God, only-begotten, unchangeable. And before he was begotten or created or appointed or established, he did not exist; for he was not begotten. We are persecuted because we say the Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning. For that reason we are persecuted and because we say that he is from what is not. And this we say because he is neither part of God nor derived from any substance. For this we are persecuted.” Letter written by Arius to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia in 312 AD.

Herbert Krosney, in The Last Gospel, (2006) p 200-201 writes:

*Athanasius dedicated his life to the fight against whoever or whatever would undo the work of the Council of Nicea. He was arrested and sent into exile three times. He experienced thirty years of conflict and instability as different forces fought for supremacy within Christianity. Within this context of turbulence – between 330 and 380 (AD) – the final framework of the Christian canon crystallized. It represented a significant step toward a defined body of holy literature that was recognized by all Christians. **Athanasius played the critical role in achieving this unified vision.** In his thirty-ninth festal letter, written in 367, he basically defined what was acceptable and what was not. He gave a stamp of approval to the New Testament, as it was already generally formulated.”*

Maxine Clarke Beach (1998) comments on Athanasius' role in selecting the 'inspired writings of the Bible.'

*In his Festal Letter for A.D. 367, St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, was the first to list the twenty-seven canonical books of the New Testament. He.... claimed that "in these alone is the teaching of true religion proclaimed as good news; let no one add to these or take anything from them." He distinguished canonical from apocryphal...By A.D. 400 these twenty-seven books were generally accepted as Christian Scripture, although no official action was taken by the church until 1546. **The canon was not actually formally ratified until the Council of Trent, when the Roman Catholic Church was fine-tuning its teachings and beliefs in reaction to the Protestant Reformation. Protestants have accepted this canon, without the Apocryphal books, by common consent.**for some 400 years after the life of Jesus the church was still determining what would be the normative texts." <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/bible/canonselect.html>*

Glenn Davis, also comments on the manner in which the New Testament, under the authority of Athanasius, came to be accepted as **exclusively sacred**.

"Saint Athanasius, theologian, ecclesiastical statesman, and Egyptian national leader, was the chief defender of Christian orthodoxy in the 4th-century battle against Arianism... Athanasius attended the Council of Nicaea (325) and shortly thereafter became bishop of Alexandria (328). For the rest of his life he was engaged in **theological** and **political struggles** with the Emperor and with Arian churchmen. It was an ancient custom for the bishop of Alexandria to write, if possible, every year soon after Epiphany a so-called Festal Epistle to the Egyptian churches and monasteries under his authority, in which **he informed them of the date of Easter and the beginning of the Lenten fast**. By fixing the date of Easter, this yearly epistle fixed also the dates of all Christian festivals of the year. In view of the reputation of Alexandrian scholars who were devoted to astronomical calculations, it is not surprising that other parts of Christendom should eventually come to rely on the Egyptian Church for information concerning the date of Easter, made available to the Western Church through the bishop of Rome, and to the Syrian Church through the bishop of Antioch. <http://www.ntcanon.org/Athanasius.shtml>

From Athanasius' 39th Festal Letter in the year 367:(AD)

'Since, however, we have spoken of the heretics as dead but of ourselves as possessors of the divine writings unto salvation, and since I am afraid that -- as Paul has written to the Corinthians [2 Cor. 11:3] -- some guileless persons may be led astray from their purity and holiness by the craftiness of certain men and begin thereafter to pay attention to other books, the so-called apocryphal writings, being deceived by their possession of the same names as the genuine books, I therefore exhort you to patience when, out of regard to the Church's need and benefit, I mention in my letter matters with which you are acquainted. It being my intention to mention these matters, I shall, for the commendation of my venture, follow the example of the evangelist Luke and say [cf. Luke 1:1-4]: (Continued over page)

“Since some have taken in hand to set in order for themselves the so-called apocrypha and to mingle them with the God-inspired scripture, concerning which we have attained to a sure persuasion, according to what the original eye-witness and ministers of the word have delivered unto our fathers, I also, having been urged by true brethren and having investigated the matter from the beginning, have decided to set forth in order the writings that have been put in the canon, that have been handed down and confirmed as divine, in order that every one who has been led astray may condemn his seducers, and that every one who has remained stainless may rejoice, being again reminded of that.’ ... In them alone is the doctrine of piety proclaimed. Let no one add anything to them or take anything away from them...”

(Athanasius' 39th Festal Letter in the year 367 AD continued)

“But for the sake of greater accuracy I add, being constrained to write, that there are also other books besides these, which have not indeed been put in the canon, but have been appointed by the Fathers as reading-matter for those who have just come forward and which to be instructed in the doctrine of piety: the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobias, the so-called Teaching [Didache] of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. And although, beloved, the former are in the canon and the latter serve as reading matter, yet mention is nowhere made of the apocrypha; rather they are a fabrication of the heretics, who write them down when it pleases them and generously assign to them an early date of composition in order that they may be able to draw upon them as supposedly ancient writings and have in them occasion to deceive the guileless.” <http://www.ntcanon.org/Athanasius.shtml>

Athanasius considered certain additional books to be worthy of reading for instruction in the doctrine of piety. It might be accepted that he considered them 'not as inspired' as the other 'sacred writings,' which **he** declared constituted the New Testament 'Word of God' based on their acceptance and use by other bishops.

Questions

- What creditability does Athanasius possess that Christians readily accept his decision?
- Why should Christians place unswerving confidence in the Egyptian bishop's selection of what he considered was the 'only inspired' writings to make up the New Testament?
- Why should Christians rely on the clergy, instead of God, to instruct them?
- Was Athanasius' wisdom, spiritual discernment and decision trustworthy?
- What were the fruits of Athanasius' character?

Recall that Athanasius:

- was involved in theological and political struggles with the Roman Emperor;⁵
- prayed that “rather than the church be disgraced, that Arius might die;”⁶
- persecuted heretics (non-trinitarians – i.e. Arians and semi-Arians);
- determined that heretics considered **other** writings to be inspired - which he rejected. Perhaps the rejected writings (which Athanasius labelled as 'heresies') were of a distinctly non-trinitarian nature ;
- determined the dates (from the moon's position) upon which the churches of the empires would celebrate the pagan Easter festival and all other church feasts;
-
- was beatified (recognised as a saint) because of his service to the Roman church – the system which inflicted the '1260 years of persecution' upon God's people;
- considered writings were inspired on the basis that church leaders' already approved of them; and
- was not a prophet and does not appear to have been given special divine insight.

Were the transcripts which the ancient Jewish leaders and Athanasius declared to be exclusively, divinely inspired, without error?

5 *Emperor Constantine denounced Athanasius as “proud, turbulent, obstinate and intractable.”* Encyclopedia Britannica

6 *The Arians, under the authority of the emperor, threatened that the next day, Sunday, they would force their way into the church, , and compel the admission of Arius to full membership in good and regular standing. Upon this, the Athanasian party took refuse in 'prayer;' the bishop prayed earnestly that, rather than the church should be so disgraced, Arius might die; and naturally enough, Arius died on the evening of the same day. In Constantinople, where men were familiar with Asiatic crimes, there was more than a suspicion of poison. But when Alexander's party proclaimed that his prayer had been answered, they forgot what then that prayer must have been and that the difference is little between praying for the death of a man and compassing it. (Draper, 'Intellectual Development of Europe,' p 358; cited by Lynnford Beachy, in *The Formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity* p 15 www.presenttruth.info)*

Barry Setterfield, in **Creation and Catastrophe Chronology**, (1999) in section titled, *Comparing NT Quotations of the OT*, comments:

*"Ezra and Nehemia are usually accredited with assembling the original, complete Old Testament around 440 BC. These writings became known as the 'Vorlage Text' of the Old Testament in paleo-Hebrew. With time, the Vorlage gave rise to three 'recensions.' The first of these was the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), again in paleo-Hebrew about 408BC. The second recension was the Septuagint Greek (LXX) which was translated from the Vorlage Text about 250 BC by 72 Jewish scholars in Alexandria. The third recension was the Masoretic Hebrew Text re-written in square 'modern' Hebrew characters at the Council of Jamnia around 100 BC with vowel points added around 900AD. In "Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts" p 49, authored by Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, Sir Frederick Kenyon commented that **this dual procedure could easily be 'one considerable source of corruption'** in the MT [Masoretic Text]Confirmatory evidence of the acceptance of the LXX as an accurate reflection of the Vorlage comes from the NT quotes by Christ and the Apostles from the OT. Compare, for example, Christ's quote of Psalm 8:2 in Matthew 21:16 or the Apostle Paul's quote of Hosea 13:14 in 1 Corinthians 15:55, or his quote from Isaiah 64:4 in 1 Corinthians 2:9. From such comparison it is obvious that the NT quotes almost exactly follow the LXX. By contrast, when the NT quote is compared with our modern OT we find our OT version is deviant. It is significant that our OT is translated from the MT (Masoretic text). Some differences can have major implications such as Paul's quote in Hebrews 1:6 of Deuteronomy 32:43 from the Vorlage. **There he argues that Messiah had to be Divine.** Paul writes: "But again, when He brings the first begotten into the world, He says, 'And let all the angels of God worship him.' On checking that Deuteronomy passage in the AV or NKJV, **we find that Paul's important quotation on Messiah's Divinity is simply not there!** It is omitted on the MT, but is still recorded in the LXX just as Paul quotes it. In fact the MT omits another significant part of that verse as the LXX goes on to say of Messiah: **'and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him.'** The LXX thus seems to be at least a more complete translation of the Vorlage Pentateuch" (Barry Setterfield: *Creation and Catastrophe Chronology*, 1999).*

Dr Paul L Maier, Professor of History of Western Michigan University, casts some light on the preservation of the Bible during a time of great instability in Europe. It was at the turn of the first millenium when the great libraries were often burned, that Irish monks recopied manuscripts and preserved and edited certain famous works. Dr Maier states:

"I think it would be safe to say that every book written before 1000 AD - that includes all of the Greco-Roman classics, that includes all of the Holy Scripture, Old and new Testaments, that includes all of the theological works and the Jewish side from Josephus or from Augustine or anyone else - we would not have these books today if it were not for manuscript recopying in these monasteries." Christianity, the First Thousand Years (1998) A&E Television Networks, Magna Pacific - DVD

7 *"The Vorlage Text is quoted in scrolls from Qumran and Masada written prior to the Council of Jamnia. After that Council, the Jews used the new Masoretic Text exclusively and destroyed all other versions. But Christ, the Apostles and Josephus all quote from the Vorlage, and its LXX translation as did the Church Fathers. In most matters, the differences between the texts are usually relatively minor, however the chronologies have some significant differences."*

It is not the author's aim to suggest that the Old Testament prophetic passages are not divinely inspired, or that the Masoretic Text is not generally reflective of the earliest manuscripts which have been dated from the first century BC, however, it must be noted that some errors through copying are present and that by comparing all the existing manuscripts it can be seen that some errors have been introduced. The errors are obviously not God's words, but those of men who translated or copied the sacred writings.⁸

Ellen White, *Early Writings* p 220

“I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition.”

When Jesus quoted from the Old Testament, He clearly endorsed those passages of Scripture written by the prophets who predicted His coming as the Messiah. He quoted the moral law also. Thus the credibility of the Messianic prophecies are clearly established by Christ Himself.

Further Christ endorsed the great principles of the law of God (Matthew 5) which revealed the unchangeableness of God's loving character, despite the erroneous traditional beliefs which the Jewish religion had unknowingly absorbed. Christ repeatedly contrasted the Jewish leaders beliefs with the truth about His Father's character which He demonstrated through parables and by quoting relevant passages from the Old Testament.

Summary

These preceding factors certainly appear to need careful consideration, but God's people need not fear being deceived. Jesus promised that He would instruct His people, through His spirit. Jesus declared that no other human intercessor was or is required to lead His people into all truth.

John 16:13

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.”

Prior to the giving of the 10 commandments on Mt Sinai, God's people were aware of His laws and His character (e.g. Enoch walked with God – Genesis 5:22-24). Today, when every wind of doctrine is blowing, God can still be relied upon to lead His people. His still small voice still speaks through human consciences. The 144,000 will have their Father's name – His character – written in their foreheads. They will be taught of the Lord; will know their God and reflect His character perfectly (Rev 14:1; Isa 54:13; Dan 11:32). They will know which writings reflect the character of God as they are tested by the great standard – the law of God as seen in the faith and character of Jesus.

8 *For an interesting article on the copied mistranslations in the Bible, refer to “Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties” by Gleason L Archer p 19-44*

<http://lambsound.com/Reading/books/Bible%20Difficulties.pdf>

#5 - Kill the Soul - (Matthew 10:28)

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Objection: *God has the power to destroy both soul and body in hell because if people cut themselves off from Him, the Source of all Life, then they choose eternal death.*

Answer:

Proverbs 8:36 “But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.” In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus is saying, “Don’t be concerned about what man can do to you. The Father supplies your needs. Nothing can happen to you without the Father’s permission. Trust in the Father. He will preserve your eternal life, despite what evil men might do to your body.” Similarly Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.” (Matt 6:33). In similar tones, Paul encourages, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Consider:

The absence of all light results in complete darkness.

The absence of all heat results in complete cold.

The absence of all energy results in complete inertness.

The absence of all Life results in complete death.

God is Love. It is a basic principle of unselfish love that requires freedom of choice for every individual. As the only Creator, God is the source of all light, heat, energy, life and love. When God is continually rejected, His principle of love insists that He honour the decision of His creatures. When continually and persistently rejected, God is legally forced to cease entreating confirmed, unrepentant sinners. He finally declares, with heart-wrenching agony, “...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” and “ Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone” (Matthew 23:37-38; Hosea 4:17).

Every created being has the ability to exercise freedom of choice in whom they will serve. Those who reject God’s principles of love, are considered to have chosen death.

Proverbs 8:36

“But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.”

When a sinner decides to continue in rebellion against His Creator, God must instruct the holy, guardian angels to ‘let the sinner alone.’ Tragic events follow. Satan and his agents are free to attack the unprotected sinner. The sinner continues to move further away from God by resisting His spirit, until all creative energy, light, warmth and life ceases to reach them. The further sinners move away from God, the closer they come to suiciding. God did not create death. It can occur only when God is absent.

Consider unrepentant sinners as a patient in a hospital emergency room. The patient presents in desperate need of oxygen, however, instead of accepting the mask which the nurse offers him, the patient rejects it. The patient refuses to permit the nurse to place the mask over his nose, but pushes the mask away. The patient refuses to accept the life-giving substance that his body so desperately needs, and eventually, he dies. Thus it is with the sinner who rejects the ONLY Source of Life. In the analogy, it can easily be seen that the nurse did not kill the patient. His refusal to connect with the life giving substance caused his death. In fact, this death would be legally considered to have been a ‘suicide.’

#6 - God Kills and Wounds – Deuteronomy 32:39

“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.”

Other similar verses:

1 Samuel 2:6 “The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.”

Hosea 6:1, 2

“Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. (2) After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.”

Objection:

God has control of all parts of life. He gives life and he destroys.

Answer:

In the Hebrew culture in Caanan, the pagan religions taught that their gods were the source of life and protection (Deut 32:38). The sun god was the chief source of life. The fertility rituals appeased the gods and they blessed their worshippers with children, cattle, crops and rain. The pagan gods were also thought to control the after-life. Reincarnation was an essential part of the pagan religion, as it is still today in the New Age Movement. It is called “crossing over” to the other world.

The pagan gods were credited with winning battles. The Philistines thought that Dagon delivered Samson into their hands (Judges 16:23, 24).

In an endeavour to alert the Israelites to the fact that the pagan gods were not the source of life, God tells them He is the source of all life. There is no other god who has the power of life – or who has inherent, immortal life in themselves. The absence of life is death (Exodus 20; Psa 68:20). In God is healing (Numbers 21:8,9). Without God or in the absence of His Life - is only decay and death (Prov 8:36). God provides protection for those who consent to give their allegiance to Him (Matt 23:37). Without God's protective presence, humanity is defenceless against the forces of evil (Eph 6:12). God wounds the enemies of His people. How? God puts a hedge around His people and the evil schemes which are brought against them prove ineffective in separating them from the love of God (Romans 8:39). However, the evil that the wicked planned to apply to the righteous 'backfires' and the wicked are caught in their own snare (Gal 6:7; Psa 64:7; Job 18:8).

Psalms 64:6-8

“They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep. 7 But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. 8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.”

Job 18:8

“For he (a wicked man) is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare.”

God works with the natural consequences of sin. Sinners reap what they sow (Gal 6:7). God terms this “wounding” the wicked, but it can be seen that the wicked wound themselves and reap the evil results of what they have sown.

#7 - Parable of the Vineyard

Objection: *Didn't Jesus teach an angry God in His parables? Luke's gospel appears to do so.*

Luke 20:14-16

*"But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, **God forbid.**"*

Answer:

One is left wondering why the Pharisees would remark "God forbid" if the vineyard was taken from them for killing the heir. Having the vineyard "taken from them" would be the expected, logical response to murdering the heir. This response was in keeping with Jewish tradition given as the accepted treatment of murderers, but the Pharisees appear to react as if in shock.

However, Matthew's gospel reveals why the Pharisees were shocked.

Matthew 21:38-42

*"But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. 40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 41 **They say unto him,** He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. 42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures..."*

Acts of the Apostles, p 174

"The Saviour Himself, during His earthly ministry, foretold the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. In the parable of the vineyard He declared to the impenitent Jews, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43).

The Pharisees who were convinced that the Father was an angry, vengeful Being. **They** stated this belief to Christ, that God would destroy those who opposed Him. Then, realising that they had already condemned themselves, the Jewish leaders, as represented by the guilty husbandmen, the Pharisees reacted in shock. "God forbid." Jesus did not teach that God was like the vineyard owner who would "miserably destroy those wicked men" - **that was the expressed belief of the Pharisees** of the character of the Father. The Pharisees were convinced that the Father was an angry, vengeful Being.

#8 - The Parable of the Wedding Garment

Matthew 22:11-13

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Objection:

The parable of the wedding garment teaches that God personally inflicts punishments on the wicked.

Answer:

Notice that in this parable, the Father calls the self-righteous guest “Friend.” Jesus also called Judas, the traitor, “Friend.” (Matthew 26:50).

The wedding feast is obviously a parallel of the judgment scene. The Jews had traditional attire that was meant for public festivals. They wore long white robes. Those guests who dared attend the festival with any other kind of garment were not only highly offensive to the host, but were considered worthy of punishment. The organiser of the festival invited the guests prepared a wedding garment for them to wear (while at the festival). On his arrival, the guest would be given the garment by the organiser. This custom meant that the wedding guest who wore his own garment must have refused the special garment prepared just for him by the organiser. This was considered extremely insulting behaviour. It was purposely performed with the knowledge that it would insult the host. He could have obtained a wedding garment if he had asked for and accepted it from the organiser of the festival.

It is interesting that the texts from Zephaniah speaks about a garment, kings and guests.

Zephaniah 1:7-9

“Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. 8 And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel. 9 In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.”

God forces no man to wear the garment – to accept Christ's righteousness. But the natural consequence of refusing the wedding garment is that the guest will be excluded from the heavenly marriage feast. The guest was bound hand and foot. Sin binds everyone so they can't escape. The man was taken into darkness. The unrepentant sinner will likewise be bound outside the New Jerusalem, with the devil and His angels and THAT situation will cause much sadness and grief. God is not making the pain and grief. It is the **absence** of God that causes negative consequences. That is simply what happens when people choose to sin. Sin brings forth or results in death.

#9 - Other Parables of Jesus

Objection:

In the life of Christ that there is an active process of judgment portrayed by Him. In John 15:6 the branch that is withered is cast onto the fire. The branch symbolises the professor of Christianity whose does not have a living connection with Christ. He doesn't say that the withered branch falls off into a fire below. Rather they are cast into the fire in a deliberate process. Similarly in Matthew 13:30, the tares are bound into bundles to burn. In Matthew 13:41 we read, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; 42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Again in Matthew 13:47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: 48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. 49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, 50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." These are the words of Jesus. This is in harmony with the actions of Jesus recorded in the Old Testament where judgements are made against the wicked.

Answer:

As demonstrated in these parables of Jesus, there is a separation of wicked from those made righteous. There is no argument that an executive judgment will take place and that sinners will be destroyed. People make their own choices about whom they will serve. (Review the three ways that sinners can be destroyed depending on the time frame. i.e. which judgment is specified.).

These verses speak of Christ's third coming to the earth at the time of the executive judgment – not the second coming or the investigative judgment. (see Isaiah 33:10-12. The investigative judgment – separation - has already taken place. With the investigative judgment already completed, and the separation clearly made between God's people and Satan's followers, the decision is made that the spirit of God will be withdrawn from the wicked. However, the righteous remained filled with the spirit of Christ.

Sinners chose their own destiny. All humanity has the freedom to choose and they are warned of the results of the their decisions.

Jeremiah 21:8

"And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. "

There certainly will be agony of body and spirit when the wicked realise they are eternally lost and that they will soon suffer the second death in the inescapable fire of destruction , but holy angels do not cast the wicked into the fire. The fire comes from inside the wicked themselves; as a result of uncontrolled human wrath or unrestrained 'natural' disasters. All systems are chaotic when God removes His sustaining, creative power.

Ezekiel 28:18

"Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will **I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee**, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee." .

Isaiah 33:10-12

“Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. 11 Ye shall conceive chaff, **ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.** 12 And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.”

The “flame” that destroyed the Amorites came from within their own stronghold.

Numbers 21:28 (prophesied by Moses)

“For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab, and the lords of the high places of Arnon.”

Amos 2:2 (prophesied by Amos)

“But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kiriath: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:”

Jeremiah 48:45 (commenting on the Mosaic prophecy)

45They that fled<05127>(8801) stood<05975>(8804) under the shadow<06738> of Heshbon<02809> because of the force<03581>: but a fire<0784> shall come forth<03318>(8804) out of Heshbon<02809>, and a flame<03852> from the midst<0996> of Sihon<05511>, and shall devour<0398>(8799) the corner<06285> of Moab<04124>, and the crown of the head<06936> of the tumultuous<07588> ones<01121>.

Heshbon means "stronghold." The capital city of the Amorites, which was Sihon, was referred to as their stronghold. The same term was also used to refer to the Amorite king. In contrast, another OT passage in the pre-Christian era records a different methodology for the destruction of the wicked. This record was written by an author who was “looking through a veil” - without the benefit of a knowledge of God through Christ (2 Cor 3:12-4:2).

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

“But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: 17 But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: 18 That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.”

In the Old Testament, people suffered death when they chose to separate themselves from God – not because God became “out of control and wrathful” - as the Jewish religion pictured Him. **Despite claims to the contrary, God did not in fact, command the Israelites to annihilate the wicked.** God had instructed the Jewish nation through Moses, that **He** would drive the wicked out of the land by confusing them with a loud noise and with horns.

Exodus 23:27

I will send <7971>(8762) my fear <terror - 0367> before<06440> thee, and will destroy< to move noisily, confuse, make a noise - 02000>(8804) all the people<05971> to whom thou shalt come<0935>(8799), and I will make<05414>(8804) all thine enemies<0341>(8802) turn their backs<06203> unto thee. (backs: Heb. neck)

Strong's Hebrew Concordance:

#2000 hamam haw-mam' a primitive root (compare 1949, 1993); properly, **to put in commotion**; by implication, to disturb, drive, destroy:--break, consume, crush, destroy, discomfit, trouble, vex. see HEBREW for 01949 see HEBREW for 01993

Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Lexicon

1) **to move noisily, confuse, make a noise**, discomfit, break, consume, crush, destroy, trouble, vex 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to move noisily 1a2) to confuse, discomfit, vex

The Israelites rarely grasped this divine promise and it appears that the nation came to believe that THEY would be the active agents in destroying the inhabitants of their promised land Caanan, through military force, with divine assistance and divine justification.

However, this was not God's strategy, but a faulty human strategy.

God said he would cause a loud noise which would confuse the idolaters who would then retreat, deserting their land. No bloodshed was necessary. Certainly the Jews were not required to take human life to possess the land. To the contrary, ***the Israelites were given opportunity to witness to the pagan nations, of the love and righteousness of God as contained in the 10 commandments, however they chose instead to imitate the violence of their pagan neighbours and became a warlike, pillaging people.*** By so doing, they dreadfully misrepresented the character of the One True God whom they professed to serve and obey.

In New Testament times, Jesus came to show us the Father. This was necessary for He proclaimed that the world didn't know His Father's character.

John 17:25

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. 26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: **that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them**, and I in them.”

Jesus also reminded the Jewish leaders that ***they*** didn't know His Father either. He pursued this further, making the connecting that by not knowing the Father's character, they could not be His children. Christ spoke very strongly, informing the Jewish leaders, that they neither knew His Father and neither was God ***their*** father - , but that the devil was their father (John 8:19, 42).

The Jews had severely misrepresented the Father's character. Christ said that they represented the devil's character. The fact is incontrovertible that the Jews did NOT have a proper or correct understanding of God's character. Jesus worked within the realm of the Jewish understanding as can be evidenced in several of his addresses and parables.

Jesus parables convey certain spiritual meanings which responded to the traditional beliefs of the Jews, many of which Christ corrected, but some truths He could not even tell His disciples, "for they could not bear them yet." (John 16:12) Not ALL facets of parables are representations of doctrinal truth in every aspect, (eg Lazarus and the rich man), but all Christ's parables address a deeper principle – giving information about the Father's character and government.

Concerning the parables mentioned in this objection, it is noted that:

- **Holy angels gather/bring the righteous to heaven. The wicked are left behind - bound - joined to sin;**
- **The withered branch represents a spiritually dead professed Christian. The withered branch is without Christ, which is why it is dead spiritually. It will die the final physical death (2nd death) at the executive judgment when the sin within that being is burned by coming into contact with the unveiled glory of holy divinity. "Our God is a consuming fire" to sin (Heb 12:29); (see objections)**
- **The holy angels do not carry the wicked into the fires of hell, they carry the righteous to meet Jesus in the air at the second coming. At the resurrection of the wicked, unrepentant sinners are raised where they fell - outside the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:24, 27). Destroying fire comes from within the wicked, in the same way as it bursts forth from Satan. (Ezek 28:18; Isa 33:10 -12). Sin – selfishness - is consumed by the glory of the unselfish character of holy divinity. Whatever is attached to sin - joined to sin - bound to sin - burns along with the sin. Sin destroys itself as it lacks the life that only Love brings.**

Concerning the death of the wicked, it should be remembered that there are at least three examples of destruction in the Bible. ALL destruction involves the natural consequences of the sinner's choice to separate from God and to reject God's presence, which is life.

- Sinners destroy themselves by their own actions or are destroyed by the actions of others (first death eg accidents, illnesses, smoking, suicide, wars);
- Thus sinners reject the protection of God and are permitted to be destroyed by Satan - "are handed over to Satan" 2 Kings 17:39; 21:14; Jer 15:9 (first death, but await the second death);
- Eventually sinners are destroyed in the chaos that results from the removal of God's sustaining creative power eg. The earth quakes and explodes and becomes chaotic (Sodom and Gomorrah; Noah's flood, the plagues on Egypt).

Matthew 10:28

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather **fear him** which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Revelation 14:7

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of his judgment is come."

God is the Source of All Life. Only the Creator is able to provide eternal life. The judgment determines which persons elected to serve God and which persons elected to separate themselves from Him - from Life itself. The death of the wicked is simply a natural consequence of separation from the Source of All Life. It is not an act of vengeful divine wrath. Jesus demonstrated His Father's reaction to the death of the wicked as He cried over Jerusalem. The Father has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He is loving. Would His people have pleasure in the death of the wicked?

Proverbs 8:36 - "**all they that hate me love death.**"

Death is a natural outcome of sin - not the act of a hateful divine being.

EJ Waggoner (commenting on) Romans, p 99, 100 "Romans 8:6. 'The sting of death is sin.' 1Cor. 15:56. There could be no death if there were no sin. Sin carries death in its bosom. So it was not an arbitrary act on the part of God that death came upon men because of sin. It could not possibly be otherwise. Note the justice here. Death passed upon all men, 'for that all have sinned.' 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son;...Ezek.18:20.' And this is also a necessary consequence of the fact that sin contains death in it, and that death can not come in any way than by sin. (100) Everything that came through Adam's fall is undone in Christ; or, better still, all that was lost in Adam is restored in Christ."

Death will happen to sinners because it is a natural consequence of sin. Sinners choose death. God does not inflict it, but He does withdraw His presence from those who choose death. Love uses no force or coercion. The sinner's freedom of choice to separate from Him, is respected by the Creator. He withdraws His presence. It is not God's fault that unrepentant sinners die when they enter into the presence of holy, unveiled divinity.

Early Writings, p 54 (End of the 2300 Days)

"I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, **'If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.'**"

The Gospel Message for Today, Sermon by W. W. Prescott, Sunday, 29 March, 1903
General Conference Conference Daily Bulletin Vol 3, No. 4 p 54

"A word further concerning that blotting out of sin: **It is the revelation of the glory of God that blots out sin. The time for the blotting out of sin has come when our High Priest takes all the sins of the people upon Himself, and goes into the most holy place, and stands in the immediate presence of the glory which blots out sin.** The sins blotted out are the sins confessed, confessed upon the Priest, not that by arbitrary act of ours we can lay our sins upon Him; God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Our confession is that we personally confess that our sins are on Him. We agree to that, and, having confessed that, and agreed to that, we let go of them; we say our sins are on Him. **Our very agreement with Him, in the confession that our sins have been laid upon Him, is God's means of removing them from us, and letting them be upon Him in our behalf.**"

God has warned sinners - pleaded with them. "Why will ye die? Ezekiel 18:28-32

Ezekiel 18:28-32

"Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 29 Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? 30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; **so iniquity shall not be your ruin.** 31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for **why will ye die,** O house of Israel? 32 For **I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth,** saith the Lord GOD: wherefore **turn yourselves, and live ye.**"

Jesus cried when he announced to the leadership that His people's probation was over.

Luke 13:34-35

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! (35) Behold, your house is left unto you desolate:"

Just as demonstrated in the fall of Jerusalem 40 years later, God will permit the destruction of those who refuse His spirit. But, before sinners can be destroyed, God's protective hedge of holy angels must be removed.

This protective hedge **will be** removed from those who **repeatedly resist** the spirit of God by choosing to serve Satan. God will not force His presence on those who are determined to reject Him, but when God removes His presence, His protection is also removed.

Psalms 27:12; 140:1,2

"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; (2) which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war."

Ezekiel 31:11

"I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness."

Psalms 91:3, 4

"Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. (4) He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler."

Matthew 23:37

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! "

Sin equals death (Romans 6:23). Certainly, there is no doubt that sinners will be destroyed, but is their destruction caused by a vengeful, wrathful divine Being, or as a consequence of ***their choices*** to alienate themselves from the protection of the Creator: the Source of all Life?

When God's creative and sustaining power is removed, chaos occurs, both spiritually and physically. Demonstrations of this were evident during Noah's flood; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Red Sea crossing and Christ's death on the cross.

David Rohl's description of the early Hyksos invaders of Egypt, as portrayed in his book, ***A Test of Time – The Bible from Myth to History*** (1995:288-289), casts light on the belief that **God** sent evil angels to destroy the Egyptians as the last plague just prior to the Israelites' exodus. Apparently, after the 9 previous 'natural disasters',⁹ the country of Egypt was a "sitting duck" to other warlike tribes.

9 See Graham Phillips in "the Moses Legacy" who demonstrates how the plagues might well have been the result of natural phenomenon which, without God's protection was able to cause devastation to the Egyptians.

“The 'Early Hyksos' invaders of Egypt were Amalekite tribesmen who migrated through Sinai from northern Arabia. This marauding army met the Israelites in battle during the Sinai wanderings. They settled at sites such as Avaris in the eastern delta and drove the native Egyptian pharaohs back to their capital at Itj-Tawy in Upper Egypt. The Amalekite warriors can be identified with the non-Egyptianised Asiatic newcomers who occupied Avaris at the beginning of stratum F...”

Psalm 78:49, 50,

“He (God) cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. (50) He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence;”

Of this verse David Rohl comments:

*The context of this verse is that of God's final punishment following the calamitous events of Exodus. Who then are the 'evil angels' sent by God to destroy the Egyptians? Velikovsky again comes up with an interesting observation. He notes that the phrase usually translated 'evil angels' is **malakhei-roim**, but the literal translation would then be 'angel of evils.' The correct Hebrew for 'evil angels' is **malakhim-roim**. Could it be that here we have another textual corruption resulting from a misunderstanding on the part of the redactor?¹⁰ If the Psalmist, who originally composed this verse probably sometime in the tenth century BC, was aware of the agents of God's punishment of the Egyptians, then he would have written the verse as follows:*

He loosed the full heat of his anger, fury and rage and destruction by sending an invasion of king-shepherds against them.

*The phrase 'king-shepherds' in biblical Hebrew is **malakhei-roim**.”*

¹⁰ A “**redactor**” is someone who seeing information from a different perspective, revises or edits information.

#10 - Tempting the Faithful - Harassment of the Wicked

Objections:

(a) Would it be that the Old Testament, God allowed sin to happen in some cases. e.g. when David numbered Israel? In one verse it says that Satan made David do it, and in another, it says God made him do it.

(b) When we compare this to Job and his afflictions from Satan, we see that God had allowed Satan to hurt Job, therefore God did it to him. Would the apparent contradiction be that when Satan makes someone sin, (as in the above cases) he is only able to do so when God allows it, therefore saying that God made him do it.

(c) Also, God had foretold (in the old testament) that Judas would betray Jesus. Jesus also foretold this. But the Bible also says that Judas allowed Satan to take control of him. So did God or Jesus, make Judas a betrayer, or did Satan? I read it as: God allowed Judas to be taken by Satan, but it was Satan who did the work on Judas.

Answer:

(a) Satan can't force anyone to sin, but he can present strong temptations. Sin is only committed when a sinful thought is cherished by the person who is tempted. The act of cherishing the sinful thought, demonstrates that the person's allegiance is with Satan.

Proverbs 23:7

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

God simply permits human beings (and every other being for that matter), to exercise total freedom of choice. If a man wants to sin, then God respects his freedom to choose to do so. God doesn't condone or force any person to sin, neither does he tempt anyone to sin.

James 1:13

“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: “

Biblically it can be seen that Satan tempts people to sin as in David's experience. Satan put the proud thoughts in David's mind, but Satan couldn't force him to sin. David chose to cherish those selfish thoughts. By cleaving to the sin, by cherishing the selfish thoughts, David spiritual allegiance temporarily changed and he placed himself outside God's protective hedge. The only thing for which God is responsible, is that He refused to withdraw David's right to choose how he would respond to the temptation.

2 Samuel 24:12, 13

“Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land?”

God honoured David's choice to cleave to his sin. With sadness, He withdrew His presence (His spirit) from David. God could no longer defend David, because David was exercising his freedom of choice to separate Himself from God and God would not force His protective presence on him. God knew that Satan's desire was to destroy Israel and God warned David of the consequences of cleaving to his sin.

David apparently repented immediately of his sin, but was his repentance sincere? For three days there is no record of David offering the required sin offerings as laid out in the law of Moses.

Satan had power to destroy the Israelites until the king **sincerely** and **genuinely** repented of his sin.

David's repentance became sincere as he saw men dying as a consequence of **his** sin. In demonstration of his genuine repentance he confessed his sin and asked for mercy.

2 Samuel 24:17

“And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.”

David's repentance legally invited the Lord back as the official God of the Israelites. Immediately after David's genuine repentance, the Lord intervened to stop the slaughter of the Israelites.

Then David responded by offering the sin offering and the peace offering to the Lord on the threshing floor belonging to Araunah the Jebusite.

2 Samuel 24:25

“And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.”

The Lord's accepted David's genuine repentance and immediately, His protective presence prevented Satan (the destroyer Rev 9:11) from inflicting more slaughter on the Israelites. God immediately surrounded Israel with His hedge again.

But why did 70 000 men die at the hand of the destroying angel? They weren't involved in the decision to number Israel. Would **God** punish 70 000 men for the sin of David, and yet let David, the one who did the sin, live on?

It is not in keeping with God's laws that the penalty of guilt is transferred from one person to another person.

Ezekiel 18:20

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”

Jesus Himself comments on the **false** belief that the guilt of sin could be transferred from one person to another.

John 9:1-3

“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

Jesus explained that some times, bad things happen – not as a result of punishment being inflicted, but because there are painful consequences to living in an evil world.

Luke 13:1-5

“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Some of the Galilaeans, who died at Pilate's command, were thought to be followers of Judas Gaulonites (Acts 5:37). This group of about 3,000 men were seditious and refused to acknowledge the authority of Rome. According to Josephus, Judas Gaulonite and **Sadduc (a Pharisee) convinced many Galilaeans that God would assist them to use force to break free from the yoke of Roman bondage.** (Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, book 18, chapter 1, section 1). Archelaus sent soldiers to control the riotous group, but the worshippers threw stones at the soldiers and killed several of them, while other soldiers fled. The worshippers went back to making their sacrifices for the Passover feast. More soldiers were sent to the temple and overpowered the “worshippers.” Pilate had the Galilaeans slaughtered while they were worshipping in the temple, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover). (The War of the Jews, book 2. chapter. 1, section. 3, & Book 2, Chapter 2, section 5).

Jesus comments, “Do you think these men were any worse than any other sinners?” These Galilaeen men were murderers. They were seditious, riotous and violent. They were undeniably commandment-breaking sinners – despite keeping the feasts. The Galilaeans strongly believed that God was with them and that He would fight for them against the Romans. This belief was based on the lie that the Father's character is one of fighting and bloodshed. This dangerous belief led to their sinful actions in attacking and murdering the Roman soldiers. The Galilaeans died as a consequence of their lack of knowledge about God's character. It is just as dangerous today to believe a lie about God's character being one of bloodshed and murder.

Jesus' words have impact today. People who consider themselves “righteous” or “not as bad as other sinners,” need to be careful. “Righteous” people ARE sinners, but they are simply **forgiven** sinners. If self-declared “righteous” people believe a lie about the character of God, they too will form unholy characters – characters resembling that of the military god they envision - as did the Galilaeans. The modern day Galilaeans will likewise suffer the consequences of their sins also, if they do not repent of the lies they believe about God's character and seek Him with all their heart (Jer 29:11-14).

The mentality demonstrated by the Galilaeans is hardly surprising considering their Jewish ancestry, traditions and literature. The Old Testament scriptures promote the concept of a militant god. The Galilaeans were taught from the books of Moses and the prophets, that the God of 'our forefathers' “won the battle,” “avenged us of our enemies,” and “commanded us to fight.”

The Old Testament war reports do not demonstrate that the Father is a God of love - but a brutal god of war and fighting. And the Old Testament writers and the Galilaeans both appeared unaware that eternal life depended upon having a correct understanding of the Father's character. Jesus was not unaware of the importance of knowing God's character.

He said in John 17:3

“This is **life eternal**, that they may know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.”

When a person rejects God and His principles of government (the 10 commandments), God's respect for the person's freedom of choice, forces a separation between that person and God. When God is rejected, His divine protection is also rejected and Satan rushes in to destroy the rebellious person.

Regarding whether God permits evil to happen to people who reject Him, I agree that He does permit it for legally He is committed to honour the individual's freedom of choice - but God does not cause evil to happen.

The only way that God could stop evil happening to someone who has chosen to follow Satan, is by over-ruling that person's free choice to be separated from God. But Jesus died to secure our freedom of choice. God does not use force, for force and coercion are not fruits of the spirit of God (Gal 5:22,23). It is the spirit of Satan to use force and to deny freedom of choice. God respects the right of the sinner to reject Him. He will not use force. He uses divine love to draw people to Him. He never compels anyone to serve Him - not His own Son, neither angels nor humans.

(c) The case of Judas shows how sin develops and the inevitable result.

Judas cherished status, position and power in his heart. His worldly ambitions did not include the things of God. He was interested in power and money. It was prophesied that Judas would betray Christ and yes, Christ knew his betrayer (John.6.64; 13:11) however, God had nothing to do with forcing Judas to sin. It was not predetermined that Judas had to sin. But Judas entertained the thought of self-exaltation. He cherished the thought and then decided to act on it. Judas wanted Jesus to become a powerful king who would install *him* in a position of power in his earthly kingdom – (as did James and John - and the other disciples - Matt 20:21). Judas rejected the mission of the humble Master. Jesus performed the actions of a slave by humbly washing the disciples' feet, but Judas wanted Jesus to think and act like an ambitious, power-seeking earthly king. Despite Jesus washing Judas' feet and giving him opportunity to repent of his evil thoughts, Judas' heart only hardened. He was already a thief – he held the money bag (John 13:29) and robbed Jesus (John 12:6) to serve his own purposes. When Judas left the Lord's Supper/Passover feast, determined to betray Jesus, the Bible says that Satan entered into him (John 13:27). Judas made his final free-will decision at that time - and it was a decision to betray Jesus. After that decision was made, THEN Satan 'entered into him" and Judas went out and acted on the cherished sinful thought.

Until that time, the spirit of God was pleading with Judas. But that hateful decision to betray the humble Jesus who washed his feet, and acted as a servant, closed Judas' probation. Only death remained (Acts 1:18).

As demonstrated in the experience with Judas, when people reject God's invitation to come to Him for protection (and remain with the boundaries of His law), then God, a true gentleman, steps back a certain distance and leaves the person to the natural consequences of sin - which is separation from God's protection – and makes the sinner vulnerable to an attack by Satan.

God is the source of all life. To separate from life is to choose death. "Why will ye die O house of Israel?" "He who hateth me, loveth death." "I would have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chicks, but ye would not." "He shall gather thee with his feathers and under His wings shalt thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield."

When the 10 commandments, the government of God is rejected, then His protection is also withdrawn. There is only safety within the loving principles of the government of God. Outside those unselfish principles one only finds chaos, destruction and death. i.e. the evil angels are free to torment and destroy.

When people haven't had opportunity to learn how to resist temptation or when they don't understand that God is 100% love, God doesn't abandon them to Satan. However, God presents opportunities for them to learn about Him. It is only outright rejection of Christ that will eventually place the sinner completely outside the protection of God.

God monitors demonic activity. Satan can only tempt commandment keepers to the level which God permits. God knows the spiritual maturity of each follower. It is through trials that a loving character is developed and demonstrated (Heb 5:8; Rev 3:18). Christ's followers will demonstrate His character (Col 1:27).

1 Corinthians 10:13

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

God's government is based on love - which is freedom of choice. God's own character prevents Him from becoming dictatorial and usurping the free choice of human beings to sin. The 10 commandments reflect the respect God has for the freewill of every human being and other created creature.

So the negative consequences of sinful choices are what the unrepentant sinner reaps. Ultimately that reward is death. However, if before probation, a "wicked" person (an enemy of God) turns to God and calls out for help, God will instantly intervene and restore His protection to that person and shield him/her from Satan's attacks as demonstrated in David's experience when he numbered Israel.

(b) As noted already, **Job's experience** was different to David's. Job did not reject God's leading, nor did He sin in expressing his bewilderment apparently when he declared, "thou He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Did Job not realise that God wasn't trying to destroy him, but that it was Satan trying to take his life? Perhaps he didn't understand the situation for nowhere does the Bible say that God told Job that the evil he suffered came from Satan and that Job was the object of a test of loyalty. It appears that God permits people to be "tested" in the fires of persecution for the development of their character. Job's friends attempted to convince him that God punishes specific sins (Job 4:1 to Job 5:27). The young man Elihu introduced "new theology" and endeavoured to prove that perhaps God doesn't punish, but He disciplines those who have gone astray (Job 32:1 to Job 33:33). In the final analysis, God commanded Job to pray for his friends for they had all sinned. They had not presented the truth about the origins of evil. Job's friends were not privy to the heavenly counsels (Job 1:6-12) which were revealed to Moses when he wrote the book of Job. The book of Job reveals that evil events, whether labelled 'punishment' or 'discipline,' **do not originate from the Creator, but from Satan.**

Job 37:23

“Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict.”

Hebrews 5:8

“Though he (Jesus) were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”

Satan persecuted Christ Himself and the Father permitted that to happen in order to demonstrate the inevitable results of sin. But despite the demonic harassment that Christ experienced, He developed a perfect human character. Similarly, when Christians are exposed to trials, their characters will also develop – either as pleasing to God, or aligned with Satan's principles.

Trials either "make us" or "break us." We decide which way we will react to persecution and hardship. Satan was permitted to "test" Christ's humanity. The real question was, "Would Christ be faithful to His Father's law of love - even unto death?" and of course, the answer is, "yes." Christ developed a perfect human character that clung to His Father's love, and Christ kept His Father's law of love – even unto death. Christ's death was brought about by Satan's torture. Of course, Christ could have "borrowed" from His divine nature and kept His humanity alive eternally, but He refused to do what humanity could not do. He continued to keep His Father's law until His human life was extinguished. Christ had voluntarily laid down His life. He would not break His Father's law of love even though he was tested to His final breath. Christ's ways, words and actions were all entirely loving. His love did not fail under any circumstances. This represents the Father's love. His love will continue under ANY circumstances also. His character doesn't change.

Who Tempts?

2 Samuel 24:1

“And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and **he moved David** against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. “

Would God tempt a person to sin? No. James, the brother of Jesus, tells us that God tempts no man.

James 1.13

“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: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

Tempting comes through lust. Would God entice a man to sin through lust to destroy his life? No. That is the enemy's strategy. Satan draws a person away from God by appealing to the carnal nature of humanity.

In the New Testament, the KJV translators also used the word "tempt," but it would be more concisely translated as "test."

Strong's Greek Concordance #3984 peira pi'-rah from the base of 4008 (through the idea of piercing); a test, i.e. attempt, experience:--assaying, trial. see GREEK for 4008

Luke 20:22, 23 (spies sent by the chief priest and scribes questioned Jesus)
"Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no? (23) But he (Jesus) perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why **tempt** ye me?"

If God **DOESN'T** tempt people, but Satan does, then how can we believe that God, who doesn't tempt people, who doesn't put them on trial to trap them, told Abraham to go and break His commandments - as a kind of a test?

Genesis 22:1

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did **tempt** Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.”

Abraham was told to offer Isaac up as a burnt offering on a high mountain, supposedly by God, however, these actions according to Moses and Jeremiah, were condemned by God.

Deuteronomy 12:31

“Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every **abomination** to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even **their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.**”

Jeremiah 7:22, 30, 31:

“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:(30) For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: **they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name**, to pollute it. (31) And they have built the high places of Tophet which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, **to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.**”

Jeremiah 32:35

“And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.”

Didn't it come into the heart of God to tell Abraham to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering on the heights of Mt. Moriah? If it didn't come into the heart of God, who *did* tell Abraham to offer up Isaac? Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:10 tells us which "god" enjoyed human sacrifices. The One True God detested child/human sacrifices, *at least to the pagan gods*, and those who DID offer up their children as burnt offerings in the high places (to Molech) were an abomination to God (Ezek 16:20, 21; Jer 32:35).

Does this mean that both the One True God AND Satan want us to offer up our children as burnt offerings in the high places? Could it be that the One True God was only "wroth" with the Israelites because they were offering up their children as burnt offerings to Satan and not to Him?

Are Christians really considering the question, “To which God should we offer up our children as burnt offerings?” The One True God or to Satan? Such a thought is abhorrent to Christians – true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It appears there are only two conclusions to draw from this. Either:

- God enticed Abraham by lying and tempting him; or
- Satan tempted Abraham to break God's law.

If it is accepted that God enticed Abraham to commit a heinous crime (to break the 6th commandment), it follows logically that this view would necessarily incriminate Him as a liar and a tempter.

It is possible that Abraham was influenced by the surrounding pagan nations. It is a well-established historical fact that the Canaanite nations practised sacrificing their children as burnt offerings on the high places.

Jephthah was confused on this point. He thought God required him to offer His only daughter - his only child in fact - as a human sacrifice, since he had made a vow that if God gave him victory in battle, he would offer to God as a sacrifice, the first thing that ran out of his house to greet him, on his arrival home (Judges 11:30-40).

Judges 11:31

“Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.”

Jephthah only had one child – his daughter. On his arrival home from his 'victorious' battle, his only child ran out of the house to greet him. Jephthah was devastated, believing that he was required by God to offer up his daughter as a burnt offering.

Did Jephthah fail to consider that perhaps his wife might have run out of his house to welcome him home? Or that his servants might also have come out to assist him into the house? Did he expect an animal to run out of his house to greet him? It appears that Jephthah might have been planning to offer a human sacrifice to God, as a “plea-bargaining” process. “If you let help me win in battle, I’ll give you a sacrifice that is extremely valuable – a human sacrifice.” The offering of human beings as sacrifices was very common in pagan religions.

It is also highly unlikely that Jephthah was ignorant of the provisions made for his particular type of error which was supposedly found in the Levitical law at that time, which made provision for a man making a foolish pledge.

Leviticus 5:4-6

“Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these. (5) And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing: (6) And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD for his sin which he hath sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin.”

As did Jephthah, Ellen White revealed that David also made the mistake of making a foolish and sinful vow that involved breaking the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.”

Ellen White, Signs of the Times, 26 October, 1888

“David had taken an oath that Nabal and his household should perish; but now he saw that it was not only wrong to make such a vow, but it would be wrong to keep it. If Herod had had the moral courage of David, no matter how humiliating it might have been, he would have retracted the oath that devoted John the Baptist’s head to the ax of the executioner, that the revenge of an evil woman might be accomplished, and he would not have had upon his soul the guilt of the murder of the prophet of God.”

David, only through Abigail’s intervention, realised that to kill Nabal and his family – either in anger or when not angry - would be sinful. (One wonders why a man who was given prophetic visions from God, would not realise that to break the 6th commandment, is to sin). Similarly, Jephthah did not appear to realise that killing his daughter in order to keep a vow, was equally wrong. The foolish vow should have been broken and repented of, rather than to commit another offence by breaking the 6th commandment.

But, with the Old Testament portrayal of Abraham pleasing God by offering up Isaac as a burnt offering, perhaps Jephthah's confusion is understandable. Obviously, Jephthah's understanding of the One True God's character was extremely limited (or veiled). Perhaps Jephthah's sincere worship of the One True God was simply contaminated by familiarity with pagan worship services of the fire-serpent god.

[Which ever the case, Jephthah apparently thought it was more important to keep a vow to his god, than to keep one of the 10 commandments of the Creator, which stated, "Thou shalt not kill" \(Exodus 20:13\).](#) Jephthah apparently thought that offering a human sacrifice – especially a human sacrifice which he highly valued – would be likewise highly valued by his god. From whom did he learn this faulty concept? From the One True God? Or from the pagan nations around him?

Dr. Charles Wellborn, Professor of Religion Emeritus, Florida State University, Tallahassee comments in [Is It Murder—The Problem of Ethical Language](#):

"What are we to make of this? Are we to see it, as preachers sometimes extol it, as a great act of faith and obedience on the part of Jephthah? Or—are we to see it as the disastrous story of a sinful man, misunderstanding the will and character of God, actually committing "murder"?"

Perhaps I can press the point with a far-fetched, hypothetical, modern example. If President George Bush, at the beginning of the Gulf War, had publicly vowed that, if God gave America victory over Saddam Hussein, he would sacrifice whatever first met him at the White House door, how would most sensible people, including Christians, have reacted? And if the President had been greeted on his return by George, Jr., his eldest son, and, in fulfillment of his vow, had sent his son to his death, what would have been our judgment on him? The whole example is, of course, ridiculous, but the fact that we cannot conceive such a scenario surely passes some sort of judgment on Jephthah.

*Concrete examples of the shaping of the interpretation of Scripture can be multiplied almost endlessly. In the 6th century, Procopius, secret court historian for the Emperor Justinian in Constantinople, wrote of his Christian master (who had built the magnificent Santa Sophia and left his enduring legacy in the Justinian legal code), "He did not accept that the crime of murder extended to those who did not agree with him on theological or, indeed, other matters. He slew them without compunctions of conscience." In the Middle Ages the leaders of the Holy Inquisition piously believed that it was the will of God for them to torture or even kill in order to preserve the purity of their doctrine. In the years leading up to the American Civil War devout pastors across the South proclaimed that the Scriptures endorsed and approved the institution of human slavery. Today, few if any honest Christians support that interpretation of God's moral law. We easily recognize that in the past such distortions of Biblical interpretation resulted largely from cultural conditioning. It is more difficult for us to accept that our own contemporary understandings may be similarly misshapen. To return to Richard Niebuhr's terminology, the Scriptures can be seen as a "divine gesture." That gesture consists of a particular set of words. The process of communication is not complete until we interpret and respond to the gesture. **Our response, as sinful persons locked up in a time-space box that conditions our every thought and action, is always and everywhere partial and problematical.**" (end quote Dr. Charles Wellborn, Professor of Religion Emeritus, Florida State University, Tallahassee)*

http://www.christianethicstoday.com/Issue/018/Is%20It%20Murder%E2%80%94The%20Problem%20of%20Ethical%20Language%20By%20Charles%20Wellborn_018_3_.htm

1 Samuel 15:22

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice...”

Jephthah failed to understand that to obey the 10 commandments and *adhere to the principles of God's character* as demonstrated in those commandments, is better – of more value - than any gift we could offer God.

Summary

It can be concluded that God does not tempt humanity to sin nor does He employ lies or deception to teach object lessons. This misconception about God's character falls into the category of faulty, tradition-effected human thinking.

#11 - The Wicked Consumed - (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Objection:

2 Thessalonians 2:8

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” This verse states that God will consume the wicked.

Answer:

From a surface glance at the following texts many have concluded that the presence of Jesus at His second coming will destroy the wicked in an act of vengeance, but in the light of Bible study and history and a careful consideration of the teachings of Jesus Christ we conclude that the way we perceive an event is not always actually what happens behind the scenes. There is no doubt that the event occurred but what really happened? The near certainty of death is like a cliff upon which we all stand, some people call it living on the edge. If your own loved one was living dangerously on the edge of that cliff, no doubt you would try to help, possibly send warnings and eventually come to their rescue. Jesus is coming to our rescue but many who have repeatedly failed to understand the truth about God's love and character, will refuse to be rescued by such a God. There will be brightness and fiery lights and dazzling appearances. It even looks like these laser-light beams are killing off the wicked. How sad it is to have fallen so low to perceive God like this. The wicked shall be destroyed certainly but by their refusal to be saved, they fall into death, they are suicidal, they even cry for the rocks to fall upon them. An incorrect perception of how God deals with sin or us personally could end up being the foundational cause of rejecting His rescue. The intent of Jesus is to rescue the whole world – in fact, He came to save the whole world when He was born as a human being 2000 years ago. But what thoughts would be in your mind if you saw a majestic Being coming in glory, but you believed He was killing off people you personally knew and loved?. Would you want to be rescued by such a Being?

Such considerations must be kept in mind. Christ is not coming to rescue the world based on the sinful, human mentality of a “good-guys-versus-the-bad-guys” movie – where the “good guys” use more violence than the “bad guys” to secure the “morally right” outcome. It must be remembered that it is not God who destroys sinners, but cherished sin that destroys them. God's presence destroys sin – selfishness - where-ever it might be residing. This is not an intentional murder of sinners by a wrathful Being. It is simply a reality in the universe – like the law of gravity which is neither good nor evil. The rule of sin, results in death.

Concerning **2 Thessalonians 2:8** and similar texts, it must be understood that prophecy reveals that Christ will return to this earth on at least two more occasions.

Some texts in the Bible refer to the second coming of Christ when Jesus will take the righteous to heaven for 1000 years, while other texts refer to the third coming of Christ to this earth, when after the 1000 years, the earth will be purified with fire.

At the second coming of Christ, the wicked die a temporary death – a sleep that extends for 1000 years. They are not consumed in the lake of fire at Christ's second coming. So how do the wicked die?

Isaiah 11:4

“But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

This concept of the breath of His lips (or word or voice) killing the wicked, also harmonises with 2 Thessalonians 2:8 which states that “*the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth.*”

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

Isaiah 11:4 [With the rod of his mouth-"By the blast of his mouth"]
“For beshebet, by the rod, Houbigant reads beshebeth, by the blast of his mouth, from nashab, to blow. The conjecture is ingenious and probable; and seems to be confirmed by the Septuagint and Chaldee, who render it by the word of his mouth, which answers much better to the correction than to the present reading. Add to this, that the blast of his mouth is perfectly parallel to the breath of his lips in the next line.”

This concept, that the word of His mouth which will slay the wicked is in keeping with the voice of the archangel which is said to speak or shout at Christ's return.

1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Notice the similar expressions: The sleep death occurs by the voice of the Archangel – the trump of God; the blast of His mouth; the breath of His lips. These phrases appear to describe similar concepts which refer to the words of Christ or the spirit of Christ.

When Christ comes in the glory of His Father and in His own glory, and with the glory of the holy angels (Luke 9:26) He will call out to those who are “dead in Christ.”

Daniel 12:2

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Isaiah 26:19

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

Exposure to the divine voice of Christ and His unveiled divine glory, will cause wicked human beings to begin the sleep of death which lasts for 1000 years.

Note: *Christ's second coming does not slay Satan. Christ's coming renders useless the satanic powers of the papacy and the global confederacies of evil.*

The same divine voice that calls out to give life to the dead “in Christ” will have the opposite effect on the wicked. The wicked are not protected by the indwelling spirit of God. They have not been separated from sin or purified in their minds. Their mortal, corruptible bodies do not undergo a change “in the twinkling of an eye” as do the bodies of the redeemed. The redeemed “put on incorruption and immortality,” but the wicked remain unchanged (1 Cor 15:53). Their bodies cannot stand in the presence of the unveiled glory of God. Their bodies cease to operate and the wicked begin the sleep of death for 1000 years. This death occurs due to a cause and effect situation – it is not the case of a murdering, angry and wrathful god taking out His pent-up vengeance on the wicked. God remains the same to all humanity. It is humanity that must adapt to meet “the consuming fire” of God's holy presence.

EJ Waggoner, Prophetic Lights, Christ's Second Coming, p 110, 111

*"When Christ appears in the clouds of heaven, in power and great glory, the righteous, because they are righteous, are strengthened to behold his glory; but the wicked cannot endure it. Says Isaiah: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Isa.11:4. And the apostle Paul, speaking of "the man of sin," - "that Wicked," - says that he is the one "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." 2Thess.2:8. **This, however, is not the final destruction of the wicked, and the cleansing of the earth, for the millions who have died in sin lie all this (p 111) time in their graves, unconscious of the wonderful events that are taking place on the earth.** Not at that time do they receive the recompense for their evil deeds. Neither do the wicked who are alive at the time of Christ's appearing, and who are slain by the brightness of his coming, receive their punishment at that time. They simply drop dead, unable to endure the dazzling glory of Christ's presence. 'And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.' Jer.25:33."*

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible - 2 Thessalonians 2:8:

"Whom the Lord shall consume He shall blast him so, that he shall wither and die away; and this shall be done by the spirit of his mouth--the words of eternal life, the true doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus; this shall be the instrument used to destroy this man of sin: therefore it is evident his death will not be a sudden but a gradual one; because it is by the preaching of the truth that he is to be exposed, overthrown, and finally destroyed.

Barne's New Testament Notes - 2 Thessalonians 2:8:

*"With the spirit of his mouth. **What goes out of his mouth, or what he speaks; that is word, truth, command, or gospel**--all of which he may be regarded as speaking. In Rev 1:16, 19:16, 21, it is said of the Redeemer that "a sharp two-edged sword goeth out of his mouth" that is, his word, doctrine, or command--what he speaks --is like a sharp sword. It will cut deep; will lay open the heart; will destroy his enemies. Comp. Isa 11:4, "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." The reference in the passage before us is one of the methods which would be employed to "destroy" the man of sin; and the sense is, that it would be by what is spoken by the Redeemer. This may refer either to what he will say at his coming, or to his truth--already spoken; to what has gone from his lips, by whomsoever uttered; and the meaning then is, that one of the grand agencies for destroying this antichristian power is the truth spoken or revealed by the Saviour--that is, his pure gospel.... "*

The Third Coming of Jesus

At Christ's return after the 1000 years (Rev 20:5) the wicked are "awakened" from their "death sleep." They again continue to obey Satan's commands and he orders them to assault the righteous and take possession of the city and the tree of life. God intervenes to protect His people. The same action that protects His people causes the permanent death of the wicked. God's glory is unveiled and God who is "a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29) to sin stands between the wicked and the righteous.

Fire is said to "come down out of God out of heaven and to destroy the wicked.

Revelation 20:9

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."

It is interesting that when the prophets saw God in visions, that many remarked that His glory was like a fire, but the fire did not destroy any beings.

Daniel 7:9, 10

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. (10) **A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him:** thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. "

Daniel 10:6

"His body also was like the beryl, and **his face as the appearance of lightning**, and his **eyes as lamps of fire**, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude."

Revelation 2:18

"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his **eyes like unto a flame of fire**, and his feet are like fine brass;"

Even angels have this fiery appearance.

Revelation 10:1

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and **his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:**"

An example of a human reaction to viewing unveiled divine glory is given when John the Revelator saw the Son of God in vision.

Revelation 1:13-17

"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. (14) His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and **his eyes were as a flame of fire**; (15) And his feet like unto fine brass, **as if they burned in a furnace**; and his voice as the sound of many waters. (16) And he had in his right hand seven stars: **and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword**: and **his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength**. (17) And **when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.**"

John viewed the Son of God's glory in vision. In response, he fell down as if he was dead. The wicked also, will fall down as dead at Christ's second coming, but no-one strengthens them, so they remain in a "sleeping" death until they are raised at the final resurrection. The final resurrection precedes the executive judgment. Each person must stand before God and give account of His life.

Romans 14:12

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Those who are not covered by the perfect life of Christ Jesus, must present their own good works to God and a perfect, faultless character. This of course the wicked cannot do. In their own weakness, they must face the unveiled glory of God. Unprotected and unstrengthened from exposure to such intense divine purity and glory, unrepentant sinners die a permanent death. There must be something **different between this exposure to God's glory and the exposure of the second coming, for the final exposure causes fire to spring forth from sinners - and they self-combust. Whatever the difference is, God knows it will cause the wicked to be consumed. This action might well be considered "God's strange act"** (Isaiah 28;21) as He does not interfere to prevent their deaths.

Since sin entered the world, the Father has veiled His glory in order that sinful humanity might not perish in His presence.

Ellen White was instructed of this situation by Jesus Himself.

Early Writings, p 54 (End of the 2300 Days)

"I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. **I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, 'If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.'**"

Ezekiel 28:18

"Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will **I bring forth a fire from (# 1537) the midst (#3319) of thee, it shall devour thee**, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee." .

Strong's Concordance reveals that the fiery action originates in the sinner – in this case within Satan. LXX Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures)

"from" Strong's Greek Concordance

1537 ek or ex a primary preposition denoting origin (**the point whence action or motion proceeds**)...

"midst"

#3319 mesos mes'-os from 3326; **middle** (as an adjective or (neuter) noun):--among, X before them, between, + forth, mid(-day, -night), midst, way. see GREEK for 3326

Isaiah 33:10-12

"Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. 11 Ye shall conceive chaff, **ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.** 12 And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire."

Notice that it is again the “breath” (or the words or spirit) – his own breath - which devours the wicked person.

Jesus warned humanity that their words (or spirit) would either justify or condemn them.

Matthew 12:36, 37

“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. (37) For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

So how do the words or spirit of the wicked cause them to be consumed?

Romans 8:6

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

Romans 8:9-11

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. **Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.** (10) **And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.** (11) **But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”**

When the spirit of the Lord is already dwelling in humanity, they are strengthened to stand – they are protected from - the divine glory which destroys sin and which brings death to the unprotected.

Deuteronomy 4:24

"For the LORD thy **God is a consuming fire**, even a jealous God."

Hebrews 12:29

"For our God is a **consuming fire.**"

Malachi 4:1

“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall **burn as an oven**; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

Psalms 68:2

"As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God."

Sin is within the wicked – dwelling in their carnal minds and dominating every cell of their “corruptible” and “mortal” flesh. Embedded sinfulness (corruption 1 Cor 15:53) causes the **sleep** death of the wicked when exposed to unveiled divine glory at the second coming of Christ. Hosea reports, that sinners will be committed to sin - “joined” to their idols.

Hosea 4:17

“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”

Even pleadings from the loving spirit of Christ are spurned by those who insist that they prefer to live a life of selfishness. Accompanied by divine agony, God leaves these lost people to serve the master of their own choosing. Their 'righteousness' cannot protect them from God's glory and that they are left "desolate" (Matt 23:38) unable to "stand in the presence of a holy God."

God is not pleased that the wicked have chosen to suicide and lose eternal life.

Hosea 11:6-9

"And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels. 7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him. 8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. 9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city."

Ezekiel 33:11

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Does God derive no pleasure from the death of the wicked, or is that divine statement only in effect until the day of "God's wrath" when God will derive pleasure from His act of justice - the burning of wicked sinners?

God knows that the wicked will be destroyed when they are in the presence of unveiled divinity. He warns them to repent today, and to come back to Him, the Source of their life, but the choice is their own.

The permanent death of the wicked might be illustrated by the following allegories:

A man develops the habit of sleeping on the warm bitumen surface of a road. He was warned by a concerned truck driver, that the practice is very dangerous. But the man takes no notice of the warning and doesn't consider it a serious threat because he knows the truck driver is a "nice guy" who "wouldn't hurt a fly." So day after day, the man continues to enjoy the warm surface of the road. Suddenly the road train appears and cannot stop in time to avoid hitting the man who is laying on the road again. The driver is horrified to have run over the sleeping man, but he knew that it was the inevitable outcome if the man continued to lie down on the road.

Consider a second analogy: what happens when water is dripped onto a very hot surface such as a stove hotplate. The water is immediately 'consumed' (converted into steam). Just as the hotplate possessed no intention to injure or transform the water, the transformation occurred anyway. In a similar way, when the wicked are destroyed, there is not present in God, any intention to destroy the wicked. Just as the water was 'consumed' as a natural consequence of being on the hotplate, so too are the wicked consumed by coming into contact with the unveiled glory of divinity. Divinity does not aggressively seek to destroy the sinner. Death occurs as a consequence of the sinners' actions – coming closer to the glory of the unveiled Divine Presence.

In a similar fashion, God has warned humanity that the wages of sin is death. Life is in Jesus Christ. God doesn't want the wicked to die, but He knows that death will automatically come on all who refuse to separate from sin.

Those who are possessed by the spirit of Christ will endure the adaption when their bodies will be changed in the “twinkling of an eye.” However, the wicked, whose bodies and minds are not “changed,” will be completely unprotected from death by self-combustion.

AT Jones, Review and Herald Jan, 24 & 31, 1899.

“Yet, what every one must understand is this: the only way that God does, or can, separate anybody from sin is by that very consuming fire of his presence. The only way, therefore, in which you and I can ever be so separated from sin as to meet God as he is, in the flaming fire that he is, in that great day, is to meet him TODAY as he is, in the consuming fire that he is. The only way that we can be prepared to meet him at his coming in that great day is to meet him in his coming today. For there is a coming to men now, as really as to the world in that great day. 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will COME TO YOU.' John 14:18. But do not forget that whether he comes to you or to me now, or whether he comes to other people in that great day, he comes only as a consuming fire. Listen: 'If any man hear my voice, and open the door,'-- what does he say?--'I will come in to him.' Good. Thank the Lord! And 'he is a consuming fire;' and when he comes in to you, that coming will consume all the sin in you, so that when he comes in the clouds of heaven in flaming fire, you can meet him in joy in the consuming fire that he is.

Then do you hear his voice? "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I WILL COME IN TO HIM." Do you hear his voice? Then swing open wide the door, and keep it everlastingly open. Bid him welcome, in the consuming fire that he is: and that flaming fire of his presence will consume sin in all your being, and so will thoroughly cleanse and prepare you to meet him in flaming fire in that great day.

When I meet him today 'in a flaming fire,' when I welcome him today 'a consuming fire' in me, shall I be afraid to meet him in flaming fire in that day--No; I shall be accustomed to it; and knowing what a blessed thing it is to become familiar with meeting him as 'a consuming fire,' knowing what a blessing that has brought to me today, I shall be delighted to meet him on that other day, when he shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire. 'Our God is a consuming fire.' Bless the Lord!

'Who may abide the day of his coming? Who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's FIRE.' Good. Then when I meet him now, in the consuming fire that he is, I meet him in a fire that is refining, that purifies. 'And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.' That is separation from sin; that is purification from sin. And that sets us where we offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness: we become the servants of righteousness unto holiness, that we may meet the Lord. So, then, bless the Lord that he is a consuming fire,-- that he is as a refiner's fire.

Look again at that expression in Revelation: 'His eyes were as a flame of fire.' In that day his eyes will rest upon each one of us, and he will look clear through us. When his eyes are as a flame of fire, and those eyes in that great day rest upon every one of us, and look clear through us, what will that look do for every one who is wrapped up, body and soul, in sin?-- It will consume the sin, and the sinner with it; because he would not be separated from the sin. And today, just now, those eyes are the same that they will be in that day.”

“Today his eyes are as a flame of fire; and 'all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' Very good, then.”

AT Jones (continued)

"As all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do, whether we will have to do with him or not, why not accept the fact, choose to have it so, and on our part open up everything to the eyes of him with whom we have to do?"

And having opened up the life thus to him, to the flaming fire of the glory of his shining eyes, what will that do?-- Those eyes of living flame will look clear through us, and will consume away all the sin, and all the dross; and will refine us so that he shall see in us the image of himself.

It is written that we are to serve the Lord 'as of sincerity.' Sincere is genuine; it is true; it is as strained honey. Originally, it is honey strained, and strained again, over and over, until, holding up the honey to the light, it is found to be sine-cera, -- 'without wax,' no trace of cera to be seen floating in it. That is what he says you and I are to be as certainly as we are Christians. God cleanses us in the blood of Christ, and holds us up in the light of the Lord, and the world can see only the light. And so, 'ye are the light of the world.'

"Here, again, is the word of the Lord: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me.' Ps. 139:23, 24. That is the word given to us for today and for all time.

Another word goes right along with it: 'O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, . . . and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.' Another translation has it: 'Thou has compassed me all around; and holdest thine hand over me.' Verses 1-5. That is a fact. He has compassed us all around, and his hand is over us. Whether we accept it or not, is another matter; but that is the fact with every man in all this wide world. That is how it is that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Then when it is a fact that he has searched us, and known us, and does search out and know us all the time, why not accept it as a fact, and have the benefit of it? Why not present to him the word, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts'? What for?-- 'And see if there be any wicked way in me.' O, that sets me before his face; for his glorious eyes of light to look upon me, and to shine through me, as the fire, searching out if there be any wicked way in me! And having searched it out, and being a consuming fire, he consumes it all away, and leads me in the way everlasting.

So, then, the sure way to escape the flaming fire of that great day is to welcome that flaming fire this day. Therefore, I say again, Let it never escape from your thought that "our God is a consuming fire;" and that the sure way to escape from that consuming fire in that great day when there will be no chance to change, and no time to choose, is to choose today the blessed change that is wrought, by welcoming freely, gladly, into the life, our God, who is a consuming fire.

I remember the word that was spoken to Moses. As Moses had come nearer and nearer to God, he said at last: 'I beseech thee, show me thy glory.' That is exactly what appears in the coming great day that is at hand: he comes "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

AT Jones (continued)

"His glory covers the heavens in that day, and the earth is filled with his praise. In that day he is "wrapped in a blaze of boundless glory," "and every eye shall see him." But who shall endure it?

"That is the question; and the answer is: Only those who have prayed, and now pray, that Christian prayer, 'I beseech thee, show me thy glory.'

When Moses prayed that blessed Christian prayer, the Lord said: 'There is a place by me, . . . and I will put thee in a cleft of the rock,' 'and I will make all my goodness pass before thee.' 'And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, I will cover thee with my hand. And I will take away my hand,' and you shall see me. Ex. 33:21-23. So, though every man should dread the terror of the consuming glory of the Lord in that great day, there is today a place by him. So we are to bid all souls; and from him I bid you, today, Come, and stand in this place by him, in the very presence of the flaming glory. Do not be afraid. Moses was not able to bear the fullness of that consuming glory that day; but the Lord, in his love, covered him with his hand, and protected him from the effects of that glory, which he was unable to bear.

The great trouble in that great day is that the people are not able to bear the glory. The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, the chief men and the captains, and every bondman, and every freeman flee to the rocks and mountains to hide themselves, and say to the rocks and mountains,

'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?' The blazing glory of God will shine upon the earth, and these people can not bear it. But today do not be afraid. He says: 'There is a place by me;' there is a place 'in a cleft of the rock,' and 'I will put thee in a cleft of the rock,' and I 'will cover thee with my hand,' so that you can bear the blaze, and the purifying power, of my glory.

And that consuming fire of my presence shall consume away all the sin. I 'will cover thee with my hand,'-- I will protect you even from that weakness which, in you, makes you unable to bear the fullness of my glory. And when he takes away his hand in that great day, those who have dwelt by his side, and been purified by living in this consuming fire until they are made white and tried, can look upon his unveiled face. In the full brightness of his glory, we shall look upon him, and see him as he is.

And that is where we are now, to look. With open face we can look, even now, into his face. For, in the flesh of Jesus Christ, God has veiled the annihilating power of the glory of his face; for, having shined into our hearts, he gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In looking into the face of Jesus Christ, we see the face of God, and 'we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory, to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

Then let every soul welcome the glorious message that God sends to the world, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" welcome that blessed Spirit that works this change by which we are changed from glory to glory, and made ready to meet him in that great day of glory; and welcome not only the Holy Spirit, but covet earnestly the best gifts, which the Holy Spirit brings when he comes. Desire spiritual gifts; for these are to bring us to perfection in Christ Jesus."

AT Jones (continued)

"Only in this way shall we be made perfect in Christ Jesus; and in Christ be made ready to meet him as he is.

God is a consuming fire; and I am glad of it. Our God is coming; and I am glad of it. He is coming in flaming fire; and I am glad of it. He is coming in all his glory; and I am glad of it. I am sorry that there will be anybody upon whom he will have to take vengeance; but I am glad that the day is coming when all sin will be swept away by our God, who is a consuming fire.

Come, brethren. Are you ready? Are you ready to meet him in that day? If not, he says to you today, 'There is a place by me.' Come today, and stand in this place by me. I will reveal to you all my glory; "I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

And where there is any defect in you that cannot just now bear the deeply consuming fire of this glory, I "will cover thee with my hand" until it is all over: so that I may separate you from all sin, and save you in that day of glory.

O, then, welcome him who is a consuming fire! Dwell in his presence. Open up the life. Recognize the fact that he is a consuming fire-- that he is never anything else. Then rejoice in that today. Dwell in that consuming fire today. And when that great day breaks upon the earth, in all his glory, we shall also rejoice in that day. Then we shall stand and say, "Lo, this is our God." But what! with the mountains hurling through the air; every island fleeing out of its place; the earth coming up from beneath; the heavens departing as a scroll, with a noise that is more than deafening; and flaming fire all around, his face as the sun, his eyes as a flame of fire,-- in all this shall we rejoice?-- Yes, bless the Lord! We shall rejoice, because "this is our God." We have seen him before; we have lived with him; we have welcomed his consuming presence; we have welcomed the living flame of which his eyes are as a flaming fire, that they should pierce us through, and search out any wicked way in us."

"We know what blessing and joy were brought into our lives when his consuming glory purified us from sin and from sinning, and made us the servants of righteousness unto holiness. And knowing what blessedness that was, we exclaim, in the fullness of perfect joy, 'Lo, this is our God' indeed. We see him now, more fully than before. That means more blessing still. 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: This is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' Isa. 25:9." (end quote AT Jones)

The Gospel Message for Today, Sermon by W. W. Prescott, Sunday, 29 March, 1903
General Conference Daily Bulletin Vol 3, No. 4 p 54

"A word further concerning that blotting out of sin: *It is the revelation of the glory of God that blots out sin. The time for the blotting out of sin has come when our High Priest takes all the sins of the people upon Himself, and goes into the most holy place, and stands in the immediate presence of the glory which blots out sin. The sins blotted out are the sins confessed, confessed upon the Priest, not that by arbitrary act of ours we can lay our sins upon Him; God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Our confession is that we personally confess that our sins are on Him. We agree to that, and, having confessed that, and agreed to that, we let go of them; we say our sins are on Him. Our very agreement with Him, in the confession that our sins have been laid upon Him, is God's means of removing them from us, and letting them be upon Him in our behalf.*"

#12 - God is Angry with the Wicked – (Psalm 7:11)

Objection: “God judgeth the righteous, and God is **angry** with the wicked every day. In this psalm, it is clear that God is able to become angry with wicked persons.

Answer:

According to the Webster's Dictionary (1913), one definition of anger is: *The feeling excited by that which is unworthy, base, or disgraceful.*

God's anger is an emotional reaction to something disgraceful, base or unworthy. But God tells us, that *His* anger is not like *our* anger.

Psalm 50:21

“These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.”

Isaiah 55:8, 9

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. (9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

With these texts in mind, consider the following passage:

Psalm 7:11-16

“God judgeth the righteous, and God is **angry** with the wicked every day. 12 If he (the wicked man) turn not (doesn't return to God, doesn't return from apostatising), he (the wicked man) will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. (the wicked will progress from sin into violence) .13 He hath also prepared for him (self) the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors (literally, those who "hotly pursue" - people who chase the wicked man to try to bring him to justice). 14 Behold, he (wicked man) travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. 15 **He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.** 16 **His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate (scalp).”**

This passage is NOT saying that **God is violent. It is not saying that God's violence** will come down upon **His** own head. God is not a violent being. We can be certain of that because the Father's character, (the express image of the Father's character) was shown in the life, words and actions of Jesus Christ - and in Christ there was **NO** violence.

Isaiah 53:9 (In reference to Jesus Christ)

"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; **because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.**"

In Psalms 7: 12,13, David is referring to the wicked persons, whose evils escalate and progress to violent acts. e.g. a man steals another man's wife. The husband pursues the kidnapper "hotly." However, the thief and kidnapper simply prepares his arrows to kill the pursuing husband. He uses violence, instead of "turning away from his iniquity." Eventually, this wicked man's sins will take his own life, because by his sinful decisions, he is separating himself from the Father, the Source of all Life.

Psalm 9:15-17

“The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: **in the net which they hid is their own foot taken**. (16) The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: **the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands**. Higgaion. Selah. 17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

Those who commit iniquity will reap the consequences of iniquity. Violent people will reap violence from their own actions. The consequence of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Death comes from separation from a holy, pure, powerful, but respectful God. Death is only possible when created beings choose to separate themselves from the Source of all Life and Perfect Goodness.

Review and Herald 18 January, 1898, p 8 (Jesus speaks regarding the Pharisees)

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin,’ Christ said, ‘but now they have no cloak for their sin. . . . But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.’ Christ’s works of mercy contrasted too sharply with their pride, selfishness, and evil actions. They could not bear to have his goodness and tender sympathy acted out, even to those whom they despised.”

Despite the warnings, if a sinner chooses to live his probationary life in a direction that is moving away from God’s unselfish, loving principles, then the sinner is choosing death.

Proverbs 8:36

“He that hateth me, loveth death.”

God informs of the natural consequences of sin, but sinners choose their own destiny.

#13 - Abraham and Isaac - (Genesis 22:1, 2)

Genesis 22:1, 2

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, 'Abraham': and he said, 'Behold, here I am.' And he said, 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.’”

Objection:

*This Old Testament account requires that we ask the very serious question, **does God tempt man to break His commandments?***

Answer:

The New Testament answer to that question is, no. The Son of God Himself confirmed this answer when He stated:

Matthew 5:19

(Jesus said) “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, **and shall teach men so**, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

James, the brother of Jesus stated also:

James 1:13

“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.”

However, in the Old Testament account, it is recorded supposedly by Moses, that God **did** tempt Abraham to break His commandments – to make an exception and to put aside those commandments – a most startling and contradictory declaration!

God is not only said to have required that Abraham disregard the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” in this circumstance, but to also perform a special, pagan-reeking ritual - to kill Isaac as a human sacrifice - a burnt offering on top of a high place – **the same nature of the sacrifices which the Canaanites were condemned for performing hundreds of years later.**

The book of Genesis states that God originally asked Abraham to "get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Gen 12:1).

Abraham had to separate from pagan worshippers (those who performed human sacrifices), so that God could reveal Himself - His character – clearly to him. The admonition to “be separate,” was continually emphasised by the prophets down through Israelite history, but was most often ignored by the leaders of the people.

During a famine, Abraham went into Egypt and from that time onward, sins and pagan practises were recorded against his record.

1. Upon his entry in Egypt, Abraham revealed that he did not trust God with his life. He feared the Egyptians might murder him to possess his wife. Sarah, Abraham's wife was "fair to look upon" (Gen 12:11) so Abraham required her to lie about their marriage relationship (Gen 12:18, 19). He devised this scheme to deceive Pharaoh instead of asking for God's protection.
2. On leaving pagan Egypt, Abraham, instead of remaining separate from the pagan worshippers, purchased an Egyptian female slave named Hagar to become Sarah's handmaiden.
3. Not long after Abraham left Egypt, he believed that the Creator told him to circumcise himself and his male descendants as a public sign of their allegiance to Him (Gen 17:11,12). However, this blood ritual was not original with Abraham or "God" because the ritual had been practised in Egypt for centuries prior to Abraham's visit. ⁽¹¹⁾ and it was a blood ritual that signified allegiance to the most important god; the sun "god" Amon-Re.
4. Abraham again revealed his lack of faith in the One True God and made the same mistake in Gerar, as he did in Egypt. The circumcision rite had not caused him to become "certain" of God's loving and faithful character (Genesis 20:2, 3). "And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, 'She is my sister:' and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife."
5. Abraham again distrusted the promises of the One True God, when he took Hagar for his concubine. This "marriage of convenience" was the accepted custom in the *pagan* countries around them, but not in the religion of the Creator. God's perfect arrangement for marriage had been clearly portrayed in Eden - one man - one woman. Marriage was instituted in Eden, but mocked in Egypt where the royal class married multiple wives (Mark Andrews, Marriage in Ancient Egypt. <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/marriage.htm> Abraham became a polygamist.

11 *In Egyptian mythology, the sun "god" Amon-Re circumcised himself and from the blood from his wound two deities (gods) were given existence* (The Third International Symposium on Circumcision, 22-25May, 1994, University of Maryland, **Voskuil, Duane, Ph.D. From Genetic Cosmology to Genital Cosmetics: Origin Theories of the Righting Rites of Circumcision**) <http://www.nocirc.org/symposia/third/> "...what makes Egyptian circumcision especially interesting is that the scholarly evidence indicates that, no matter where and upon whom it was practised, it represented a sign of affiliation to the cult of sun god, Amon-Re, chief deity and creator of all things" (**Ashley Montagu, Ph.D, D.Sc.**, presented at the Second International Symposium on Circumcision, San Francisco, California, 30 April – 3 May, 1991). <http://www.nocirc.org/symposia/second/montagu.html> "Just when and why circumcision was first practised in the ancient Near East is not known, but it was widely attested in antiquity. Bodies from 4000 Before the Common Era (B.C.E.) exhumed in Egypt disclose evidence of circumcision (Breasted, 353, p.10). Ancient Egyptian art, on those occasions when the genitals of Egyptian males were depicted, provide evidence of male circumcision. For example, the carpenter portrayed in a Sixth Dynasty (2350-2000 B. C. E. tomb at Saqqara with his loin cloth pulled to the rear clearly reveals this circumcised penis... A relief from the Sixth Dynasty tomb on Ankh-ma-Hor at Saqqara portrays the circumcision of two puberty-aged youths." **Gerald A. Larue Ph.D**, Religion and Circumcision, presented at the Second International Symposium on Circumcision, San Francisco, California, 30 April – 3 May, 1991 <http://www.nocirc.org/symposia/second/larue.html>

Question:

If God had made a covenant of circumcision with **Abraham**, why didn't He make that covenant with **Adam** straight after the fall? In fact, God **did** make a covenant with Adam after the fall, and it was the promise that the Messiah would come through **Adam's** posterity - his children – of whom Abraham was a descendant. Satan was present when this aspect of the plan of salvation was presented to Adam. So Satan knew that the Child of Promise - Christ, was going to come through Adam's children.

When Abraham was selected to be the "father of a great nation," Satan knew the Promised Child would come through Abraham. Would it be too difficult to consider that Satan would try to destroy the child Isaac, just as Satan tried to destroy the baby Moses through Pharaoh's decree to kill all the male babies? Just as Satan tried to destroy the baby Jesus through King Herod's murderous plot to kill the male babies under 2 years old in Bethlehem? There is an alarming, familiar threat to these three events.

Abraham had made at least 5 serious errors arising from his experience in Egypt, many of which had their source in Egyptian pagan religions. Could it be that, after his trip to Egypt, amongst the pagan worshippers, Abraham became confused as to how to worship the One True God? Did he confuse the voice of God, with the command of another pagan voice? Did Satan impersonate God's voice and entice Abraham to follow the pagan Egyptian practices of child sacrifice? If so, Abraham must have been confused for God's commandments said, "Thou shalt not kill."

In any case, Abraham **believed** that he was obeying the voice of the Creator. When Abraham was about to take the life of his son, the One True God intervened, urging him not to take his son's life (Gen 22:12). Perhaps God accepted that Abraham had intended to worship Him, in giving up his beloved son Isaac, and so prevented Abraham from doing that which was abhorrent to Him. In fact, God said that He had NEVER asked for human sacrifices (Jer 7:31: Jer 32:35).

Through his confusion over the character of God, Abraham still had faith that God would bring the Messiah from his lineage, even if He had to raise Isaac from the dead. **That faith** was granted to him as righteousness (Heb 11:17-19) **despite** his confusion over God's character and law.

Not having stated that she 'was shown' by a divine revelation or vision, Ellen White makes a strange statement in Patriarchs and Prophets concerning this 'divine' command given to Abraham to murder his 'son of promise.'

Ellen White, Patriarch and Prophets, p 148

"The command was expressed in words that must have wrung with anguish that father's heart: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, . . . and offer him there for a burnt offering." Isaac was the light of his home, the solace of his old age, above all else the inheritor of the promised blessing. The loss of such a son by accident or disease would have been heart rending to the fond father; it would have bowed down his whitened head with grief; but he was commanded to shed the blood of that son with his own hand. It seemed to him a fearful impossibility. Satan was at hand to suggest that he must be deceived, for the divine law commands, "Thou shalt not kill," and God would not require what He had once forbidden. Going outside his tent, Abraham looked up to the calm brightness of the unclouded heavens, and recalled the promise made nearly fifty years before, that his seed should be innumerable as the stars. If this promise was to be fulfilled through Isaac, how

could he be put to death? Abraham was tempted to believe that he might be under a delusion. In his doubt and anguish he bowed upon the earth, and prayed, as he had never prayed before, for some confirmation of the command if he must perform this terrible duty. He remembered the angels sent to reveal to him God's purpose to destroy Sodom, and who bore to him the promise of this same son Isaac, and he went to the place where he had several times met the heavenly messengers, hoping to meet them again, and receive some further direction; but none came to his relief. Darkness seemed to shut him in; but the command of God was sounding in his ears, 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest.' That command must be obeyed, and he dared not delay. Day was approaching, and he must be on his journey."

It would appear that Ellen White confirms the concept that God does tempt man to break His commandments and to 'lead them into temptation.' If we accept Ellen White's understanding as being correct, - that the 10 commandments can be put aside if God so communicates that to us, what then becomes the great standard by which we can identify the voice of God and discern the temptations of Satan?

In Matthew 6:13, Jesus said His people were to pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

Does Jesus mean that we are to ask God to STOP leading us into temptation, the way He led Abraham into temptation regarding sacrificing Isaac? Adam Clarke casts some light on the Greek text. **Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible** - Matthew 6:13

[And lead us not into temptation] *That is, bring us not in to sore trial. **πειρασμον**, which may be here rendered sore trial, comes from **πειρω**, to pierce through, as with a spear, or spit, used so by some of the best Greek writers. Several of the primitive fathers understood it something in this way; and have therefore added **quam ferre non possimus**, "which we cannot bear." **The word not only implies violent assaults from Satan, but also sorely afflictive circumstances, none of which we have, as yet, grace or fortitude sufficient to bear. Bring us not in, or lead us not in. This is a mere Hebraism: God is said to do a thing which he only permits or suffers to be done. [But deliver us from evil] **απορουπονηπου**, from the wicked one. **Satan is expressly called οτρονηπος, the wicked one.** Mt 13:19, 38, compare with Mr 4:15; Lu 8:12." (end quote Adam Clarke)***

So Jesus was teaching his disciples to ask the Father to continue to prevent their exposure to Satan's temptations which their weak faith could not yet stand against. This principle, of temptations arising from Satan – not from God - is in harmony with Paul's instructions to the Corinthian believers.

1 Corinthians 10:13

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

We can trust the words of Jesus.

Matthew 5:19

(Jesus said) "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

#14 - God's Strange Act - (Isaiah 28: 21)

Objection:

Some people believe that God will kill the wicked, even though it is against His commandments and character to kill. Isaiah certainly appears to say that God Himself will destroy the wicked and he calls it God's "strange work" and "strange act."

Isaiah 28:21

"For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act."

Answer:

Let's examine what happened in the Valley of Gibeon.

Joshua 10:5-11

"Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.

6 And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us. 7 So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. 8 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee. 9 Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night. 10 And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah. 11 And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

In the valley of Gibeon, hailstones rained down from heaven and destroyed the Amorites. The Lord is again credited with this amazing mass murder, however, just as God withdrew His protection from Job, and this act permitted Satan to bring fire "down from heaven" to destroy Job's property, so Satan destroyed the Amorites with hailstones in the valley of Gibeon. The Amorites were not protected by God, as they worshipped pagan gods.

Christ revealed the Father's character. While on earth, Christ performed a "strange act."

Signs of the Times, 15 February, 1899 p 14

"The explanation of this **strange act of Christ** in the cursing of the fig tree was to stand as a living, warning appeal to all Christian churches. The blighted tree was to repeat its lesson in every age to the close of earth's history. God is looking for piety, self-denial, self-sacrifice, compassion for man, and zeal for God. He longs to see in man a deep yearning of soul to save his fellow-man from unbelief and ruin. But the present condition of the Christian churches is similar to the condition of the Jews in Christ's day. The Lord and all heaven behold the fruitless fig tree. They see men trampling upon the law of Jehovah, making the covenant between Him and His commandment-keeping people a thing a naught. But to the people who trample upon that law which God has ordained, Christ says, as He said to the Jewish nation, "**Thou hast destroyed thyself.**"

#15 - Christ Executes Judgment - (Jude 1:14, 15)

Objection:

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, (15) to execute judgment upon all.”
Christ's earthly life revealed the character of a sanctified human being. Christ did not destroy the wicked during His incarnation, because that was not the work that God gave Him. Neither is the destruction of the wicked the work He gives to this human generation. That work was performed by the Jews under Joshua's leadership, in their generation. Christ's work was not to destroy sinners during the time He was to be a Sacrifice for the sins of the world. Christ will perform that destroying work as a conquering King. Then Christ as Judge, will destroy sinners and satisfy the wrath of God against sin.

Answer:

Jesus told the Pharisees to rethink the meaning of an Old Testament verse.

Hosea 6:6

“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

Matthew 9:13

“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.”

Christ informed the Pharisees that they needed to receive clearer knowledge of God's character. The same advice could be applied today.

The Bible clearly shows that Christ **performed the office** of a prophet while on earth, and **performs the office** of a priest in heaven, and will **perform the office** of king at His second coming.

The suggestion is made that Jesus, whilst performing the duties of His prophetic office, only showed us **the character** of the prophet while on earth - not the **High Priest's character** and not the **character of a King** - *as if the divine character could change with the duties of His different offices*. It is claimed that Jesus' character (while incarnated) did not reveal the traits of a Judge or King. It is claimed that Christ's judging character - the supposedly destroying aspect of His character - will be enacted when God destroys the wicked in a strange violent act. Is this claim provable? What is the evidence?

Philip requested to Jesus, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." Jesus answered that He that had seen Him had seen the Father also (John 14:9-11). Christ came to show us the Father and He did show us the Father's character – perfectly. It was only the Father's **character** that **was** shown to humanity. Jesus assured His disciples that the Father's character is the same character as the Son's character i.e. Their spirit is the same.

Does the divine character of Jesus and His Father ever change?

James 1:17

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

Malachi 3:6:

"For I am the LORD, I change not..."

Hebrews 13:8

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."

How can some people suppose that Christ's character changes when He officiates in the role of Judge?

The Father handed over judgment to the Son.

John 5:22

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."

Therefore, Jesus also must have revealed the character of a Righteous Judge, despite not executing that judgment during His incarnation.

Matthew 23.13

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. (14) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. (15) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. (16) Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! (17) Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? (18) And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. (19) Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? (20) Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. (21) And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. (22) And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. (23) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (24) Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. (25) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. (26) Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. (27) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. (29) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, (30) And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. (31) wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. (32) Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. (33) Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? (34) Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: (35) That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. (36) Verily I

say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. (37) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (38) Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (39) For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

In this chapter, Jesus prophesied the consequences which would eventually befall the Pharisees and scribes if they continued in their self-righteousness. Christ judged their works as evil and predicted the outcome on the day of judgment. In this judgment, Christ simply stated that the end result of their evil choices will be more dreadful for them than the pagans suffered in Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 10:6-15).

The scribes and Pharisees and the "chosen people" had greater knowledge of truth than the pagan races, yet they chose to cherish sin; therefore more sin resided in their minds and consequentially they will have more sin that will self-destruct when brought into contact with unveiled divinity on judgment day. Then Christ declares that He, the Righteous Judge, will proclaim, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt 7:23).

Christ, in His strange act, (Isa 28:21) finally and completely turns away from those He died to save, leaving them without the mercy of the loving, protective God. This strange act on God's part is demonstrated in the parables:

- the 10 virgins, the wise and the foolish (Matt 25:1-12) ;
- good and faithful servants and the unprofitable servant (Matt 25:15-30);
- the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31-33);
- the wheat and the tares (Matt 24:13-3);
- the good tree and the corrupt tree (Matt 7:17-19)
- branch grafted into the vine and the withered branch (John 15:5,6)

These parables represent the two classes - those who are hid "in Christ" and those who cling to sin and are representatives of Satan.

While acting in the office of Judge/King, the Bible assures Christians that Christ's character does not change. Christ simply accepts the choice humanity has made and His strange act is to leave sinners to the certain fatal consequences of their sad choice to reject Him.

#16 - Open or Closed Probation

Objection: *God treats people differently depending on whether their probation is closed or still open.*

Answer:

Did Jesus treat His enemies any differently though their probation had expired? Did Jesus only reserve His “loving, forgiving” character traits for those to whom mercy for repentance was still extended? Did the character of Jesus change toward those whose probation was expired? Did He then demonstrate a destructive, vengeful character?

Luke 22:2-6

“And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. (3) **Then entered Satan into Judas** surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. (4) And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. (5) And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. (6) And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

Luke 22:47-51

“And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. (48) But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? (49) When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? (50) And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. (51) And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.”

Matthew 26:51-53

“And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. (52) 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. (53) Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?”

John 18:10-11

“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. (11) Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

These three accounts of violence used by Peter to protect Jesus from being taken captive, demonstrate that Jesus left a definite example of how His followers are to treat those:

- who betray them,
- those whose probation has closed; and
- those who are endeavouring to take our lives.

Jesus knew that during the Lord's Supper meal, Judas' probation was expired for Satan had entered into him at that time (Luke 22:30). Nonetheless, Jesus did not refuse the traitor's kiss which marked Him as “the victim” to His enemies. The love of Jesus for lost sinners is so great that He even called the traitor, “friend,” though this man's actions led to the Saviour's cruel torture and death. If Jesus treated those whose probation was over with mercy and love, how can Christians suppose that God would treat those rebels whose probation expires any differently?

#17 - I Came to Send a Sword - (Matthew 10:34)

Objection: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” *Jesus advocated the use of weapons. That is not pacifist ideology.*

Answer:

Christ was primarily concerned about helping people discover how to develop righteous characters by responding to the love of God, which He demonstrated in His own life. Sadly, sometimes religious pre-conditioning blinds Christian to the actual truth that Jesus tried to teach humanity. Matthew 10:34 is an obvious example where traditional views have hindered our understanding of Christ’s message.

Jesus was speaking to His disciples, prophesying as to the “cross” that they would have to bear for following His teachings. Christ declared that His words, His truth - the gospel – would bring trouble, strife and protest from those who rejected His words. The disciples would preach the truth and the rejection of that truth would bring division among families and communities.

Jesus was ***not*** suggesting that His disciples become physical war warriors and be involved in carnal warfare, as did Mohammed, and several popes. The sword that Jesus referred to was His testimony - the “sword of the spirit.”

Revelation 19:13

“And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called **The Word of God.**”

Ephesians 6:17

“And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:**”

Hebrews 4:12

“For the **word of God** is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

The truth divides believers into two categories – those who accept truth and those who reject it. These two groups would separate and be at enmity with each other.

1 John 4:6

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”

In the next six verses, Christ elaborated the truth divides souls into two groups.

Matthew 10:35-40

“For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (37) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. (39) He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. (94) He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. “

Ellen White makes this comment in Review and Herald, 9 February, 1911, p 19

"Though he bore the title of the Prince of Peace, Christ said of himself, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." By these words he did not mean that his coming was to produce discord and contention among his followers. **He desired to show the effect that his teaching would have on different minds.** One portion of the human family would receive him; the other portion would take sides with Satan, and would oppose Christ and his followers. **The Prince of Peace, he was yet the cause of division.** He who came to proclaim glad tidings and to create hope and joy in the hearts of the children of men, opened a controversy that burns deep and arouses intense passion in the human heart. And he warns his followers, "In the world ye shall have tribulation."

In studying 'confusing' utterances, Christians must be careful not to limit Christ's words or to interpret them exclusively according to traditionally held views, but to explore His teachings for spiritual meaning.

#18 - Buy a Sword - (Luke 22:36)

"Then said he unto them, 'But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.'"

Objection: *Jesus commanded His disciples to prepare to kill people by buying swords. Jesus is not speaking of the sword of the spirit in this passage as the sword of the spirit is not for sale.*

Answer: Let's examine the passage in question.

Geneva Bible Translation Notes

Luke 22:36:

"Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take [it], and likewise [his] scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. He says all this using an allegory, as if he said, "O my friends and fellow soldiers, you have lived until now in relative peace: but now there is at hand a most severe battle to be fought, and you must therefore lay all other things aside and think about dressing yourselves in armour." And what this armour is, is shown by his own example, when he prayed afterward in the garden and reproved Peter for striking with the sword."

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

Verse 36. He that hath no sword] Bishop PEARCE supposes that the word μαχαίραν, sword, has been inserted here from what is said in Lu 22:38, as it is evident our Lord never intended to make any resistance, or to suffer a sword to be used on the occasion; see Mt 26:52. The word stands rather oddly in the passage: the verse, translated in the order in which it stands, is as follows: And he who hath none, let him sell his garment and buy-a sword. Now it is plain that the verb πωλησάτω, let him buy, may be referred to πήραν a scrip, in the former part of the verse: Therefore if, according to the bishop's opinion, the word sword be omitted, the passage may be understood thus: "When I sent you out before, Lu 10:1, for a few days, and to preach the Gospel only to your country-men; therefore you had but little need of a staff, purse, or scrip, as your journey was neither long, nor expensive; but now I am about to send you into all the world, to preach the Gospel to every creature; and, as ye shall be generally hated and persecuted for my sake, ye shall have need to make every prudent provision for your journey; and so necessary will it be for you to provide yourselves victuals, inhospitable country, that, if any of you have no scrip or wallet, he should sell even his upper garment to provide one." Others, who are for retaining the word sword, think that it was a proverbial expression, intimating a time of great difficulty and danger, and that now the disciples had need to look to themselves, for his murderers were at hand. The reader will observe that these words were spoken to the disciples just before he went to the garden of Gethsemane, and that the danger was now so very near that there could be no time for any of them to go and sell his garment in order to purchase a sword to defend himself and his Master from the attack of the Jewish mob."

Prior to Peter's conversion and just after Jesus statement which supposedly instructed the disciples to arm themselves for physical warfare, Peter used violence against one of his enemies. Jesus rebuked him immediately and repaired the damage that Peter's sword had inflicted on the priest's servant's ear.

John 18:10-12

“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. (11) Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? (12) Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him.”

If Jesus intended His direction to be taken literally – to buy a sword and to use it for protective purposes – why didn't the disciples carry swords with them in compliance with Christ's command? If Christ meant for His disciples to understand that from now on they should use “self-defence” as they spread the gospel, why is there no record of Paul and the disciples fighting their enemies with the sword? Why are there no Biblical records of the “sons of thunder” (James and John) or Simon the zealot, reverting to their defensive behaviour, violent habits which they possessed prior to their conversion? The Bible simply records that the disciples bore patiently the cross that Jesus prophesied would be theirs to bear. Paul and Silas sang and prayed in prison. Peter was released from prison by an angel – not by his own trickery or violence against the jailer.

Furthermore, Jesus told His disciples to “love your enemies” -not to “destroy your enemies” (Matthew 5:44). If Christ gave a command contrary to that which He taught continuously throughout His ministry and in His sermon on the mount, then it would make Christ contradict His own teaching.

Matthew 10:16-23

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. (17) But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; (18) And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. (19) But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. (20) For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. (21) And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. (22) And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. (23) But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.”

Christ clearly taught His disciples that when they suffered persecution, they were to suffer it patiently and accept what their heavenly Father permitted to come upon them.

Matthew 5:11-12

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. (12) Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Christ further instructed His disciples who, when suffering abuse, to “endure unto the end” for in so doing, they would imitate their Master's perfect, loving example.

1 Peter 2:21-23

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: (23) Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:”

So whatever the meaning of Christ's words in instructing the disciples to “buy a sword,” it can be safely accepted that Christ never intended “the sword” to be purchased with the intent of causing violence or threat to any human being. It has also been clearly presented from Christ's teachings, that He never advocated His disciples to employ **self-defence** as a substitute for placing their trust in **God's defence**.

#19 - Thou Shalt Surely Kill - (Deuteronomy 13:6-13)

“If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; (7) Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; (8) Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: (9) But **thou shalt surely kill him**; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. (10) And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

Objection: *This passage is a direct command from Moses to destroy idolaters. The instructions are explicit. Moses spoke with God face to face. There can be no doubt that God gave Moses this direct instruction to destroy all idolaters, either inside the Israelite camp or in the Promised Land.*

Answer:

In the passage from Deuteronomy 13, it appears that **Moses** received his instructions to exterminate idolaters from God. This is strange, for in 1 Samuel 28:18-19, **Satan** also credits **God** for handing over the Israelites into the hands of the idolatrous Philistines.

1 Samuel 28:18-19 (**Satan speaking, disguised as Samuel's "spirit"**)

*“Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, **nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.** (19) Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.”*

The Bible appears to claim that:

- **God** (through Moses) instructed the Israelites to actively destroy idolaters in Canaan;
- **God** permitted Satan's followers, the Philistine idolaters to destroy the Israelite idolaters (their leader, King Saul attended a séance);
- **Satan** led the Philistines to murder the Israelites.

Satan (disguised as Samuel) claimed that:

- the kingdom was being “rent” from Saul because **God was “fiercely wrath”** with him for not totally exterminating the Amalekites;
- God's fierce wrath needed to be vented by the destruction of many Israelites in an active, aggressive, blood-thirsty war with the idolatrous Philistines.

Should Satan's words be believed?

Jesus said that Satan is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:44

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

Satan's lies beg the question – Are the characters of God and Satan so similar that both commit the same destructive work of killing human beings? Jesus warned against such confused reasoning.

Matthew 12:26 (Jesus asked)

“And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?”

Mark 3:26

“And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.”

Do Christ and Satan do the same destructive work? No!

John 18:36

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

Christ said His kingdom is not of this world. If it was, His servants WOULD fight – if they were worldly and carnal (as was Peter when he sliced off the priest's servant's ear)– but the only fight that Christ's converted servants are to be lawfully engaged in, is the fight of self surrender to God's spirit.

1Timothy 6:12

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

Ephesians 6:11-13

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Revelation 2:24;12:9

“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, **and which have not known the depths of Satan**, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden..... 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.”

Just as Jesus said the disciples could not bear to learn many more truths at that time (John 16:12), so also, humanity is often ignorant of the depths of Satan's evil ways.

Review and Herald 22 April, 1862, p 10

“Our efforts must be earnest and persevering to resist the attacks of Satan. He employs his strength and skill in trying to turn us out of the right way. **He watches our going out and coming in, and intends to hurt or destroy us.** He works most successfully in darkness, **injuring those who are ignorant of his devices.** **He could not gain advantage if his method of attack was understood.**”

Does God instruct sinful human beings to destroy other sinful human beings? Or, as Satan insinuated to Saul, “Is God **the only** destructive force?”

Shouldn't Christians question Satan's lies and examine the life of Jesus Christ for evidence of His (and the Father's) divine character?

Can we know if God is destructive to human beings? Yes, we can examine the life of Christ and see if His character was destructive.

Luke 9:54-56

“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? (55) But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. (56) For **the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.**”

John 10:5, 10.

(Jesus said) “The **thief** cometh not, but for to **steal, and to kill, and to destroy**.... **I** am come **that they might have life**, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

- According to Satan (disguised as Samuel), **God is the destroyer of heretics!**
- According to Jesus (through John) in Revelation 9:11, **Satan is the destroyer** (Destroyer is translated **Abaddon** in Hebrew and **Apollyon** in Greek).

Who will Christians believe?

Will they believe the testimony of the Son of God?

Hebrews 2:12

“Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”

The following section also appears in the Assassination of God's Character, Volume 1, but is inserted in Volume 2 as it appears appropriate to the context.

Thou Shalt Not Kill – or is it Thou Shalt Not Murder?

Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17

“Thou shalt not kill.”

Webster's Dictionary

“Kill: To kill does not necessarily mean any more than to deprive of life. A man may kill another by accident or in self-defense, without the imputation of guilt. To murder is to kill with malicious forethought and intention. To assassinate is to murder suddenly and by stealth. The sheriff may kill without murdering; the duelist murders, but does not assassinate his antagonist; the assassin kills and murders.”

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

Exodus 20:13: -THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

“Against murder and cruelty. [Thou shalt not kill.] This commandment, which is general, prohibits murder of every kind. 1. All actions by which the lives of our fellow creatures may be abridged. 2. All wars for extending empire, commerce, sanguinary laws, by the operation of which the lives of men may be taken away for offences of comparatively trifling demerit. 4. All bad dispositions which lead men to wish evil to, or meditate mischief against, one another; for, says the Scripture, He that hateth his brother in his heart is a murderer. 5. All want of charity to the helpless and distressed; for he who has it in his power to save the life of another by a timely application of succour, food, raiment, the person either falls or is

abridged on this account, is in the sight of God a murderer. He who neglects to save life is, according to an incontrovertible maxim in law, the SAME as he who takes it away. 6. All riot and excess, all drunkenness and gluttony, all inactivity and slothfulness, and all superstitious mortifications and self-denials, by which life may be destroyed or shortened; all these are point-blank sins against the sixth commandment."

Some theologians maintain that the command "Thou shalt not kill," would more accurately have been translated "thou shalt not murder."

The most common words in the Old Testament which are used to describe the taking of life are *harag* and *ratsach*. Killing is definitely forbidden in the 6th commandment, but under the Mosaic laws, the penalty of death was not applied in cases when the killing was accidental.

The Jewish civil laws certainly appear to condone the killing of criminals who committed certain crimes and such punishment is written into the Mosaic law. No punishments are given however in the moral law of God - the 10 commandments - which were spoken by God Himself.

God's commandment forbids killing, not only murder. If God's law doesn't include accidental killing, then it must condone it as a holy act, which of course, it is not. Accidental killing is a result of living in a sinful world, not a perfect world. God's commandment recognises that we are not living in a perfect world, however it still outlines right from wrong actions. In doing so, the sixth commandment forbids the taking of life for any reason - and the Hebrew words includes accidental killing and intentional murder.

The 'no taking of life under any circumstances' principle, demonstrates to a selfish world, just what love is. God is love and God is life. The 'no killing' principle expectedly harmonises with the words of Jesus. Jesus said that 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:12,13). 'Friends' includes our enemies, just as Jesus demonstrated on the cross when He gave His life for His enemies (Matthew 5:44).

If the greatest love is demonstrated by giving up our own lives in order to preserve the life of our enemies, then what is the opposite? What is the greatest sin? What is the greatest selfishness? To protect our own lives, at the expense of the lives of others. (ie. The enemy must die so that we can preserve our own life. Such action is considered 'legal' and it is called 'self defence.' It is certainly defending SELF - at the cost of another's life).

Paul Phillip Levertoff is best known to the modern world as the Jewish believer in Jesus (JBJ) who helped translate the Zohar into English for Soncino Press, a leading publisher of Judaica. Less well known about Levertoff, as we will see, is the fact that he was a major pioneer in the Hebrew Christian movement of his time. Paul Levertoff was raised in a Hebrew school and by his teenage years, he was attending the Volozhin Yeshiva. At this Lithuanian Jewish seminary, Levertoff received an exemplary rabbinic education. Later, he became a believer in Jesus and has done much translation from Hebrew into English, German and Russian. His position on the 6th commandment is as follows:

*"hom'-i-sid (rotseach): Hebrew has no word for killing or murder; rotseach (ratsach) is the word for manslayer. The Greek for murder is phonos. Homicide was every conscious violent action against a human being with the immediate result of death. It was always to be punished by death, being considered a crime against the image of God. **Killing is definitely forbidden in the sixth commandment (Ge 9:5 f; Ex 20:13; 21:12; Le 24:17,21; Nu 35:16-21; De 19:11-13). The penalty of death was not inflicted when the killing was***

unintentional or unpremeditated (Ex 21:13; Nu 35:22-25; Jos 20:3-5; compare Mishna, Makkoth, xi. 5). Cities of Refuge were founded to which the manslayer could escape from the "avenger of blood." There he had to abide till after the death of the officiating high priest. If he left the city before that event, the avenger who should kill him was free from punishment (Ex 21:13; Nu 35:10-15,25-28,32; De 19:1-13; Jos 20:2). See CITIES OF REFUGE. Killing a thief who broke in during the night was not accounted murder (Ex 22:2). Unintentional killing of the pregnant woman in a fray was punished according to the lexicon talionis, i.e. the husband of the woman killed could kill the wife of the man who committed the offense without being punished (Ex 21:22 f). This was not usually carried out, but it gave the judge a standard by which to fine the offender. If a man failed to build a battlement to his house, and anyone fell over and was killed, blood-guiltiness came upon that man's house (Dr 22:8). He who killed a thief in the daytime was guilty in the same way (Ex 22:3; compare the King James Version). Where a body was found, but the murderer was unknown, the elders of the city nearest to the place where it was found were ordered by a prescribed ceremony to declare that they were not guilty of neglecting their duties, and were therefore innocent of the man's blood (Dr 21:1-9). Two witnesses were necessary for a conviction of murder (Nu 35:30). If a slave died under chastisement, the master was to be punished according to the principle that "he that smiteth a man, so that he dieth, shall surely be put to death" (Ex 21:20; compare Ex 21:12). According to the rabbis the master was to be killed by the sword. Since in this passage the phrase "he shall die" is not used, some have supposed that punishment by death is not indicated. If the slave punished by the master died after one or two days, the master was not liable to punishment (Ex 21:21). Because of the words, "for he is his money," the rabbis held that non-Israelite slaves were meant. In ancient times the avenger of blood was himself to be the executioner of the murderer (Nu 35:19,21). According to Sanhedhrin 9:1 the murderer was to be beheaded. Nothing is said in the law about suicide." <http://www.messianicart.com/davar/articles/levertoff.pdf>

Jesus Himself explained that the commandment against killing includes being angry or even withholding help from another (Matt 5:21,22). If this is the case, then the problem remains: - how could the Israelites, supposedly under God's express direction, kill (execute) their fellow human beings? **Jesus** specified that "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" John 15:13. If that is the definition of the greatest love, surely murder – taking life in any of its forms – is the opposite of love. Jesus also emphasised that His followers would be empowered to keep all the commandments which were summarised in two commandments, one of which is "the second great commandment, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Luke 10:27). Jesus also gave humanity a fail-safe principle which assisted them to be able to discern good from evil. He said, "*Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets*" (Matthew 7:12).

A converted, loving and selfless Christian would rather lay down his life for the person on "death row" as did the Lord Jesus Himself, rather than take life.

(Consider the stand taken by Seventh-day Adventist Christian, Private Desmond Doss. He refused to carry a weapon or to take life at any time, while tending to the wounded repeatedly under heavy fire, despite being stationed in “the hell-hole of the Pacific” during the Second World War. Private Doss repeatedly demonstrated his willingness to lay down his life for his friends and for “the enemy” also (see www.desmondoss.com)

Michael Tonn, was given an honourable discharge from the US Navy based on his application as a conscientious objector. Mr Tonn, a Roman Catholic mentions that although the Catholic church states there is a thing called a ‘just’ war, he does not agree with that theology. He notes the reasons for his stance as a conscientious objector:

1. the fifth (sic) commandment states ‘thou shalt not kill’;
2. Jesus stated love thy neighbour as thyself; and
3. “my own moral and ethical stance”.

Of particular note is Mr Tonn’s statement,

“...my own moral and ethical stance, because the Catholic Church does allow for a just war, but I don’t. I don’t agree with that statement. I don’t believe in the Catechism that far. I still think it’s wrong to kill people in any case.... Look at the facts. There’s more than one side to this whole thing... On one hand we’ve got, ‘Well, we’re liberating the people.’ I guess the peacemakers would say, ‘Oh, they’re just did it for the oil.’ Either way, whatever motivation you have behind it, it’s still war. It’s still killing people. It’s still invading a country. It’s still causing massive suffering for some cause. It’s still the action of it that I disagree with.... I’ve heard him (President George Bush) a few times, say ‘Freedom and democracy,’ but, freedom and democracy is not implemented by, through gunpoint, through killing people, through bombing other countries...That doesn’t make anyone free. We’re only going to be more victims – victims of more terrorism by the very acts that our government and our military does today, maybe not in five years, but it maybe in ten or fifteen years..., the next generation our children are the ones who are going to feel it. I’m sure that’s why we’re the victims of it in the first place because of things done 10 or 15 years ago. You just kind of ask him to stop the cycle I guess.” The video of this interview with Mr Tonn is available at:

http://docuary.oftheworld.tv/details.php?media_id=221&search_term=

Christ's Object Lessons p 314

“He who becomes a partaker of the divine nature will be in harmony with God's great standard of righteousness, His holy law. This is the rule by which God measures the actions of men. This will be the test of character in the judgment. There are many who claim that by the death of Christ the law was abrogated; but in this they contradict Christ's own words, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. . . . Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." Matt. 5:17, 18. It was to atone for man's transgression of the law that Christ laid down His life. Could the law have been changed or set aside, then Christ need not have died. By His life on earth He honored the law of God. By His death He established it. He gave His life as a sacrifice, not to destroy God's law, not to create a lower standard, but that justice might be maintained, that the law might be shown to be immutable, that it might stand fast forever. Satan had claimed that it was impossible for man to obey God's commandments; and in our own strength it is true that we cannot obey them. But Christ came in the form of humanity, and by His perfect obedience He proved that humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God's precepts.”

#20 - God Has a Right to Destroy Heretics – EGW (4 Spiritual Gifts p 5)

Objection:

“Moses commanded the men of war to destroy the women and male children. Balaam had sold the children of Israel for a reward, and he perished with the people whose favor he had obtained at the sacrifice of twenty-four thousand of the Israelites. The Lord is regarded as cruel by many in requiring his people to make war with other nations. They say that it is contrary to his benevolent character. But he who made the world, and formed man to dwell upon the earth, has unlimited control over all the works of his hands, and it is his right to do as he pleases, and what he pleases with the work of his hands. Man has no right to say to his Maker, Why doest thou thus? There is no injustice in his character. He is the Ruler of the world, and a large portion of his subjects have rebelled against his authority, and have trampled upon his law. He has bestowed upon them liberal blessings, and surrounded them with everything needful, yet they have bowed to images of wood and stone, silver and gold, which their own hands have made. They teach their children that these are the gods that give them life and health, and make their lands fruitful, and give them riches and honor. They scorn the God of Israel. They despise his people, because their works are righteous “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt. They have done abominable works.” God has borne with them until they filled up the measure of their iniquity, and then he has brought upon them swift destruction. He has used his people as instruments of his wrath, to punish wicked nations, who have vexed them, and seduced them into idolatry.” (end quote) **Ellen White testifies that God has a right to order His people to destroy heretics. Are you rejecting the spirit of prophecy?”**

Answer:

Ellen White certainly was the “messenger of the Lord” and a true prophet. What she was shown **in vision** or **in a communication from God**, can be accepted as being direct truth from the Lord, however all other theological conclusions need to be weighed against the “law and the testimony of Jesus” (Isaiah 8:20). Regarding the above statements made by Ellen White, consider the vision she was “shown” on this subject. It appears immediately after the quote above. Did Ellen White conclude MORE than was given in the vision? It might appear that this is the case.

The Vision - 4 Spiritual Gifts p 50

“A family picture was presented before me. A part of the children seem anxious to learn and obey the requirements of the father, while the others trample upon his authority, and seem to exult in showing contempt of his family government. They share the benefits of their father’s house, and are constantly receiving of his bounty. They are wholly dependent upon him for all they receive, yet are not grateful, but conduct themselves proudly, as though all the favors they received of their indulgent parent were supplied by themselves. The father notices all the disrespectful acts of his disobedient, ungrateful children, yet he bears with them. (51) At length, these rebellious children go still further, and seek to influence and lead to rebellion those members of their father’s family who have hitherto been faithful. Then all the dignity and authority of the father is called into action, and he expels from his house the rebellious children, who have not only abused his love and blessings themselves, but tried to subvert the remaining few who had submitted to the wise and judicious laws of their father’s household. For the sake of the few who are loyal, whose happiness was exposed to the seditious influence of the rebellious members of his household, he separates from his family his undutiful children, while at the same time he labors to bring closer to himself the remaining faithful and loyal ones”.

(continued over page).

(Ellen White, continued)

“All would honor the wise and just course of such a parent, in punishing most severely his undutiful, rebellious children. God has dealt thus with his children. But man, in his blindness, will overlook the abominations of the ungodly, and pass by unnoticed the continual ingratitude and rebellion, and heaven-daring sins of those who trample upon God's law and defy his authority. They do not stop here, but exult in subverting his people, and influencing them by their wives to transgress, and show open contempt for the wise requirements of Jehovah.” (52) Some can see only the destruction of God's enemies, which looks to them unmerciful and severe. They do not look upon the other side. But let everlasting thanks be given, that impulsive, changeable man, with all his boasted benevolence, is not the disposer and controller of events. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel” (unquote).

Ellen White was **not** shown in vision that the Father ordered the “good” children to kill the “bad” children. Ellen White **was** shown that the Father forsook, or “turned His back” on the “bad” rebellious children and left them to their own devices. Also, the vision reveals that the Father did this in order to protect the “good” children who were endeavouring to be obedient to the Father's law. The Father was **not** encouraging the “good” children to break His law which stated, “Thou shalt not kill.” The “good” children were shown to be protected by the “casting out” of the “bad” children – not by killing them. What does casting out involve? **“He separates from his family his undutiful children.”** God removes His “wings of protection” (Psalm 91:4) from the rebellious children and with weeping, commands His angels, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” (Hosea 4:17). As in the case of Ephraim, God's protection is withdrawn. Without divine protection, enemies are able to attack, murder and destroy under the command of the devil. The Father agonises as did Jesus as He wept over Jerusalem, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate”(Matthew 23:37,38). The Father cries, “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for Why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 18:31).”As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11)

Should our faith be placed in any man or woman? No. “Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ” (Matthew 23:10).

Our faith is established in Jesus' testimony – in His life. Christ's life aligns with the law of God perfectly. There is a safeguard against trusting in human beings for direction in spiritual matters. If they speak not according to the law and to the testimony, it is because there is no light in them (Isaiah 8:20).

Is it possible that Ellen White might have been unaware that God's “wrath” is His “turning away” from those who continually reject His spirit? If so, one might question why God did not tell Ellen White that she was mistaken in this aspect of interpreting the vision. Perhaps, God did not explain some matters to Ellen White because, as Jesus said to His disciples, the church “could not bear them” at that stage.

John 16:12

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”

Jesus did not say that the disciples were not inspired or converted or not genuine, nor in receipt of the gifts of the spirit of God. In fact the disciples were already “healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, casting out devils” (Matthew 10:8; Luke 10:17). He stated that they could not bear any more truth just at that particular time. God does not overwhelm us with too much truth all at once. He leads His sheep gently (Isaiah 40:11).

However, the 144, 000 WILL reflect God's character PERFECTLY. There is much to learn about the character of God and we learn these lessons through His Son.

John 16:13

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:”

#21 - Korah's Death

Objection:

*Concerning the destruction of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, from Patriarchs and Prophets p 401, 4, Ellen White states: "Overwhelming evidence had been given that they were wrong, and that Moses was right. The signal manifestation of **God's power** had removed all uncertainty.... The same thing was done by the people, who the day after the destruction of Korah and his company came to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'Ye have killed the people of the Lord.' Notwithstanding they had had the most convincing evidence of God's displeasure at their course, in the destruction of the men who had deceived them, they dared to attribute His judgments to Satan." **You appear to be saying that Satan destroyed Korah and his company, whereas the prophet says God destroyed them.***

Answer:

God destroyed Korah, Dathan and Abiram (and the 250 princes and some of the congregation) only in the sense that He withdrew His presence and protection and Satan was able to rush in and destroy the defenceless rebels. Consider the situation as follows:

Korah and his peers died after refusing to believe the divine evidence given to them personally, that Moses was chosen as leader of the Israelite people.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p 396

"Korah and his fellow conspirators were men who had been favored with special manifestations of God's power and greatness. They were of the number who went up with Moses into the mount and beheld the divine glory."

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram ascended the mountain with the seventy leaders and he saw the glorious divine light of Christ. Even with this undeniable evidence, Korah still dared to suggest that it was not God who appointed Moses as leader, but Satan.

Ellen White, 3 Testimonies for the Church, p 346, 348

"He (Korah) claimed that God had opened the matter to him and laid upon him the burden of changing the government of Israel just before it was too late. He stated that the congregation were not at fault; they were righteous; that this great cry about the murmuring of the congregation bringing upon them the wrath of God was all a mistake; and that the people only wanted to have their rights; they wanted individual independence.... And they gave themselves up to discontent until **they really deceived themselves and thought that Moses and Aaron had placed themselves in the position which they occupied in Israel**.... Moses told them that Aaron had assumed no office of himself, that God had placed him in the sacred office.... They said that it was Moses who had told them that they could not go into the land, and that the Lord had not thus said."

Korah accused Moses of authorising his own leadership— and accused him of being tyrannical (insinuating that he was controlled by the devil). Of course this was not the case. It was God Who declared that Moses was the leader and that Aaron's priesthood was ordained by divine instruction. This was the evidenced testimony of the spirit of God that the rebels denied. It was then that God separated the people and withdrew His protection from the rebels. This action is in harmony with other demonstrations of the "wrath of God."

Korah claimed that God had not judged him and his friends as evil doers. The rebels also claimed that God's judgment of Moses and Aaron (as being His leaders), wasn't from God but from Satan.

After being privileged to be on the mountain with God and to see His divine leading in setting apart Moses and Aaron, Korah rejected the divine evidence and continued to rebel against God's expressed order of organisation. After hardening his heart repeatedly, God left him to his own choice. Korah was judged guilty. That was the judgement of God. Then God withdrew His protection. With divine protection removed, Satan rushed in - to do the destroying - and again, God got the blame. The people who witnessed all the destruction caused as God removed His protection from Korah, also sinned in not accepting that their leaders were divinely ordained and that Korah and his cohorts were killed because of continued disobedience to God.

The day after Korah and the 250 princes were destroyed it was evident that Korah's rebellious sentiments had been conveyed to and accepted by the congregation also.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p 404

"The same thing was done by the people, who the day after the destruction of Korah and his company came to Moses and Aaron, saying, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." Notwithstanding they had had the most convincing evidence of God's displeasure at their course, in the destruction of the men who had deceived them, they dared to attribute His judgments to Satan, declaring that through the power of the evil one, Moses and Aaron had caused the death of good and holy men. It was this act that sealed their doom. They had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, a sin by which man's heart is effectually hardened against the influence of divine grace.... It is through the agency of the Holy Spirit that God communicated with man; and those who deliberately reject this agency as satanic, have cut off the channel of communication between the soul and Heaven."

The people declared that Moses and Aaron served Satan. They accused Moses and Aaron of causing the death of men whom the people still declared were innocent and "good and holy men." The people rejected the judgment of God, despite knowing that Moses and Aaron had been especially selected by God - as they witnessed in the mountain when they saw the divine light and Moses go into the light. These are the judgments of God that they rejected.,

But, even though He was being rejected, Christ still wanted to save the rebels from the destroying angel. Or perhaps it was volcanic or earthquake activity which God knew was imminent. God's action was protective, not destructive.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p 401

"Jesus, the Angel who went before the Hebrews, sought to save them from destruction. Forgiveness was lingering for them. The judgment of God had come very near, and appealed to them to repent. A special, irresistible interference from heaven had arrested their rebellion. Now, if they would respond to the interposition of God's providence, they might be saved. But while they fled from the judgments, through fear of destruction, their rebellion was not cured. They returned to their tents that night terrified, but not repentant."

The Bible states that the earth swallowed up Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Isn't it possible that Satan caused these evil men's destruction after God removed His protection? Isn't it possible that volcanic activity erupted since there were no holy angels any longer present to 'hold' the winds of destruction?

The Son of God tenderly pleaded with the rebellious people, but they would not repent. In response to their reconfirmed rebellion and rejection of Him, Christ once again reluctantly withdrew His protective presence from the rebellious people.

Only in the sense of withdrawing His protection was Christ responsible for their destruction, for in withdrawing His presence, the rebels were left unprotected from Satan.

Their probation was over. The rebels chose to cling to their cherished their sins. Satan then became their master and he controlled and destroyed them.

How the Son of God must have wept, that these people died, as He later cried over unrepentant Jerusalem!

If this scenario seems far-fetched, please consider the situation explained by Ellen White concerning Jesus' experience of enduring the Father's wrath, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

EG White, Sufferings of Christ, p 17, 18

“Could mortals view the amazement and sorrow of the angels as they watched in silent grief the Father separating His beams of light, love and glory, from his Son, they would better understand how offensive is sin in His sight. As the Son of God in the Garden of Gethsemane bowed in the attitude of prayer, the agony of his spirit forced from His pores sweat like great drops of blood. It was here that the horror of great darkness surrounded Him. The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man's stead, as a transgressor of His Father's law. Here was the scene of temptation. **The divine light of God was receding from His vision,** and **He was passing into the hands of the powers of darkness.** In the agony of His soul He lay prostrate on the cold earth. **He was realizing His Father's frown.** The cup of suffering Christ had taken from the lips of guilty man, and proposed to drink it Himself, and, in its place, give to man the cup of blessing. **The wrath that would have fallen upon man, was now falling upon Christ.**”

From the above quote, it is explained by EG White that **the wrath of the Father is called “the Father's frown.” It is described as the separating of His light, love and glory. When the Father withdraws His spirit (light, love and glory) then Satan and his demons – the powers of darkness - rush in and bring horror and destruction.**

Ellen White here states that the Father turned away from His Son and Satan rushed in to destroy Him.

If Ellen White's definition and understanding of the Father's wrath is rejected, there is no other conclusion remaining than to suppose that the Father killed His Son, or that the Son committed suicide. Both these options accuse Father and Son of breaking Their own commandments - “thou shalt not kill.”

While on the cross, the Son of God laid down His immortal life. Christ refused to “borrow” life from His divinity. In this way, no-one could take His immortal life from Him. However, Satan inflicted torture to ensure the death of Christ's mortal, human life. To this murderous action, Christ voluntarily submitted.

Just as the wrath of God fell on Jesus (on behalf of guilty humanity) in the Garden of Gethsemane, the same divine wrath fell on guilty Korah and the other Israelite rebels. **When the Father withdraws His spirit (light, love and glory) then Satan and his demons – the powers of darkness - rush in and bring horror and destruction.**

#22 - The Lord Shall Judge His People – Deuteronomy 32:20-36

Objection: “*For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.*” In 1 Testimonies for the Church, p 355-386, Ellen White applies Deuteronomy 32:36 as God's punishment on wicked people. The result was the Civil War. Therefore, God must approve of warfare to get rid of, or to punish the wicked.

Answer:

There are many Old Testament passages which **appear** to teach that God is personally going to destroy idolaters, even enlisting other human beings to perform the murderous task on His behalf. Many major religions expound doctrines based on the premise that God destroys His enemies - heretics, by asking “the righteous” people to commit murder. It seems strange that when “God” commands someone to murder a heretic, religions which accept this as doctrine, never describe the act as murder. Some well-known religions include the Roman Catholic and Islamic religions whose sacred traditions and holy books teach that God commands His people to destroy sinners and heretics.

Two examples follow:

The Directorium Inquisitorum (Handbook of the Spanish Inquisition) states:

*“He is a heretic who does not believe what the Roman Hierarchy teaches.... A heretic merits the pains of fire.... By the Gospel, the canons, civil law, and custom, heretics must be burned...**Inquisitors enjoy the benefits of a plenary indulgence [a full papal forgiveness of sin] at all times in life, and in death.**”*
<http://www.rulersofevil.com/chap8.html> Inquistoium Dictorum 1376.

Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi (Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University)

*“Rather, the issue is the teachings of the Koran which call for the suppression and extermination of those who practice a different religion.....“By teaching that **those who die fighting for the cause of Allah will have their sins forgiven and are admitted into the pleasure of Paradise,** the Koran has inspired Muslims throughout the centuries to fight unto death for the cause of Allah.”*
www.keithhunt.com/Islam.html

Ellen White states that “***Force is the last resort of every false religion***” (SDA 7 Bible Commentary p 976 ; ST 6 May, 1897).

When carefully examined and compared with the life of Jesus Christ, the judgment promised in Deut 32:36 and in similar passages in the Bible, such as Jeremiah 11, can be understood as ***a desperate safety warning from a loving God*** - to quickly return to Him.

Following is Bible Commentator Adam Clarke's notes on those verses which reveal from the Hebrew text the understanding that God's wrath is demonstrated by His “turning away” or when He “changes His conduct toward them” (Green's Literal Version of the same Bible texts, follow the commentary).

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

Deuteronomy 32:36:

Verse 36. ***The Lord shall judge his people***] He has an absolute right over them as their *Creator*, and authority to punish them for their rebellions as their *Sovereign*; yet he will ***repent himself-he will change his manner of conduct towards them, when he seeth that their power is gone***-when they are entirely subjugated by their adversaries, so that their

political power is entirely destroyed; and there is *none shut up or left*-not one strong place untaken, and not one family left, all being carried into captivity, or scattered into strange lands. Or, he will *do justice* to his people, and *avenge* them of their adversaries; see Deuteronomy 32:35.

Green's Literal Translation

Deuteronomy 32:20-35

20 "And **He said, I will hide My face from them; I will see what their end will be** ; for they *are* a perverse generation, sons in whom *is* no faithfulness. **21**They made Me jealous with a no-god; **they made Me angry** by their vanities; and I shall make them jealous by a no-people; by a foolish nation I shall make them angry. **22****For a fire has been kindled in My anger, and it burns to the lowest Sheol, and consumes the earth and its produce; and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.** **23**I will heap evils on them; I will use up My arrows on them. **24**I will send on them exhaustion by famine, and depletion by burning heat, and bitter destruction, and the teeth of beasts, with the venom of crawling things of the dust. **25**The sword shall bereave from without, and terror from within, both the young man and the virgin, the suckling with the man of gray hairs. **26**I said, I will dash them to pieces; I will make their memory cease from among men; **27** *saying* , Were it not the provocation of an enemy I feared, that their foes should judge amiss, that they might not say, Our hand *is* high, and Jehovah has not done all this. **28**For they *are* a nation void of counsel, and no understanding *is* in them. **29**If they were wise, they would understand this; they would consider their latter end. **30**How could one chase a thousand, and two put a myriad to flight, if *it were* not their Rock that sold them, and Jehovah had shut them up? **31**For their rock *is* not our Rock, even our enemies being judges. **32**For their vine *is* of the vine of Sodom, and their grapes of the fields of Gomorrah, grapes of gall; they *have* bitter clusters. **33**Their wine *is* the venom of serpents, and the cruel venom of asps. **34** *Is it* not stored up with Me, sealed in My treasures? **35**Mine *are* vengeance and recompense, At the due time--doth their foot slide; For near is a day of their calamity, And haste do things prepared for them."

Despite the intense language, closer study reveals that God did not inflict evil on anyone. Evil resulted as a sad consequence of people who made a choice to reject God's spirit and protection, thus leaving themselves exposed to satanic attacks. Take for example, the prophesied desolation of Jerusalem which God had threatened for centuries.

Divine Fury on Jerusalem

(This section concerning Jerusalem is repeated from an earlier section for convenience)

Jeremiah 6:8

"Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited."

Jeremiah 9:11

"And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant."

Jeremiah 44:6

"Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day."

Ezekiel 12:19,20

“And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, **because of the violence of all them that dwell therein** (20) And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.”

In fact, Jeremiah paints a furious picture in Jeremiah 11:1-14. Jeremiah was instructed to write dire warnings of judgments to come upon idolaters in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 11:1-14

The prophet Jeremiah revealed that the Israelites were wicked from the time they were delivered from Egyptian captivity. They served “other gods.” Jeremiah captures the truth that **the wrath of God is a ”turning away” from His people** and that “cursings” (evil) is a “natural” consequence that follows the removal of God's blessings – His spirit and protection.

Jeremiah 11:1-14

“The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, (2) Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; (3) And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; **Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant**, (4) Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God: (5) That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD. (6) Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. (7) For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. (8) Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: **therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant**, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not. (9) And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (10) **They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them:** the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers. (11) **Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.** (12) Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. (13) For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal. (14) **Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.**”

From the foregoing Old Testament verses, it certainly appears convincing that God is so angry with Jerusalem that **He is going to personally destroy the city** and the land of Judah, leaving the entire area desolate. However, many years later, as **Jesus weeps over Jerusalem**, **He** demonstrates **the reality** of how rejection affects His Father.

Matthew 23:37

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”

Ellen White states that Christ's reaction after being rejected by first century Jerusalem, was of the same character as that suffered by the Old Testament Christ, Who was reluctant to remove His presence from Old Jerusalem.

Desire of Ages, 1989, p 829

“The holy Shekinah, in departing from the first temple, had stood upon the eastern mountain, as if loath to forsake the chosen city; so Christ stood upon Olivet, with yearning heart overlooking Jerusalem.”

Furthermore, though God states unequivocally that HE will destroy Jerusalem and Judah, the prophesied siege of Jerusalem and its destruction was accomplished by the Roman army, under Titus – a pagan.

Great Controversy, p 33

“Blood flowed down the temple steps like water. Thousands upon thousands of Jews perished. Above the sound of battle, voices were heard shouting: "Ichabod!"--the glory is departed.”

General Conference Daily Bulletins, 7 March, 1899 p 5 (written 2 August, 1895)

“Their beautiful temple was in ruins, and 'Ichabod, Ichabod, the glory is departed from Israel,' was heard in songs of lamentation.... The Lord permitted them to be broken up until they should find in him their center of attraction.”

Isaiah 51:17:

“Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, that hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of His fury; thou hast drunken the beaker, even the cup of staggering, and drained it.”

Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem would drink the full wine from the cup of God's fury. Jerusalem did indeed drink of that cup, but was it God who destroyed Jerusalem? No. **It was the Roman armies that did the destructive deed.**

Ellen White states very clearly that God performed no destructive action toward Jerusalem, but that the Bible credits God with that action and “it is thus that the deceiver, Satan seeks to conceal his own work.”

Great Controversy, p 35-36

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. p 36 We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy.”
(continued)

(Great Controversy continued)

“It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. 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.**

Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. 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.”

If we credit God with destroying Jerusalem, we are helping to cover Satan's tracks.

#23 - To Me Belongeth Vengeance and Recompense - Deuteronomy 32:35

Deuteronomy 32:35 "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense."

Objection: *This verse appears to state that God's character permits Him to harbour anger and that He will eventually "pay back" that anger and call it justice. This appears to harmonise with the Mosaic law.*

Exodus 21:23-25

"And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, (24) Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, (25) Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

Answer:

If God ever acted in an unloving way, then He would change His character, which He says He will not do (Mal 3:6; Jam 1:17; Heb 13:8). To do so would mean that God would break His own commandments, for love is the fulfilment of the law of God. Love is defined by God's character. The 10 commandments educate humanity how to love in God's government. Therefore, God's vengeance and recompense are undoubtedly loving, law-abiding actions of a holy and supremely loving God.

If this premise is correct, we can safely assume that no divine act has ever been performed which was motivated from fury or wrath – as understood by fallen humanity – for these character traits stem from sinful, selfish motives. So God's vengeance and recompense must be quite different from the usual human understandings.

Dictionary Definitions:

- **Thayer's Greek Lexicon**

VENGEANCE# 1557 εκδικησις ekdikesis *ek-dik'-ay-sis* **from <1556>**; nf
1) a revenging, vengeance, punishment in 2Co 7:11 --meeting out of justice; **doing justice to all parties**. See Lu 18:3, 21:22. The word also has the **sense of acquittal and carries the sense of vindication**. (Vincent III, p. 329))

from #1556 to protect, defend, one person from another

- Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1913) defines **VENGEANCE** as follows:

Vengeance /Venge´ancel (?), *n.* [F. *vengeance*, fr. *venger* to avenge, L. *vindicare* to lay claim to, **defend**, avenge, fr. *vindex* a claimant, **defender**, avenger, the first part of which is of uncertain origin, and the last part akin to *dicere* to say. See Diction, and cf. Avenge, Revenge, Vindicate.] **1.** Punishment inflicted in return for an injury or an offense; retribution; -- often, in a bad sense, passionate or unrestrained revenge.

- Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1913) defines **RECOMPENSE** as follows:

Recompense /Rec´om·pense/ (rĕk´ōm·pĕns), *v. t.* [*imp.* & *p. p.* Recompensed (-p?nst); *p. pr.* & *vb. n.* Recompensing (-p?n`s?ng).] [F. *récompenser*, LL. *recompensare*, fr.L. pref. *re-* re- + *compensare* to compensate. See Compensate.] **1. To render an equivalent to, for service, loss, etc.; to requite; to remunerate; to compensate. 2. To return an equivalent for; to give compensation for; to atone for; to pay for. 3. To give in return; to pay back; to pay, as something earned or deserved. [R.]**

- **God's vengeance is His defensive protection of His people.**
- **God recompenses (repays) evil when He does not interfere to prevent the wicked receiving in their bodies, the reward which they have earned – death.**

Romans 6:23

“The wages of sin is death.”

At the final destruction, God defends the redeemed saints from the final attack of the wicked who murderously compass the New Jerusalem. Because of their effort to harm the saints, God moves to protect His people. This divines protection – the unveiled glory of God - causes the sin- which still “reigns in their mortal bodies” - to be destroyed (Romans 6:12).

This is a fiery reaction. In effect, the wicked self-combust.

Despite Satan’s lie to the contrary (Genesis 3:4), it is a proven that no-one can exist exist as a spirit entity separate from their body – as immortal spirits – so thus the wicked die an eternal death. The memory of them is forgotten i.e. their spirit – the record of their character – is destroyed or blotted out from the heavenly books (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

Those who have hated God –with a murderous hatred – have reaped the wages of their selfish indulgence. “All which hate me, love death” (Proverbs 8:36). Thus, unrepentant sinners reap the reward – in their bodies – for their sins.

Isaiah 22:14

“And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, **Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die**, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.”

James 1:13 -15

“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: (14) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of **his own lust**, and enticed. (15) **Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**”

1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 51-57

“So also [is] the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: (43) It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: (44) It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (51a) Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and **we shall be changed**. (53) For **this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality**. (54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, **then** shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (55) O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory? (56) **The sting of death [is] sin; and the strength of sin [is] the law**. (57) But thanks [be] to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Once again, God is innocent of any evil or violence. Everyone can witness the fact that it is sin – which brings death, just as God predicted in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:17).

#24 - My Fury Upheld Me - Isaiah 63:1-6

Verses 2-6 “I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for **I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments,** and I will stain all my raiment. (4)**For the day of vengeance is in mine heart,** and the year of my redeemed is come. (5) And I looked, and **there was none to help;** and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and **my fury^{12*} (righteousness) it upheld me** (6) And **I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury,** and I will **bring down their strength to the earth.”**

Objections:

These verses raise several issues.

- treading the winepress;
- alone, none to help;
- sprinkling the blood;
- day of vengeance;
- divine fury;
- tread the people down;
- make them drunk;
- bring down their strength.

Answers:

- **Treading the winepress.**

Christ is shown to “tread the winepress.” ‘Treading out the grapes’ is an expression that is used to describe “the utter destruction of a people” (John Wesley’s Notes on the Bible). Christ, as the second Adam, took upon Him, the entire human race. That race of humanity with its sinful flesh was conquered by the righteous life of Christ Jesus.

- **Alone, none to help**

Isaiah 59:16

“And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his **righteousness**, it sustained him.”

Christ suffered alone, resisted temptation alone. He alone lived a sinless life. There is only one Saviour, One Mediator and High Priest (1 Tim 2:5). Christ was tried, tested and tempted more than any other human being could be tested. His humanity was crushed and there was none to help Him – only His faith in His Father’s character made it possible for Christ to conquer sin. Christ’s righteousness upheld Him. It was the righteousness of Christ that brought salvation and upheld Him. This passage also employs strong sanctuary symbolism.

12 God’s fury is His righteousness - See Isaiah 59:16

- **Sprinkling the blood** –

Pagan sacrificial practices focused on “the life” being in the blood of a sacrificial human being or animal – both of which the Israelites sacrificed in their frequent apostasies. Curiously, in the Jewish sanctuary services, as in the pagan religions, the sacrificial blood also signified “the life.”

Leviticus 17:11

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

On the Jewish day of Atonement, the priest would take some sacrificial animal's blood into the most holy place. This blood or “life” was said to represent the sin of the Israelites. Some blood was applied to the mercy seat, but some blood stained the priest's garments.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p 355

“Then in his character of mediator the priest took the sins upon himself, and, leaving the sanctuary, he bore with him the burden of Israel's guilt.”

Review and Herald, 13 November, 1913, p11

“Still bearing humanity he ascended to heaven, triumphant and victorious. He has taken the blood of the atonement, sprinkled it upon the mercy-seat **and his own garments**, and blessed the people. Soon he will appear the second time to declare that there is no more sacrifice for sin.”

Review and Herald, 17 August, 1869, p 2

“God forbid that we should go down to death with the blood of souls upon our garments.”

Revelation refers to Isaiah 63:6 where Christ alone makes atonement for humanity's sin. His own righteousness – His white robe – became stained with blood as He bore the sins of others. Sinners lives depended on Christ developing a righteous character. The sins of others, Christ carried to His death.

- **Divine fury**

Proverbs 22:24, 25; 29:22

“Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a **furious man** thou shalt not go: (25) Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul. (29:22) “An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression. ” **Compare Isaiah 59:16 -and 63:5 - God's fury is actually His righteousness. God's fury is not like sinful human anger; God's fury is His righteousness!**

- **Day of vengeance** -

In determining the nature of God's “vengeance” it must be understood that His character certainly cannot be given the selfish traits of a furious man. And Isaiah assures his readers that God's character is not infected with selfishness as is humanity's nature! (see point above). By comparing Scriptures, it can be seen that God's vengeance is defined as His protection, which He gives to His people to save them from their sins and from their enemies' attacks (Matthew 1:21; Isaiah 63:6, see objection previous section “To Me Belongeth Vengeance and Recompense” - Deuteronomy 32:35).

- **Tread the people down (figuratively - reject the nation)**

The Jewish nation rejected Christ and Christ prophesied that they would be “trodden down by the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). So at the end of the world, Christ prophesied that the wicked would be eventually destroyed - trodden down - also.

- **Make them drunk** (the people become confused; unable to detect right from wrong; they drink the wine of Babylon; sent a strong delusion); When the truth about Jesus Christ is rejected, people do not retain the ability to distinguish right from wrong. They receive a “strong delusion” and “believe a lie.” At the end of the world, “The nations are deceived (Revelation 18:23).
- **Bring down their strength** (they will be undefended, helpless).

By His righteousness, Christ broke down all the devil's strongholds by which he had maintained control of humanity (Psalm 89:40; Micah 5:11; 2 Cor 10:4,5). Similarly in the judgment, there will be no power able to stand against Christ's kingdom (1 Cor 15:27, 28). **Far from being the expression of an angry God, these texts reveal the anguish that Jesus endured in His battle to secure salvation for the human race.**

#25 - Samson a Suicide Killer – David a Warlord?

Objection 1:

According to the Book of Judges, Samson took out over three thousand people at his death. He was a prisoner, and he had strayed from God. Was he a suicide killer? (from Walter Veith's Creation Message Board)

Objection 2: *David was a man after God's own heart. Surely all his killings were divinely ordained.*

Answer 1: How do Christians know whether a certain act is sinful? By knowing the law of God. Without the law of God as their guide, humanity can not tell "right" from "wrong" (Romans 7:7,8).

1 John 3:4

"Sin is the transgression of the law.

Was Samson a suicide killer? Let's examine the evidence.

Samson was guilty of breaking the 10 commandments. He broke the 1st commandment and his actions revealed that he preferred to serve his own lusts than God. He certainly took the "name of the Lord in vain." He broke the 5th commandment and failed to honour his father and mother in his choice of a wife. He broke the 7th commandment and committed adultery on more than one occasion. He broke the 6th commandment and killed many people. No doubt he was guilty of breaking many commandments. The question of Samson's death really leads to an interesting discussion.

Can a person break God's 10 commandments "in a holy way?" Can someone commit adultery when it is really "not" adultery? Can adultery be divinely legalised under some circumstances? The Israelites apparently thought so, claiming that Moses "legalised" it and called it marriage (Deut 21:10-14; Numbers 31; Deut 24:1), but it was actually because of their sinful hearts that these laws were given (Matt 19:8). The laws were given to protect abandoned women, not to give men licence to "put away their wives" in order to commit adultery with another woman in a new "marriage." Jesus expanded the law; He didn't condone the breaking of it. He taught that adultery included more than a physical act - it was a spiritual/mind problem (Matt 5:28).

This leads us to the question: if someone can't commit adultery without it being a sin, can they kill someone else without it being a sin?

When is it not a sin to commit adultery or to kill someone? Can the sinful action become divinely declared "legal" under any circumstances? Does the penalty for sin, the wages of sin - death - (Rom 6:23) ever **not** apply when person breaks the commandments?

In short, when is a sin, not a sin? The popular answer is: When God commands you to sin and then gives you an indulgence to neutralise the punishment of that sin. You sin, but you don't receive the death penalty. Or you break a commandment, but God declares it not to be a sin in that special instance.

But this theology is not consistent with what Jesus said. It's not what Paul said. People who have been forgiven, cannot wilfully and knowingly ("legally") commit a sin without "earning the wages of sin – the death penalty" (Romans 6:23)

Hebrews 10:26

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. "But some people have been taught that God can command someone to break His laws and that's it's not a sin when God commands it. They have learned to believe in the doctrine of indulgences - that someone can sin without incurring the penalty of death for breaking God's specific commandments.

The doctrine of indulgences has an interesting history. It certainly existed in pagan religions, but became more well-known in 1376 in a document called "Dictorium Inquisitorum." This document later became the "handbook" for the inquisitioners to use to force "heretics" to confess during the Spanish Inquisition. An extract from this article reads: "He is a heretic who does not believe what the Roman Hierarchy teaches.... A heretic merits the pains of fire.... By the Gospel, the canons, civil law, and custom, heretics must be burned....Inquisitors enjoy the benefits of a plenary indulgence [a full papal forgiveness of sin] at all times in life, and in death." <http://www.rulersofevil.com/chap8.html>

Islamic theological material reveals that Allah, their God, teaches a similar command to kill heretics, and a "divine neutralising" of that sin. Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi (Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University) states: "By teaching that those who die fighting for the cause of Allah will have their sins forgiven and are admitted into the pleasure of Paradise, the Koran has inspired Muslims throughout the centuries to fight unto death for the cause of Allah." www.keithhunt.com/Islam.html

Also, according to Alberto Rivera, the evidence that the Roman Catholic Church considers it lawful to kill heretics is found in the letters printed upon the crucifix used in worship services. "The Bible tells us the words put on the cross of Christ at the crucifixion said: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" (John 19:19), but on the Roman Catholic crucifix, it reads: I.N.R.I. Webster's Dictionary says I.N.R.I. Means: Iesus Naarenus, Rex Iudaedrum. But in the Extreme Oath of the Jesuits, it has special meaning. In classical Latin, I.N.R.I means: 'Iustum, Necar, Reges, Impios.'..... Translated into English ... I.N.R.I....means, 'It is just to exterminate or annihilate impious or heretical kings, governments or rulers.'" Alberto Rivera cites the source, "The engineer Corps of Hell," by Edwin A. Sherman, p 118 © 1883 (Under Ceremony of Induction and Extreme Oath of the Jesuits), Library of Congress catalog card # 66-43354. Double Cross, p 7, published by Chick Publications Inc; Ontario: 1981). Author's note: 13 Jesus Christ told us to love our enemies, not to kill them (Matt 5:44). And Jesus also told us, that "Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2).

13 *I haven't read the original documents; I'm only quoting what other respected authors have stated, but it is certainly interesting to note that a "Christian" religion and a non-Christian religion both agree that the gods they worship, command the destruction of "heretics." i.e. a heretic is anyone who doesn't agree with an organisation's specific theology and hence is worthy of death. No criticism is intended of individual Catholics or Muslim people. Reference is made only to doctrines which appear to be advocated by these two religions - not individual members of these religions. Other religions might also believe similar theology. It is not my purpose to expose certain religions. Mention is made of these two religions because they are well known and their doctrine is relevant to the topic under discussion – that heretics, by the command of God, can be "righteously" (sinlessly) killed.*

Was Samson thinking that He was doing (John 16:2) by killing the Philistines? Didn't Jesus eventually give His life for those people too? If the Philistines had passed their probation, did that fact make it "okay" – divinely "legal" for the Israelites to kill them?

When probation closes on the world both the wicked and the righteous are sealed. The 144000 - who are 100% righteous in character -will face the threat of annihilation at the hands of the demon-possessed wicked. The wicked have no chance to repent at this stage. The wicked will have already legislated the "death decree" on all 'heretics' - those who won't honour the first day Sabbath. Their probation is over. Now they are set to break God's 6th commandments and kill the righteous.

Remember, the wicked believe "that they do God service" (John 16:2) by killing the "heretics" who won't worship their trinity god, as signified by keeping their Sunday law.

Question 1: If the wicked killed the righteous would they be innocent of committing a sin? Or would they be breaking God's 6th commandment, "Thou shalt not kill?"

Question 2: If the righteous 144000 killed the wicked, before probation closed, would they be committing a sin?

Question 3: Does the fact that wicked's probation is over, make it okay and 'divinely legal' for the 144000 to kill them? If not, why not?

The righteous people will not be killing anybody at any time. They are sealed with the law of their Father in their foreheads and they keep all the commandments of God (Rev 12:17;14:1,12). The commandments are a transcript of God's character. The righteous will have no desire to kill their enemies. They will be filled with the love of their Father for their enemies, just as Jesus was. "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34) will be on their lips, not "Father annihilate them."

Even the prophets of the Old Testament, though zealous to serve God, did not grasp the loving concept of the Father's character which is the basis of His universal government.

Jeremiah 18:23; 11:20

"Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thus with them in the time of thine anger. But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause. "

Psalms 109: 2-20

"For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. (3) They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. (4) For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. (5) And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. (6) Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. (7) When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. (8) Let his days be few; and let another take his office. (9) Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. (10) Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. (12) Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. (13) Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. (14) Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out." (continued over page)

(15) Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. (16) Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. (17) As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. (18) As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. (19) Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. (20) Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.”

Jesus came to show deluded and deceived humanity what kind of life would please His Father – love- and He revealed His Father's character perfectly.

When Philip asked, "show us the Father," Jesus replied that "he who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

While exposed to the violence of demon-possessed men and suffering extreme physical and mental agony, Jesus Christ revealed to us the superior character of the Father.

Luke 23:34

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

Is Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, or are the imperfect teachings of humanity - as they misunderstand the Father's character - to be the foundation of our faith?

Who's principles was Samson following? He, like many people back then and even today, had a twisted idea of God's character.

Walther Zimmerli (1907–1984) was Professor of Old Testament at the University of Göttingen, Germany, and considered by many as one of the most important biblical scholars of the twentieth century. Among his many publications in English are Ezekiel, 2 vols. (Hermeneia; Fortress Press, 1979/1983), I Am Yahweh (1982), The Old Testament and the World (1976), and The Law and the Prophets (1965). In The Law and the Prophets, Zimmerli writes:

*“In this connection Hosea attacks with particular passion the priests who should have been the true guardians of the knowledge of God, and who have especially failed in this duty (Hosea iv. 4 ff.). **They have allowed to pass unnoticed the very real exchange of Yahweh, the God of Israel, for the baals of Canaan.** This was no longer the same threat which had occurred in Elijah's time, it was something much more dangerous. **While the worship of Yahweh remained outwardly correct, in reality he had come to be regarded as a nature deity like the Canaanite Baal.** From him men sought the fertility of the soil and of marriage; he was worshipped with the forms of nature religion and with sacral prostitution, as men worshipped the Baals. **Yahweh became Baal. The name of one of David's warriors, which is recorded in I Chronicles 12:5 as Bealiah (Yahweh is Baal) demonstrates exactly this programmatic assertion.** Thus without knowing it, **Israel had begun to misunderstand the very nature of its God,** because the professional guardians of a true knowledge of him were asleep” (Walther Zimmerli, The Law and the Prophets, Basil Blackwell 1965 p.70).*

Samson confession might well have been sincere, but he still had a serious problem understanding God's character. He thought that killing 3000 Philistines would please God. Another Jewish leader, Jephthah, thought it would please God if he sacrificed his daughter, but he was wrong also (Judges 11).

God judges our motives – our heart. He does not penalise us for not knowing information about Him (if through no fault of our own, we were unable to gain). Paul states that, in times of ignorance, God winked (at our ignorance), but when knowledge becomes available to us, God does expect and will empower His people to adapt to that truth (Acts 17:30).

Jewish leaders didn't understand the character of God. They thought God was a murderer, but Jesus corrected them.

John 8:44

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning..."

Paul, an educated Pharisee was previously wrong about God's character. He also thought God would be pleased that he was destroying "heretics" only to be corrected later (Acts 9). James and John didn't understand God's character. They wanted to bring down fire and burn up the Samaritan "heretics" but Jesus told them that they didn't "know what spirit they were of" (Luke 9:54).

The religious leaders wanted execute a heretic - to stone a woman taken in adultery, but Jesus told them that only a righteous person was qualified to execute judgment on others. The "righteous" Jewish leaders needed to consider their own sinful condition because THEIR OWN SINFUL CONDITION prevented them from executing judgment on anyone else (John 8:7).

Would not that principle which Jesus gave to the Pharisees, also have applied to the Israelites who believed that it was God's will that THEY destroyed the nations of Canaan? God had told them that HE, the RIGHTEOUS ONE, would cause their enemies to be flee - from hornets and from confusion

Exodus 23:27, 28

"I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. (28) And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee."

Was it **God's** plan that man destroy another man and not be guilty? Or was it **man's** idea of what God wanted? Jesus came to give the perfect demonstration of the Father's character. He is the word of God made audible.

Revelation 19:13

"And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God." He is the spirit / character of God.

Christ Jesus is the spirit / character of God.

Ellen White states in the Desire of Ages, p 19

"By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,--God's thought made audible."

Perhaps Christians should consider if their God's commandments are really binding in all situations. If not, there might be some real problems that need addressing.

So was Samson a suicide killer? In my opinion, that was the crime he committed. Just as the Muslim religion condones killing heretics in the name of Allah because they believe it to be Allah's righteous will; and just as the Catholic religion condones killing of heretics based on the Old Testament misconceptions of God's character; just so Samson believed that God also condoned the killing of 'heretical' Philistines. He killed 'heretics,' "thinking that he did God service" (John 16:2). However, I believe the words of Jesus prove that Samson's honest belief (that killing heretics was "legal" – i.e. that it was not a sin) was in fact, not a righteous act.

Two Most Interesting Comparisons

As you read the following Bible texts, please note the similarities between Samson, the Israelite 'strong man' and the demoniac/s of Gadarenes; and David and Goliath.

Samson – the Israelite 'strong man' and the demoniac

Judges 15:10-15

"And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, **to do to him as he hath done to us.** (11) Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines [are] rulers over us? what [is] this [that] thou hast done unto us? **And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.** (12) And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.(13) And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. **And they bound him with two new cords,** and brought him up from the rock. (14) [And] when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and **the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him,** and the cords that [were] upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and **his bands loosed from off his hands.** (15) And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and **slew a thousand men** therewith.

It is a common reaction to believe that if a person has an outstanding ability or talent, to attribute that skill to the special blessing of God, but are special abilities a definite sign that a person has been blessed by God?

What about the strong man of Mark 5? Did he also possess a special divine blessing?

Mark 5:1-4

"And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. (2) And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with **an unclean spirit,** (3) Who had [his] dwelling among the tombs; **and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: (4) Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces:** neither could any [man] tame him."

Obviously Christians do not consider the demoniac of Gadarenes to have been especially blessed by God, but that the spirit of Satan controlled him, making him super-strong and able to do violent acts which terrified the townfolk.

The demoniac was super-strong. He frightened the Israelite people. No-one could bind him with chains. He terrorized people with his violence. He was considered by the Israelites to be cursed of God and that Satan possessed him.

However, a strange similarity exists between the demoniacs of Gadarenes and Samson. Samson was super-strong. He frightened the Philistines. No-one could bind him with chains or cords. He terrorized the Philistines with his violence. The book of Judges clearly attributes Samson's super-strength as originating from God and not from Satan, and it was considered to be a special blessing.

On the other hand, the demoniac exhibited the same violent actions as Samson performed, BUT the gospels record these actions as the result of demonic power. In fact, Jesus Himself identified the demons involved in the demoniacs' plight and thus placed beyond any doubt, the fact that the demoniac's strength was due to demonic activity.

Jesus never gave His followers the example of using force, but advised them to commit all matters – including self defence - to the Father. Did Samson embrace that principle? No.

In fact, Samson's willful, sinful acts (adultery, murder, dishonouring parents) would have permitted him to be especially vulnerable to Satan's control – and under the Mosaic law's regulations, to have been 'cut off' from the nation of Israel (i.e. executed).

In continuing the comparison of Samson with the Gadarene demoniac, it is interesting to note Ellen White's comments.

Ellen White, 2 Spirit of Prophecy, Chapter 26, "Men From the Tombs," p 317

"Satan is the god of the world; his influence is to pervert the senses, control the human mind for evil, and drive his victims to violence and crime. He sows discord and darkens the intellect. The work of Christ is to break his power over the children of men. Yet how many in every department of life, in the home, in business transactions, and in the church, turn Jesus from their doors but let the hateful monster in. It is no wonder that violence and crime have spread over the earth, and moral darkness, like the pall of death, shrouds the cities and habitations of men. Satan controls many households, people, and churches. **He watches the indications of moral corruption, and introduces his specious temptations, carefully leading men into worse and worse evils, till utter depravity is the result."**

The Bible records Samson as succumbing to the same temptations that Ellen White revealed had caused the demoniac's downfall. Given that Samson made the same errors and committed the same crimes of violence, could his final condition be any different from the inevitable result which Ellen White described above?

In several other statements, Ellen White reveals that it was deliberate sin that caused another man to become demon-possessed- the demoniac of Capernaum. It is interesting to note that the Bible records Samson suffered from and continued to succumb to very similar problems.

2 Spirit of Prophecy, p 179, 180

"It was not according to the will of God that this man should be visited with so terrible an affliction as to be delivered wholly into the hands of Satan. The secret source of his calamity, which had made him a fearful spectacle to his friends and a burden to himself, was in his own life. **The pleasures of sin had fascinated him, the path of dissipation had looked bright and tempting, he had thought to make life a grand carnival" (continued).**

(Quote continued)

“He did not dream of becoming a disgust and terror to the world and the reproach of his family. He thought his time could be spent in innocent folly; but once on the downward path, his feet rapidly descended till he had broken the laws of health and morality. (180) Intemperance and frivolity chained his senses, the fine qualities of his mind were perverted, and Satan stepped in and took absolute control of him.”

Desire of Ages (1898), p 256

“He had placed himself on the enemy's ground, and Satan had taken possession of all his faculties. The tempter had allured him with many charming presentations; but when once the wretched man was in his power, **the fiend became relentless in his cruelty, and terrible in his angry visitations. So it will be with all who yield to evil;** the fascinating pleasure of their early career ends in the darkness of despair or the madness of a ruined soul.”

Samson clearly followed the same sinful course as that taken by the demoniacs. Could Samson escape Satan's power while performing willful sin, when the demoniacs could not?

Ellen White writes that Samson repented of his sins, which is interesting because the Bible does not clearly record this important event, despite the fact that Samson is found in the 'faith chapter' (Hebrews 11).

Patriarch and Prophets, p 566,

“In suffering and humiliation, a sport for the Philistines, Samson learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance.”

God can and does save sinners who repent and forsake their sins, but forgiveness is based on the condition of the heart – as revealed in the motivation of the repentant sinner.

God warns us not to look on a person's outward appearance in order to make judgments about a person's spiritual status, for it is the heart condition that is the vital aspect. The motivation of the heart demonstrates whether repentance is genuine (1 Samuel 16:7). Salvation is through faith – not works. The works might not be perfect, but the faith might be strong.

God might forgive a sinner, but just because they are redeemed, it should not be interpreted that their works are a perfect example of holiness. Such might have been the case with Samson.

God can save genuinely repentant sinners *in spite* of their works, but they are saved by faith in Christ.

God empowers people to produce good works, but these works are always motivated by His love, and will not be evidenced by acts that break His commandments (1 Cor 13:1-13; 1 John 3:1-24).

Let's look more closely at the passage that is interpreted as Samon's confession.

Judges 16:28

“And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines **for my two eyes.**”

Ellen White comments on this text, but curiously omits the last part of Samson's prayer.

Patriarch and Prophets, p 566

"Then he silently uttered the prayer, 'O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines' (**omitted.... For my two eyes**). With these words he encircled the pillars with his mighty arms; and crying, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' he bowed himself, and the roof fell, destroying at one crash all that vast multitude."

When honestly evaluated, Samson's confession as reported in the Judges 16:28, only serves to confirm that Samson asked God for strength in order to take his own personal revenge on the Philistines **because they had gouged out his eyes**. It appears that Samson was not seeking repentance for his sins, but rather requesting that he be given an opportunity to take revenge on his tormentors and to commit mass murder.

Centuries after Samson's death, the disciple Peter expressed that Christians, when being abused or forced to suffer should follow the example of Jesus - who loved His enemies, not tried to find opportunity to take revenge upon them (Matt 5:44).

1 Peter 2:21-23

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: (23) Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed [himself] to him that judgeth righteously:"

Let's consider Samson's case again. The Bible seems to attribute the source of Samson's strength as **God's** spirit coming upon him, but how could God perform miracles through a man who blatantly refused to keep God's moral law (the 10 commandments) or even the Mosaic law?

Samson:

- was a fornicator who repeatedly used prostitutes – breaking the 7th commandment of the moral law (Judges 16:1);
- married a pagan woman against his parent's wishes - breaking the Mosaic law (Judges 14:2,3);
- offered honey to his parents, which unbeknown to them, was taken out of the carcass of a dead lion (Judges 14:8,9)– a practice which was against the Mosaic law (Lev 11:8; Deut 14:8) and which caused them to become ceremonially 'unclean';
- committed mass murder justifying it by using the 'eye for an eye' principle (Judges 15:11) – a principle which is identical to that which the pagan Philistines used to justify their revenge on **him** (verse 10).' (No mention of the 'golden rule that Jesus endorsed in Matt 7:12);
- Committed his greatest mass murder in **an act of revenge** for having his two eyes dug out by the Philistines (Judges 16:28 "And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, **that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.**")

Questions:

- Did God grant Samson super-human strength so that he could take revenge on the Philistines for gouging out his eyes?
- Did God sanction Samson's suicide?
- Did God permit the young Philistine children to be killed for sins which they did not commit? The children were not to blame for Samson's eyes being gouged and Ezekiel 18 states repeatedly that the children will not inherit the parent's guilt.

With such pagan beliefs embedded into the Israelite religion, is it any wonder that Jesus appeared to be challenging the nation's 'sacred' traditions and revered beliefs when He set these views aside?

Matthew 5:11; 7:12

(Jesus said) "Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake....Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Ellen White compares the plight of Samson with that of Joseph, who, hundreds of years earlier, responded quite differently to the temptations that other crippled men (eg. Samson, David and Solomon).

Conflict and Courage, p 135

"Samson in his peril had the same source of strength as had Joseph. He could choose the right or the wrong as he pleased. But instead of taking hold of the strength of God, he permitted the wild passions of his nature to have full sway. The reasoning powers were perverted, the morals corrupted. God had called Samson to a position of great responsibility, honor, and usefulness; but he must first learn to govern by first learning to obey the laws of God. Joseph was a free moral agent. Good and evil were before him. He could choose the path of purity, holiness, and honor, or the path of immorality and degradation. He chose the right way, and God approved. Samson, under similar temptations, which he had brought upon himself, gave loose rein to passion. The path which he entered upon he found to end in shame, disaster, and death. What a contrast to the history of Joseph!"

Both Paul and Ellen White declare that Samson will be among the saints, but this is according to God's great forgiveness, not according to Samson's commandment-breaking sinful actions.

Was David a Warlord?

The Philistines had their own war-hero – a type of Philistine ‘messiah.’ His name was Goliath and according to them, Goliath the giant, was no doubt especially blessed by their god Dagon, while the Israelites were cursed by the Philistine gods (1 Samuel 17:43).

The Israelites also believed that their God would intervene and win the battle for their side. This belief is demonstrated in David’s dialogue with Goliath. Observe the common principles that each nation believed in the following passage.

1 Samuel 17:43-47

*“And the Philistine said unto David, [Am] I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? **And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.** (44) And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. (45) Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but **I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.** (46) This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. (47) And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle [is] the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hands.”*



Both David and Goliath believed that their gods would give them the ultimate power that would enable them to violently destroy their enemies.

Recall that both the Israelite religion and the Philistine religion both employ the Babylonian and Canaanite theological principle of ‘an eye for an eye.’

- **Goliath curses David ‘by his gods’** (1 Sam 17:43).
- **David curses Goliath by his god** (1 Sam 17:45-47).
- **Goliath boasts that he will kill David and leave his body to be eaten by birds and beasts** (1 Samuel 17:44)
- **“David tells Goliath that in the name of the Lord he will do to him the very things that Goliath had threatened to do to David”** (Ellen White, Gospel Workers, p 188; 1 Sam 17:46)

Note that Goliath cursed David by the Philistine gods and David responded in a similar fashion. David assured Goliath that the god of the Israelites would intervene to help the shepherd boy kill the giant. Both sides were preparing to claim the victory – of murdering the other - as being achieved by the direct intervention of their gods.

According to the King James Version, when David approached Goliath, his only visible weapon was a staff (i.e. a stick) for Goliath sarcastically asked, “Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with **staves**? But the Septuagint (Greek copy of the Old Testament) reveals that Goliath sneered, “Am I a dog that you come unto me with **stones**?”

Therefore, according to the Septuagint, Goliath did notice David was picking up stones as they approached each other to do battle. That accounts for Goliath’s remarks, both in the King James Version and in the Septuagint. The Apostles Bible places both words in the text and reads, “**43 And the Philistine said to David, Am I as a dog, that you come against me with a staff and stones? And David said, No, but worse than a dog. And the Philistine cursed David by his god**” (1 Samuel 17:43).

What is not revealed in either version is that Goliath saw – or was aware of the presence of David’s sling, for if he had been so aware, he might well have taken other precautions for it was well known in ancient times, that nothing seemed impenetrable to the force of the sling. Several ancient writings report this fact. Note the following statement cited in Adam Clarke’s Bible Commentary, 1 Samuel 17:49.

Diodorus Siculus, lib. v., c. 18, p. 287, edit. Bipont

*"The Baleares, in time of war, sling greater stones than any other people, and with such force, that they seem as if projected from a catapult. Therefore, in assaults made on fortified towns, they grievously wound the besieged; and in battle they break in pieces the shields, helmets, and every species of armour by which the body is defended. And they are such exact marksmen that they scarcely ever miss that at which they aim."*¹⁴

If Goliath was ignorant of the fact that David carried a sling, then his reaction to seeing David collect stones is understandable and appropriate. Goliath clearly expected that David’s purpose was to **throw** stones at him, in the same way as a young boy might throw stones at a dog to make it stay away. A **thrown** stone would not penetrate armour, so Goliath believed that he had nothing to fear from the shepherd boy.

It was also well-known that the Israelite nation referred to and considered the Gentiles to be ‘dogs.’ If Goliath perceived that David was treating him ‘as a dog’ – trying to make him go away using sticks and stones – then one can well understand his wrathful response to what he considered was an insulting gesture.

Ellen White comments on Goliath’s wrath.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p 648

"The anger of Goliath was roused to the very highest heat. In his rage he pushed up the helmet that protected his forehead and rushed forward to wreak vengeance upon his opponent."

¹⁴ The Septuagint reports that the stone from David’s sling passed through Goliath’s helmet and sank into his forehead, a fact that the King James version omits. Ellen White also comments otherwise in Patriarchs and Prophets, p 648. *"The anger of Goliath was roused to the very highest heat. In his rage he pushed up the helmet that protected his forehead and rushed forward to wreak vengeance upon his opponent."*

David accused Goliath of coming to fight him with a sword, a spear and a shield – fully armed with lethal weapons, but his speech misled the giant. Certainly, the shepherd-boy declared that he would kill the giant ‘in the name of his god’ – i.e. with divine assistance, but he omitted any mention of using lethal weapons himself against Goliath.

No doubt it was a clever battle plan. David tricked Goliath into believing that the only weapons he intended to use against him were some throwing stones and hitting sticks. Had Goliath been aware that David carried a sling, his reaction would not have been to ‘throw up his helmet’ as slings were recognized as lethal weapons, especially in the hands of the Israelites.

Judges 20:16

“Among all this people (*the tribe of Benjamin*) there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss.”

It is claimed that David killed Goliath **only because of the Lord's intervention**, but were all 700 expert marksman from the tribe of Benjamin also similarly especially blessed with the Lord's intervention - just because they were accurate marksman? ¹⁵

In a brilliant battle strategy, David permitted Goliath to assume that his opponent was relatively unarmed - except for the stick and stones he was carrying - which served as decoys.

David's sling was no doubt concealed as a shepherd's pouch and its purpose was not revealed in his speech to Goliath. In his pre-battle boast, David stated that **he** would not use a sword, shield or spear, as did Goliath - but if David had have revealed the whole truth – if he had been honest - he would have declared that he would fight Goliath with his sling - which certainly was as lethal as the giant's weapons.

David used deception and dishonesty to kill Goliath. Are these strategies of which God approves? Does God approve of killing enemies? Jesus did not believe so (Matt 5:44).

After defeating Goliath through deceit and skilful use of his sling, David gave the credit to his god - a tradition which was common amongst the pagan religions of the Canaanites. In a similar way, the Philistines claimed that their god Dagon had delivered Samson ‘into their hands,’ when it was really Delilah's harassment that had resulted in Samson's capture. (In fact, the Philistines, despite paying Delilah for her sabotage, did not give her the credit for the success of her deceitful mission. Dagon was given the credit - Judges 16:5, 23).

One question comes to mind.

Christians readily believe that Dagon did not intervene to capture Samson, but why do they believe that the One True God intervened to assist David in murdering Goliath?

Perhaps this belief is held because Christians believe that God *and* all false gods like Dagon, have the same character and perform the same actions, but that such actions are justified and holy if done by the ‘right’ god or the ‘right’ people.

¹⁵ Is the One True God also especially blessing all the expert marksmen in modern wars? If so, which side contains God's ‘holy’ people?

When David killed Goliath, the Philistines were terrified. They turned and fled. Why? Because David had just voiced (1 Samuel 17:47) to the superstitious minds of both nations, that it was the god of the Israelites who had just been victorious over the gods of the Philistines. The Philistines and the Israelites both expected divine intervention and when David killed Goliath, both armies believed that the god of the Israelites had intervened.

Both nations reacted to this ingrained belief – the Israelites were filled with courage while the Philistines were terrified.

Please consider:

Just because people appropriate credit to God for performing certain actions (thinking to honour Him), it does not prove that God was involved in the action at all.

Note the particularly horrifying and murderous actions that David committed against his enemy, Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:51,54

“Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith....(54) And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.”

These actions were even too violent for the Israelites’ god Yahweh.

1 Chronicles 28:3

“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.”

Later, Goliath’s sword and perhaps the other parts of the giant’s armour was housed in customary Canaanite fashion, in the temple of Yahweh.

1 Samuel 21:9 “And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it [is here] wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, ‘There is none like that; give it me.’”

The practice of storing articles in ‘the temple of the gods’ had religious significance. It was based on the theological belief that certain ‘sacred’ items had special, divine powers that could be harnessed by those who possessed the item – in an **owners-keepers** situation. Many of the ‘sacred’ items were stolen or possessed by violent acts of war as pillage. A famous example from the Bible is King Nebuchadnezzar.

2 Chronicles 36:7

“Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.”

(Similar superstitious concepts are still seen today - folklore claims that magic bottles contain genies who must provide their owners with the granting of ‘3 wishes’; magic wands can be used by whomever possesses them to do supernatural acts- to do both blessings and curses; holy water can be used to bless worshippers; sacred wafers impart the divine spirit; sacred artifacts, sacred shrines and sacred animals impart healing; sacred relics impart divine power).

The Philistines placed Yahweh's ark of the covenant in Dagon's temple, thinking both gods' power would unite – making the Philistines invincible (P&P, p 586; 1SP p 404, 405)

In the sanctuary services, Moses declared that all temple items had to be ritually anointed and thus blessed, before they could be used in the service of the temple.

Exodus 30:25-29

“And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil. (26) And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony, (27) And the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense, (28) And the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot. (29) And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy.”

Although it is not expressly stated in the Bible, perhaps the storing of Goliath's sword in the temple was done to 'bless' it, ie. anoint it and dedicate it to Yahweh – reversing its dedication to Dagon - so that it would be more potent in future combat.



The Israelites and the Philistines

There appears to be some cyclic reasoning occurring in both the religions of the Israelites and that of the Philistines– and none of it takes into account that Satan was actively involved causing all the troubles – on both sides.

As do many modern religions, the ancient, Canannite religions held certain basic, theological concepts in common. The ancient Israelite religion also exhibited most of these doctrines – see bracketed references below.

Common pagan religious concepts:

- A multiplicity of gods; (trinity gods were especially common);
- That the gods were powerful creators;
- That the gods originated both blessings and curses;
- That the gods could be ‘made’ either happy or wrathful by human behaviour;
- That the gods were inclined to kill or command the killing of unrepentant people (heretics) with whom they were angry;
- That the gods, when wrathful, could be appeased by sacrifices and offerings; and
- That the gods could make a temple, high place, grove or other specified place, holy;
- That the gods would fight wars and also command their followers to fight against ‘heretics’ (pagans, non-believers etc); and
- That the gods designated certain lands to their followers and warfare was a legitimate means of acquiring that land,

Common pagan religious practices:

- animal and human sacrifices;
- fertility rituals;
- dedication rituals including circumcision and castration;
- prayers and sacrifices were ‘properly’ offered in ‘holy places’ i.e. ‘facing the temple’ or ‘facing the east’ or ‘toward the rising of the sun’ or upon the ‘high places’
- high societal position of priests/prophets (because they were considered to possess intercessory powers with the god/s);
- declaration of “holy” wars; pagan gods (via priests or prophets), commanded their worshippers to attack (heretic) nations. If successful, the conquerors, in gratitude to their god/s, often sacrificed a portion of the invaded nation’s animals. Often many prisoners-of-war were also slaughtered as human sacrifices;
- placing the conquered army’s ‘standards’ and special trophies into the temples of their god/s. This practice ‘proved’ that the gods of the conquerors were *more powerful* than those of the conquered;
- Conquered nations often ‘changed’ gods or absorbed the *more powerful gods* into their religion and worship rituals

The following table demonstrates similarities between the religion of the 'pagan' Philistines' and the religion of the Israelites.

Israelites Believed

Their god Yahweh sends both 'blessings and cursings' (Deut 11:26-28; 30:19; 1 Samuel 4:3; 5:19)

Their god Yahweh could be appeased with sacrifices (Leviticus ch 1-7, Judges 2:5)

Their god Yahweh delivered Goliath into their hands (1 Samuel 17:45-47).

Their god Yahweh especially 'blessed' and raised up Orthniel, Deborah (Judges 3:10; 4:4-7) Samson (and later) David for the purpose of destroying their Philistine enemies P&P, p 564)

Their god Yahweh especially 'blessed' Samson with extra-ordinary strength – especially to enable him to kill their pagan enemies – the Philistines

Their god Yahweh was credited with Goliath's capture, despite it being due to David's deception and skill with a sling (1 Sam 17:45, 46)

When David slew Goliath and when the Israelites slew the Philistines, the Israelites believed their god Yahweh had delivered their enemies into their hands (1 Sam 17: 37, 45, 47; 19:5; P&P, p 591)

As was customary in the Canaanite culture, when David slew Goliath, he laid up the giant's sword as a trophy, in the tabernacle of the Lord (1 Sam 21:8, 9)

After the return of Yahweh's ark of the covenant, the Israelites made sacrifices and believed they received the power of Yahweh again (P&P, p 591)

Their god Yahweh caused the Israelites to acquire – through warfare - land which was already inhabited by other nations (Exo 23:27, 28; Josh 23:16; Judges 2:3,6,18, 21, 23; 11:24; 1 Sam 7:3-14)

Philistines Believed

Dagon and other gods send both 'blessings and cursings' (1 Sam 5:11; 6:1-12)

The gods could be appeased with sacrifices (1 Sam 6:1-9)

Their god Dagon delivered Samson into their hands.

Their god (Dagon) especially 'blessed' and raised up Goliath for the purpose of destroying their Israelite enemies

Their god Dagon especially 'blessed' Goliath with extra-ordinary size – especially to enable him to kill their enemies – the Israelites

Their god Dagon was credited with Samson's capture, despite it occurring due to Delilah's harassment (Judges 16:23)

When their army captured the ark of the covenant, the Philistines believed their god Dagon had delivered the Israelites into their hands (P&P, p 566, 567; 1SP p404, 405; 1 Sam 4)

As was customary in the Canaanite culture, when the Philistines killed Saul, they hung up his armour as a trophy in the temple of their god Ashtaroth (1 Sam 31:10; 1SP p404, 405)

The Philistines placed Yahweh's ark of the covenant in Dagon's temple, thinking both gods' power would unite – making the Philistines invincible (P&P, p 586; 1SP p 404, 405)

Their gods caused the Philistines and other Canaanite tribes to acquire – through warfare - land which was already inhabited by other nations (Judges 11:24; 1 Sam 4:7)

It appears that both the nations of Israel and Philistia made serious errors assessing the morality of super-natural 'gifts.'

Instead of judging a special gift by its spiritual character, the nations assessed the morality (or 'goodness' of the gift) from the perspective of whether they were on the "winning side" or the "losing side."

David claimed that the god of the Israelites would help him to kill Goliath, but the Mosaic law clearly instructed the Israelites to be respectful to those who ruled over them, not to seek to violently rebel.

Exodus 22:8

(The Mosaic law) "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people."

Paul and Peter understood Christ's reinforcement of this teaching (in Matt 5).

Hebrews 13:17

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves..."

Ephesians 6:5-8

"Servants, be obedient to them that are [your] masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; (6) Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; (7) With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: (8) Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether [he be] bond or free."

1 Peter 2:17-18

"**Honour all** men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. **Honour the king.** (18) **Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.**

In the days of Samson, the Israelites were dominated and 'ruled over' by the Philistines. The Israelites greatly resented this rulership and they called upon God to deliver them out of bondage.

Just as Goliath was seen as their Philistine 'messiah,' so David and Samson were the Israelites' anticipated war-hero 'messiahs.' Because of his superior strength, Samson was thought to be blessed by God. Because of his skill as a soldier, David was esteemed as blessed by God also.

Considering the confused theology and the pagan environment in which they were living, Samson and David and the other Israelites might well have reasoned that God would be pleased with the violent death of the Philistines, however **believing** something, does not make it a fact.

Ezekiel 33:11

"Say unto them, [As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Matthew 5:44 (Jesus said)

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

John 13:34-35 (Jesus said)

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (35) By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

1 John 3:15, 16

“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. (16) Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren.”

1 Peter 2:17-23

“**Honour all** [men]. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. **Honour the king**. (18) **Servants, [be] subject to [your] masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward**. (19) For this [is] thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. (20) For what glory [is it], if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer [for it], ye **take it patiently, this [is] acceptable with God**. (21) For even hereunto were ye called: because **Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps**: (22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: (23) Who, **when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed [himself] to him that judgeth righteously**.”

Desire of Ages (1898) p 257

“In the days of Christ the leaders and teachers of Israel were powerless to resist the work of Satan. They were neglecting the only means by which they could have withstood evil spirits. It was by the word of God that Christ overcame the wicked one. The leaders of Israel professed to be the expositors of God's word, but they had studied it only to sustain their traditions, and enforce their man-made observances. **By their interpretation they made it express sentiments that God had never given. Their mystical construction made indistinct that which He had made plain**. They disputed over insignificant technicalities, and practically denied the most essential truths. Thus infidelity was sown broadcast. God's word was robbed of its power, and evil spirits worked their will.”

#26 - Kill to Prevent Contamination

Objection:

"Why did God allow his people to kill? Obviously to eradicate unrepentant evildoers. To prevent contamination of his people, ie. stoning of unrepentant sinners. Phinehas who stayed the plague by putting a javelin through the one committing whoredom. Num 25:7 is another example. But this still creates a contradiction. I heard a good explanation from Pastor XXX on why God said kill the babies of those nations too. Because they were possessed with devils. He was speaking from experience. He knew a baby girl who inherited demons from her parents and had much turmoil in her life."

Answer:

Those are thoughtful questions.

Please consider the following:

- Did the life of Jesus show humanity the Father's character - perfectly?
- Did the life of Jesus show humanity how to live - perfectly?
- Should humanity follow exactly in Jesus' ways?
- Didn't Jesus say that **His** words are "spirit and they are life?" Jesus is referring to "eternal life" (John 6:63).
- Was there ever a time when God says it is legal for any being in the entire universe to break even one of the precepts of His law?
- If the law is a transcript of God's character, then whose character does law-breaking demonstrate?
- Can law-breaking somehow become considered legalised law-keeping? Or in the same manner, can legal actions be illegal or considered to be law-breaking?

You wrote:

I heard a good explanation from Pastor XXX on why God said kill the babies of those nations too. Because they were possessed with devils. He was speaking from experience. He knew a baby girl who inherited demons from her parents and had much turmoil in her life.

I disagree with Elder XXX's assertion that it is not a sin to kill babies who are or who might be assumed to be demon-possessed.

It is recorded in Numbers 31:18,35,40, 46, 47 that the Israelites were able to marry very young virgin females from these "demon-possessed" nations, so Moses was apparently not too concerned about the Israelites marrying demon-possessed young girls.

Incidentally the "divine" permission to intermarry with the Canaanites (relayed through Moses in Numbers 31, Deut 21:10-14) contradicts the previous, specific divine command, also given by Moses, that the Israelites NOT intermarry with the Canaanites (Exodus 34:14, 16; Deut 17:17). It certainly appears that Moses is contradicting himself, by first outlawing intermarriage, but later legalising it.

The point under discussion however, is that Moses did not consider the fact that the Canaanite children were demon-possessed to be a valid reason, of sufficient concern, to prevent intermarriage between pagans and the Israelites. So was intermarrying with pagans legal or illegal? Were demon-possessed babies and virgins to be killed or married and absorbed into the "chosen people"?

For confirmation about perfect actions we might be guided by "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus healed a demon-possessed child Matthew 17:14-21. Recall that Christ's disciples could not cast the demon out of the boy. I assume that Elder XXX, like Christ's disciples, could not cast the demons out of the adopted girl. Would that be reason to kill her? I certainly don't think so!

There is no record of Jesus ever killing anyone - certainly not killing a baby who was already being tortured by Satan. Jesus warned though, that whoever **even offends** a little child would rather have a millstone tied around their neck and cast into the midst of the sea than suffer the punishment in hell-fire.

If a baby is murdered (or purposely aborted), what chance has he/she of learning about God and when of an age of accountability, coming to repentance and to enjoy salvation? Is the baby's probation up before the child even comes to the age of responsibility and accountability? This is not possible. A child must gain a knowledge of right and wrong before God holds him/her responsible for committing sin - uninformed, unintentional sin is a "sin of ignorance" - a sin that God "winks at." A baby knows no sin, nor righteousness, nor good nor evil. Neither can they have a "probationary period." Neither can their "cup of iniquity" be full because of their parents' sin. Ezekiel 18 makes that abundantly clear.

Is Elder XXX suggesting that the Lord commanded the "holy" Israelites (who were rebellious, stiff-necked sinners also) to murder "sinful" (unrepentant sinners) ie. The Amorites, Amalakites, Canaanites etc because these nations' probation was over and their cup of iniquity was full? If so, then God put His own law aside temporarily and made it legal to commit murder in this particular 'dispensation.'

To test if this logic is correct, please consider these questions:

- Would it be a sin for the 144 000 to kill the demon-possessed babies of demon-possessed wicked people after probation is closed on the whole world?
- If it was **NOT** a sin to kill the pagan men, women, children and babies, under the Israelite "theocracy" in Joshua's time, how is it possible that the same action would be regarded as **sinful** at the end of the world when conditions will be very similar? i.e. probation is closed on the wicked and the redeemed are completely sinless.
- Did God give the Israelites special dispensation to kill people when no-one else in the whole world has been trusted to complete that "holy" task of murdering pagans ever since? (apart from the Catholic church, the Muslims etc who believe God commands them to kill heretics).

The Bible states that the 144 000 will have their Father's name written in their foreheads. Ellen White says the same thing in different words. She tells us that the 144 000 will "reflect the character of Jesus perfectly."

Christ's Object Lessons, p 69

"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."

Jesus Himself said to Philip, that He represented His Father's character perfectly. Jesus had "no violence in Him." Isa 53:9. Therefore the Father has no violence in Him and neither will the redeemed.

The 144000 will have two things in common. They will:

- keep ALL the commandments of God; (reflect His character) and;
- have the faith of Jesus

What is the faith of Jesus? It is simply Him trusting that the Father's character is **unfailingly loving**.

The faith of Jesus was displayed when, even though He was in mortal danger as a human being, He trusted His human life to His Father's wisdom and love. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but Thine be done." He could pray such a faithful prayer because Jesus knew without doubt the character of the Father was supremely, unchangeably loving - to Him, but also to everyone whether good or evil, repentant or non-repentant.

Similarly, in reflecting the divine character of Christ, the redeemed, though under the sentence and threat of death, will not be persuaded to take matters into their own hands and out of God's protection. Because of their faith in the love of God, they will trust Him with their lives. They will refuse to break God's law, though in the face of death.

The fourth commandment is not the only commandment that God's people will refuse to break. They will refuse to break all ten commandments. Satan knows that he only has to tempt them to break *one* commandment and he doesn't care which one it is.

If Satan can't persuade people to break the fourth, then the sixth will do just as well to achieve his purposes. One broken commandment is all he needs to cause them to lose salvation!

One broken commandment testifies that the sinner has acted out of selfishness and not remained within the boundaries of the principles of love. It was this fact that James recognised when he made a very insightful statement.

James 2:10

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

#27 - Self-Defence

Objection:

*What do you say to Self Defense? Do we just lay down and let evil trample over us and say God deliver me. Is not this presumption? **If we do not defend ourselves we are allowing evil, to not resist is to assist. Resist the Devil. James 4:7. If someone is trying to kill your family and you sit back and allow it to happen then you have become participant to the murder and broken the 6th commandment and committed a sin of omission. If you accidentally kill the attacker then you must surely be held guiltless. I think this is shown in the Cities of Refuge in the O.T.***

Answer:

This objection will be answered by the different concepts it involves.

First concept

What do you say to Self Defence? Do we just lay down and let evil trample over us and say God deliver me. Is not this presumption?

I note that your pro self/family defence/violent response to threatened danger is based on logic, but only entertains 2 options: doing nothing or using violence. Your position does not refer to faith in God - that He will provide a way of escape from the temptation (the temptation to use violence against another of His creatures, whom He loves and gave His Son to die for). Your position does not permit God to work a miracle as He did when He protected many of his persecuted people from danger. The prayer of faith moves the divine arm.

“Without faith, it is impossible to please Him.” A profession of religion, without an accompanying faith is useless and powerless. It is without love and is therefore as effective as a ‘clanging cymbal’ (1 Cor 13).

Faith is based on a relationship – possible only through knowing God’s character is based on unconditional love. Faith in God’s love, channels divine power – His love - through the believer to others, including the enemies of Christ and Christians. The receipt of the new mind, the spirit of selflessness – divine love - empowers believers to keep God’s commandments. God gives His people such a love for others, **including their mortal enemies**, that they would not be motivated to murder them or to injure them. Self would be completely swallowed up in divine unselfish love for others. The true Christ-like believer would never harm their enemies, but trust God for their deliverance.

Jesus did not set us an example so we could ignore it. It was not because Jesus **‘had’** to be our **sacrifice**, or that He was going to die anyway, that He did not defend Himself from the Jews or from the Romans who were murdering Him. Jesus did not have to lay down His life by being tortured and murdered. Let’s not confuse God’s plan with Satan’s attacks. Please notice that in NO situation where Christ’s human life was in danger, did He resort to employing self-defence. His position and reaction NEVER altered. He ALWAYS trusted His Father and accepted WHATEVER conditions the Father permitted to come upon Him.

If God permits our persecutors to take our human life, then God's people, after trying to evade the danger as much as possible, will, if confronted with a choice of kill or be killed, will choose to lay down their own lives and accept death, as did Jesus. They will not love their own lives 'unto death,' but they will love their enemies, regardless of the poor treatment received at their hands. Even if their enemies murder them, a true Christian will love these

lost souls, just as did Jesus. If on the other hand, God sends an angel to free His people from their enemies, they will accept that also.

What is common to both situations is the Christ-like characters displayed by God's people. They will love their enemies and try to save their souls, not try to **destroy** them - body and soul – through violent means.

Typical of the stance taken by the pioneer Seventh-day Adventist church, is this quote from *The Glad Tidings*, p 85 by Dr EJ Waggoner,

"In Christ there is no distinctions of nationality, and no classes and ranks. The Christian thinks of any other man - English, German, French, Russian, Turk, Chinese or African - simply as a man and therefore a possible heir of God through Christ. If that other man, no matter what his race or nation, be also a Christian, then the bond becomes mutual and therefore still stronger. "There is neither Jew no Greek, there is neither slave no free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." It is for this reason that it is impossible for a Christian engage in war. He knows no distinction of nationality, but regards all men as his brothers. The life of Christ is his life, for heis one with Christ. It would be as impossible for him to fight as it would be for Christ to have seized a sword and fought in self-defense when the Roman soldiers came for Him. And two Christians can no more fight against each other than Christ can fight against Himself."

Self - defence is just that - SELF defence -It is the opposite of putting oneself into the hands and protection of Jesus. It is doubting God's love and ability to save us from destruction. It reveals a lack of faith or trust in the depth of divine love. Jesus did not use self-defence, but when urged to do so by His disciples, Jesus said, "Don't you think I can ask my Father to send me 12 legions of angels?" Jesus knew He was NOT defenceless. **His Father was His defence.** And Jesus, **by faith**, placed Himself completely into the Father's hands and submitted completely to the Father's will. Like Jesus' example to us, we need God's defence, not our own defence. And Jesus said, "Love your enemies - not kill your enemies" (Matt 5:44). We certainly don't "do nothing." If God advises His people to relocate from the cities for their own protection, His people will endeavour to live in the country. But when they've done all we can to protect themselves by non-violent means, then it is that they will pray and have faith that God will protect them.

Remember the blind Waldenses' leader who never lost a battle with the Roman armies? Every time the Romans went to attack his group, a thick fog hid them - every time. Then the Romans became disoriented and fear gripped them. They fought among themselves and others retreated from the battle. The blind Waldenses' leader never fought, neither did he or his group kill or injure a Roman soldier. The whole group simply put their trust in God to protect them. However there was another group among the Waldenses who practiced SELF-defence. When the army came to attack them, the group threw rocks down on top of them from a cliff above the soldiers. It wasn't long before the Roman armies killed all the members of the group - they were thrown off the cliff onto rocks below; men, women and little children.

In his book, **Brave Men to the Battle**, Virgil E. Robinson (1967:60-62) relates an incident that demonstrates why Satan attempts to inspire violence in God's people.

In 1622, Pope Gregory XV established a new society in the Catholic Church, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. It's purpose was to wipe out heretics, either by bringing them into the Catholic Church or by exterminating them. Within a few years the society had spread through Spain, France and Italy. In every Catholic city and town in Europe, people collected money for this society. Priests used the money to bribe people who happened to be in trouble....By 1650 a branch of this society had been established in Turin, the capital of the kingdom of Savoy. Its members determined that the Waldenses who lived close by would either accept the Catholic faith or be destroyed. The marchioness de Planeza became

one of the chief supporters of this society in Turin. In her youth she had not been well-behaved, and her conscience troubled her. The priest told her that if she would devote her time and wealth to the great task of converting heretics, all her sins would be forgiven. So she gave much of her money to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and the Extermination of Heretics. To start the work of winning back the Waldenses, the marchioness sent a group of Capuchin monks to preach to the heretics in the valleys.....But the ministers knew their Bibles and could easily prove the monks wrong. Embarrassed, the monks returned to Turin and sadly reported to the marchioness de Pianezza that they had made no converts.

“Can we persuade the duke that it is his sacred duty to destroy this nest of heretics?” asked one angry priest.

“No,” replied the lady. “I know he has decided not to break the peace of his kingdom by attacking the Waldenses.”

“If only the heretics would do something rash that might arouse the anger of the duke!”

“I fear you will wait a long time for that. They live very peaceably.”

After discussing the situation for a long time, one of the monks finally thought of a plan which they decided might work. The next day this monk found two men who agreed to go into the valleys and try to goad the Waldenses into some rash move. These men disguised themselves and pretended to be Vaudois travellers. Once in the mountain valley, they attended a meeting of one of the general councils. They told the people that the duke planned to raise an army with which to destroy them. The convent of Capuchin monks, they said, was a nest of spies, plotting their destruction. Then another man, whom these strangers had bribed, joined in saying that he had also heard of this and new it to be true.

“Let us storm the monastery, expel the monks and burn the building,” urged one of the spires. “Thus we can show the duke that we do not sleep and cannot be slaughtered like sheep.”

A few hotheads¹⁶ among the company agreed. That very night they appeared before the monastery, expelled the monks and set fire to the building. News of this action quickly reached the duke. Naturally, he grew angry when he learned of it, but the marchioness and her council were delighted. At last there would be war. The duke summoned an army of six thousand men to march to Villaro and wipe out all its Protestant inhabitants.

News of this reached Leger, the wisest and best of the Waldensian pastors. He immediately went to Villaro where he collected positive proof that the men who had plotted the deed were in the pay of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. With this evidence he went to Turin and laid it before the surprised duke, who immediately cancelled his plans for punishing the Waldenses. Members of the society, deeply angered that their plan had failed, determined to make yet another attempt to provoke the Waldenses to violence.”

¹⁶ ‘Hotheads’ is the term that Virgil E Robinson employs, however, these ‘hothead’ people from the Waldensian company, demonstrated the sad condition of their spiritual experience. They made an unwise and erroneous decision that was not in keeping with God’s commandments nor with Jesus’ example.

<u>Ancient Israelites</u>	<u>Dark Ages Roman Catholic Church</u>	<u>Jesus</u>
Slaughtered 'heretics' (Exo 23:23; Lev 20:27; Deut 7:1,2) including Israelites, Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites. Girgashites,	Slaughtered 'heretics' Albigenses, Waldenses, Heugenots (refer to Fox's Book of Martyrs) http://www.ccel.org/f/foxe/martyrs/fox104.htm	Harmless, undefiled, kept His Father's commandments (Heb 7:26; John 15:10)
Plundered heretics possessions; kidnapped children (Numbers 31:9-12) but could not kidnap 'true' Israelites (Deut. 24:7)	Plundered heretics possessions; kidnapped children the Popes alone . . . compelled bishops and priests to condemn heretics to torture, confiscation of their goods (J. H. Ignaz von Dollinger , <i>The Pope and the Council, London 1869; p190-193</i>)	Kept His Father's commandments and did not steal (John 15:10; Exo 20:15; Matt 19:18; Rom 2:21-26)
Claimed that killing heretics was not sinful or punishable, but divinely commanded and rewarded (Exo 21-23; Numbers 31; Deut 21:22; 1 Sam 15_	Claimed that killing heretics was not sinful or punishable but divinely commanded and rewarded "Roman Catholics have not only the right, but it is their duty, to kill heretics." Chiniquy, Fifty Years In The "Church" Of Rome ch 13 p 56) <i>Directorium Inquisitorum</i> , published in Rome, October 1584, by the command of the Cardinals Inquisitors General; dedicated to Pope Gregory XIII; translation by J.P. Callender, <i>Illustrations of Popery</i> , New York, 1838.	Stated that even being angry with anyone was as the sin of murder (Matt 5:21-24)
Claimed that violence was justified in self-defence and revenge (Exo 21: 23-25)	Claimed that violence was justified <i>Directorium Inquisitorum</i>	Stated that He trusted in His Father for His defence (Matt 26:52-53)
Claimed that violence was necessary to purge the camp of sinners/ heretics (Deut 17:1-7)	Claimed that violence was necessary to annihilate heretics – kill the body to purify the spirit J. H. Ignaz von Dollinger, 19th Catholic professor of church history: ' <i>Since 1183, the view of the Church had been that every departure from the teaching of the Church ... must be punished with death, and the most cruel of deaths, by fire.</i> ' (<i>The Pope and the Council, London 1869; p190-193</i>) <i>Directorium Inquisitorum</i>	Stated and demonstrated that sinners are to be loved, prayed for, forgiven - not murdered or tortured (Matt 5:44-48; Luke 23:34).

Perhaps Pope Innocent's Roman army considered it "righteous" to slaughter the children of 'heretics,' just as the Israelites considered it God's will to slaughter the Canaanite children. Both the Roman army and the Israelite army were enforcing church-state law.

Question:

In respect to their murderous deeds, was the army of the Israelites performing a 'holy' work when they exterminated the heretics of Canaan, while Pope Innocent's Roman army, while annihilating the Waldenses, committed a heinous sin?

While the Israelite soldiers were offered the 'booty' or spoils of war as their 'reward' for exterminating the heretics in Canaan (Numbers 31:9-12)¹⁷, so too were the Roman soldiers who persecuted the Waldenses. Both religious organisations offered its soldiers the privilege of 'guiltless' sinning - the Israelites were not required to offer sin offerings for slaying the Canaanites; and the Roman soldiers received a plenary indulgence for murdering the Waldenses. Both armies were thus absolved from breaking the 6th commandment (Roman Catholicism's 5th commandment) "thou shalt not kill."

Virgil Robinson (ibid., p 5) continues in reference to Pope Innocent III:

"He proclaimed a crusade, or holy war, against the Albigenses. In papal countries all over Europe the priests read the pope's proclamation. He invited all men to unite in an army to march against the Albigenses. He promised them the houses, lands and goods of the heretics whom they killed. He also assured them that all soldiers killed in the crusade would have their sins forgiven and a sure place in heaven."

- Could the 144,000 participate in such a vile activity as murdering the unsaved at the end of time?
- How could the saints show love for their enemies, and their desire to save them, by destroying them, their children and their property?
- Could the 144,000 find an example of such behaviour in the life of Jesus Christ?

Ellen White, Great Controversy, p 589

*"Satan delights in war, for it excites the worst passions of the soul and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. **It is his object to incite the nations to war against one another,** for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God."*

Sometimes the Waldenses were apparently divinely protected. Other times they were savagely murdered while remaining passive. At times, these usually peaceful people made the decision to defend themselves. To do this, they used muskets, slings, hoes, bows and arrows and they even dropped heavy stones from cliffs to crush their enemies beneath them.

¹⁷ Numbers 31: 9-12 "And the children of Israel took [all] the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, [both] of men and of beasts. And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which [are] by Jordan [near] Jericho."

When Christians are attacked, how should they respond? Should they behave:

- as the Israelites did when entering the Promised Land – slaughtering those who had previously opposed them?
- As the Waldenses did when being persecuted – sometimes suffering patiently hoping for divine intervention; sometimes fighting violently?
- As Jesus behaved when He was persecuted? Jesus prayed for His enemies, “Father, forgive them.” Jesus never harmed anyone. Jesus came to save His enemies, not kill them, even if it cost Him His life – and it did.

Second concept

Why did God allow his people to kill? Obviously to eradicate unrepentant evildoers. To prevent contamination of his people, ie. stoning of unrepentant sinners.

Fear of contamination is often cited as a justification for genocide. Hitler did it to the Jews. The Jews did it to the Canaanites. Was one genocide holy and the other, satanic?

This logic makes God a party to murder (since He supposedly ordered the Canaanite massacres) and inadvertently, it limits our perception of God in that we believe He thinks in the way that a sinful human being would think.

Isaiah 55:8,9

"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."

Jesus did not operate from a basis of "fear of contamination." Jesus didn't separate Himself from "sinful" people so that He would not become contaminated. He trusted His Father to keep Him from becoming spiritually contaminated, just as He trusted His Father to keep Him physically safe or to permit Him to die. That doesn't mean Jesus participated in these people's sins - of course He did not, but He went right into their territory and showed them truth in love. While He didn't join them in false worship ceremonies, He didn't wage war on, or annihilate the Samaritans and the Romans as the Jews were keen to do!

Jesus said that He would draw people to Him. How did He do it? Jesus said to the woman (whom the Pharisees wanted to stone to death for being an unrepentant adulteress - a *deliberate, wilful* sinner) - "I do not condemn you."

That meant Jesus forgave her; but she was not a **repentant** sinner until AFTER He forgave and saved her. It was His lack of condemnation that won her heart and His forgiveness that drew her to repentance. It is the LOVE of Christ that draws to repentance and give power to live within the boundaries of the moral law of God.

2 Corinthians 5:14

"For the love of Christ constraineth us."

God's justice and mercy are simply equivalents for justification and sanctification and are combined in His saving character. In the example of the women taken in adultery, Christ justified Mary (I don't condemn thee) and then He sanctified her – i.e. empowered her to overcome sin (Go and sin no more). In contrast to this loving response to a guilty sinner, the Old Testament god simply declares, "I condemn thee to death. There are no second chances. You have sinned. Now you must die."

It is not the One True God who refused to show compassion and love. It appears that the Israelites were deceived about the identity of the God they worshipped, because their “fruits” are not “the fruits of the spirit of Christ” (Gal 5:22, 23).

When a person is murdered they have no chance to repent. Forgiveness and protection (not condemnation and killing) are elements of love. Jesus loved His enemies. He forgave those who used force against Him. He reviled not again (1 Peter 2:23) despite the fact that the probation of some of those who crucified Him, was already over. Even Judas, who became demon possessed at the Last Supper was not repulsed or treated harshly or rejected by Jesus. Jesus still called him "friend" and accepted Judas' kiss of death.

Third concept

Resist the Devil (James 4:7). If someone is trying to kill your family and you sit back and allow it to happen then you have become participant to the murder and broken the 6th commandment and committed a sin of omission. If you accidentally kill the attacker then you must surely be held guiltless. I think this is shown in the Cities of Refuge in the O.T.

Sitting back and letting someone kill your family would be absolutely wrong, but before jumping in to solve the problem with human reasoning, what did Jesus say? He said:

- **If they don't like you preaching here, go somewhere else (Matt 10:23).**
- **If they hit you on this cheek, turn the other cheek (Matt 5:39)**
- **If they are coming to attack you, flee into the mountains (Luke 21:21).**
- **If they do something bad to you, do something good back (Matthew 5:44)**
- **If they abuse you, pray for them (Matthew 5:44)**

Matthew 5:44

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

Matthew 10:16

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

James does say we are to "Resist the devil." He's talking about resisting the temptation to break God's law, just as Jesus resisted that temptation in the wilderness. Christ resisted the devil and the devil had to flee. So it will be for humanity. The temptation is to break God's commandments to save our own lives or that of our family. That's what the death decree and the Sunday law is all about. Will we "endure unto the end?" That means, will we continue to keep all God's commandments until our life is taken, just as Jesus' human life was taken?

Will we trust God to protect us if it is His will, or will we take matters into our own hands and trust to our own defence?

"He that is faithful unto death" receives the crown of life. He that is a commandment keeper - even though the death decree is enacted upon him - that person proves his loyalty to the Father's kingdom.

Desmond Doss decided he would trust God and God miraculously protected Desmond. View a trailer of his inspiring experience at www.desmonddoss.com then click on "view trailer."

Pastor Cyril Pascoe tells this story. When he was a missionary in New Guinea, another church group tried to "get rid" of his missionary group. One 'mission boy' was badly beaten by a group of men from the other church mission. There was a court case where the aggressors were brought to court to face justice. The judge saw the victim whose features were now disfigured and disabled. He was fuming at the "Christian" perpetrators and threatened them with severe punishments. He turned to the victim and asked the boy, "What do you want to do with these men who beat you so badly?" The victim thought for a while and then he answered the judge, "Sir, I would like to forgive them." The judge was incredulous. So was the defence. So were the perpetrators. But Pastor Pascoe was conscious that God had just been honoured. He told a representative of the other mission, who was also present at the court. "You have just seen the attitude of our group. It is the attitude of Jesus. These bashings are not the way of the Lord. What are you teaching your people at your missions?" The bashings did stop - because one boy chose to forgive as Jesus had instructed him.

Resist the Devil - James 4:7

James also says in that chapter, that even speaking evil of someone makes them a lawbreaker who finds fault with God's law. i.e. with God's character.

James 4:11, 12

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. (12) There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

Fourth concept

Phineas who stayed the plague by putting a javelin through the one committing whoredom. Num 25:7 is another example.

As far as Phineas murdering the Moabite woman and the Israelite fornicator, I believe the Israelites **believed** that God was pleased with actions that they considered appropriate to the crime, but which fell far short of God's high standards. I believe that God honoured their good intentions despite their actions. God knew that Phineas was zealous for His honour, but I do not believe He sanctioned Phineas' action of murdering the two fornicators. Jesus Himself, who could have "thrown the first stone" at the woman taken in adultery, did not perform this murderous action, though Mary had done the very same act of prostitution which the Moabite woman had performed. If it's a toss up between Phineas and Jesus as to who acted in accordance with the law of God, I'll have to side with Jesus.

Fifth concept

If you accidentally kill the attacker then you must surely be held guiltless. I think this is shown in the Cities of Refuge in the O.T.

The same principle applies to the Cities of Refuge. The cities were set up to help "unintentional killers" (those who killed someone accidentally) to escape from those who would pursue and kill the man who accidentally murdered his relative. Murdering someone for accidentally killing a person is not true justice. It is vengeance which is aimed at "paying back" a presumed evil for a premeditated evil.

Deuteronomy 19:21

"And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for

hand, foot for foot.”

What did Jesus say? He said, there's a better way – a right way.

Matthew 5:38-39

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: (39) But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

Then He stated in Matthew 5:44, 45 :

Matthew 5:44, 45

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:”

Jesus had just given the principles of righteousness in the beatitudes a few sentences before the “love your enemies” statement. Christ had also just stated that He had not come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. So, it appears that somebody misinterpreted the law and the prophets, while Jesus interpreted it and fulfilled it correctly.

Matthew 5:17

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

Once again, the Christian is invited to side with Jesus. The Cities of Refuge were set up because of "the hardness of their hearts." If the Israelites repaid evil with good, they wouldn't have needed Cities of Refuge.

Sixth objection

Is it not God's prerogative to give life and to take it?

God is the source of all life - not the source of death. God gives life. Sinners choose to die when they move away from Him and embrace sin which of course brings death.

Seventh objection

Does he not destroy sinners in the lake of fire?

No, fire comes out of the sinner and consumes them.

Ezekiel 28:18

"Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee."

Isaiah 33:11

“Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.” (See also Isa 5:24; Isa 33: 12; Zeph 2:3; Mal 4:1).

Ellen White, Early Writings, p 54 (End of the 2300 Days)

“I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. **I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, 'If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.'"**

God is a consuming fire to sin - not to sinners. We can authorise God to consume the sin in us now so that we are not killed by coming into His presence when we meet Him on judgment day - or we can continue to be joined to our sins and be consumed on that day by the body in which sin 'reigns.' Sin has caused a lethal change in the human body. In a way which is not clearly explained in the Bible, sin has caused human bodies to be 'time bombs.' This condition necessitates a radical transformation and this will occur when Jesus comes the second time to save redeemed sinners (1 Thess 4:16). In contrast to this vital action, the wicked will not undergo a radical transformation and the sin in their bodies – still attached to every cell – destroys them in the presence of unveiled divinity. At this time, the world suffers from unrestrained evil passions, with sinners raging at each other and at the righteous. Their violent actions cause chaotic conditions. Sinners are bent on destroying all who disagree with them and these demon possessed people employ nuclear warfare and other suicidal methods of destruction. Sin brings death to those who accept its principles of selfishness to rule their lives. Nuclear wars, murders, cyclones, tsunamis etc will be destroying the earth when unrestrained passions are displayed as God removes His loving, gentle and peaceful influence from unrepentant sinners. Indeed human 'hearts will fail them for fear of what is happening on the earth.'

Luke 21:26

“Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”

AT Jones, Review and Herald Jan, 24 & 31, 1899.

'Yet, what every one must understand is this: the only way that God does, or can, separate anybody from sin is by that very consuming fire of his presence. The only way, therefore, in which you and I can ever be so separated from sin as to meet God as he is, in the flaming fire that he is, in that great day, is to meet him TODAY as he is, in the consuming fire that he is. The only way that we can be prepared to meet him at his coming in that great day is to meet him in his coming today. For there is a coming to men now, as really as to the world in that great day. 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will COME TO YOU.' John 14:18. But do not forget that whether he comes to you or to me now, or whether he comes to other people in that great day, he comes only as a consuming fire.' (end quote AT Jones). (See longer extract of sermon by AT Jones in the section called God is a consuming fire to sin).

The Gospel Message for Today, Sermon by W. W. Prescott, Sunday, 29 March, 1903
General Conference Daily Bulletin Vol 3, No. 4 p 54

"A word further concerning that blotting out of sin: *It is the revelation of the glory of God that blots out sin. The time for the blotting out of sin has come when our High Priest takes all the sins of the people upon Himself, and goes into the most holy place, and stands in the immediate presence of the glory which blots out sin.* The sins blotted out are the sins confessed, confessed upon the Priest, not that by arbitrary act of ours we can lay our sins upon Him; God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Our confession is that we personally confess that our sins are on Him. We agree to that, and, having confessed that, and agreed to that, we let go of them; we say our sins are on Him. *Our very agreement with Him, in the confession that our sins have been laid upon Him, is God's means of removing them from us, and letting them be upon Him in our behalf.*"

God isn't murdering anyone. Sinners are choosing death.

Eighth concept

Did he not rain down Fire and Brimstone on Sodom?

No. God protected and evacuated those who would separate themselves. The others were handed over to Satan who once again, as the fire god in Job's story, sent down fire and destroyed them. God permitted this to occur to the Sodomites for He was legally bound to do so. His principle of honouring the freedom of choice required that He was forced to abandon the people who had rejected His leadership. He could not protect them any longer and He had to leave them to the master they had chosen – Satan.

Ninth concept

God used his people when they were submitted to him to destroy those unrepentant nations.

No. God said *don't* kill. I suggest that Satan tricked the Israelites into thinking they heard God's voice. Please read section of my book called "human sacrifices." Did God ever ask for human sacrifices - according to the Bible record? Yes. In Abraham's story of making a human sacrifice as a burnt offering on a high place with his son as the offering. **But God to the Israelites that He had never commanded them since they came out of Egypt to make animal sacrifices or human sacrifices which He called an abomination which the heathen practiced** (Jer 7:22, 30, 31; Jer 32:35). According to the Bible record, the Israelites practiced human and animal sacrifices with war captives. They are especially denoted as being consecrated to death and devoted to

death or another expression is "put under the ban" in worship "to the Lord." This is in the Biblical record. Lev 27:29 is one example. It was a pagan practice and the Assyrians, Moabites, Ammonites all performed the same human sacrifices of war captives, just as Jephthah did to his daughter after a battle that "god" helped him to win. These violent murders were committed when the Israelites were NOT in supposed apostasy from Yahweh. Did Jesus ever commend this type of heathen activity? Never. When the Israelites were rebellious it is supposed that the One True God used the other nations to chastise them to bring them to repentance. This is not so. When the Israelites were rebellious, God had to let them remain "joined to their idols" (Hosea 4:17 *"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone".*) *Because of their unyielding decision to rebel against God's loving laws, the spirit of God (His presence) retreated and the Israelites were then without divine protection. Satan, their chosen master, who delights in war, was then able to use one nation of unbelievers to destroy another.*

Ellen White, Great Controversy, p 589

"Satan delights in war, for it excites the worst passions of the soul and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. It is his object to incite the nations to war against one another, for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God."

Tenth concept

Moses killed an Egyptian which was wrong then later at Gods direction he had a Sabbath breaker stoned which was right.

Moses was wrong on both counts of murder. Jesus did not suggest that Sabbath breakers were to be stoned. He didn't order the death of Judas or of the Pharisees who broke the Sabbath by their traditions. He didn't even condemn an adulteress. Is this the same Jesus as seen in the Old Testament? No. The Old Testament God which was worshipped was a mixture of pagan gods. By their fruits ye shall KNOW them. Were the ancient Israelites "holy"? Were their fruits in keeping with the 10 commandments? No! Were the fruit of the true spirit (the fulfilment of the 10 commandments) seen in Jesus? Absolutely.

Eleventh concept:

The difference is one "killing" was according to Gods will the other was not.

I can't agree. It is more consistent and reasonable based on the evidence, to believe that God killed no-one nor ordered anyone else to do the killing for Him. The One True God did not require sacrifices or murdering rampages. God never authorised His people to break the 10 everlasting commandments. The difference was dependent on the person's choice. The sinner decided to separate themselves from the protection of God by cherishing and retaining the love of sin in their minds. The Israelites became very confused about who God was and that is why Jesus came to earth to "show them the Father" (John 14: 8 9). Jesus' life demonstrated the fulfilment of the 10 commandments.

Twelfth concept

Did God give the Israelites special dispensation to kill people when no-one else in the whole world has been trusted to complete that "holy" task of murdering pagans ever since? (God can do what is just and right in his wisdom and time.

Exactly. God has told us what is just and right. It is in the principles contained in the 10 commandments and God will not change what is right and just and good. To believe that God's law is changeable is to believe a satanic lie which says that there is something wrong with God's law. Jesus said the law would not be done away with. Satan has said it is a faulty law).

Thirteenth concept

If an animal is suffering in severe agony with no remedy is it not an act of mercy to put it out of its misery?

Perhaps, but wouldn't an act of faith be superior? Ask God to intervene. We did this recently with our very old, terminally cat who was suffering in his old age. We had done all we could to provide for his needs and for his comfort, but we knew the end was near when his kidneys and bowels failed. That day we prayed that God would let our faithful old cat go to sleep peacefully. We prayed and patted our cat and he simply went to sleep without any struggle whatsoever. He died in his sleep. That is to me a demonstration of the true mercy of God and His love.

On the other hand, we do not think it would be merciful to have taken a sledge hammer and bludgeoned our little cat to a terrified death.

Likewise the Israelites did not use "mercy killings" out of compassion on the men, women, children, infants and animals. They were barbarians. They committed murder and tried to justify it by claiming that their god commanded them to do so. Many of these war captives were used as sex slaves also - it's in the Biblical record. This is not the way of Jesus nor does it demonstrate the character of the Father.

Fourteenth concept

If you don't believe in mercy killings, then are you not condoning the suffering by allowing it to continue?

Not at all. Weren't the Israelites supposed to be a witness to the world of the superior laws the ruled the One True God's government? They didn't do this. They began their "witness" in a murderous attack on the inhabitants. Was that merciful? They murdered mercilessly the people who needed most to know about the loving Creator God - and to have His love demonstrated to them. The Israelites might have revealed to the pagans, the righteous principles established by the all powerful, but loving God - the God who could save to the uttermost all who would come to Him. However, this witness was denied the pagan nations by the Israelites. The Israelite attitude to the Canaanites was the same as was the Canaanites attitude to them. The pagan attitude was clearly outlined in Deuteronomy 13:8. This was their attitude to those, even of their own nation, who "worshipped another god."

Deuteronomy 13:8

"Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him:"

In stark contrast to the Old Testament principle of destroying heretics, Christ demonstrated the principles of divine love and freedom of worship. If people didn't come to Christ in Old Testament times, but chose to cling to their sin, God had to legally respect that decision. He had no choice but to leave them to the murdering god - the one who was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44).

Fifteenth concept

Isn't God's "Strange Act" of killing an act of mercy?

No. God doesn't kill anyone. God's strange act is "letting go" of a sinner who has insisted that he does not want to be identified with God in any way. His strange act means, withdrawing His protection and influence from the one who has rejected Him. Because God has pledged freedom of choice to everyone, He is not legally authorised to interfere with Satan's plans to destroy the person's life, when that person has rejected His presence.

It is painful to God to make the decision to stop pleading with the sinner, knowing that the person He loves, has made the irrecoverable decision to give his allegiance to an imposter god; a murderer - and to expose himself to the cruelty of Satan's rule. This reality caused Jesus to weep over Jerusalem (Luke 13:34).

Jeremiah 9:24

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."

#28 - God Will By No Means Clear the Guilty - Exo 34:7; Num 14:18

Objection: *God's mercy runs out and He eventually kills the guilty.*

Answer:

Exodus 34:7

7 Keeping<05341>(8802) mercy<02617> for thousands<0505>, forgiving<05375>(8802) iniquity<05771> and transgression<06588> and sin<02403>, and that will by no means<05352>(8763) clear<05352>(8762) *the guilty* ; visiting<06485>(8802) the iniquity<05771> of the fathers<01> upon the children<01121>, and upon the children's<01121> children, unto the third<08029> and to the fourth<07256> *generation*.

Numbers 14:18

“The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.”

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

Exodus 34:7:

Verse 7. [*That will by no means clear the guilty*] This last clause is rather difficult; literally translated it signifies, *in clearing he will not clear*. But the Samaritan, reading *lo, to him*, instead of the negative *lo, not*, renders the clause thus: *With whom the innocent shall be innocent*; i.e., an innocent or holy person shall never be treated as if he were a transgressor, by this just and holy God. The Arabic version has it, *He justifies and is not justified*; and the Septuagint is nearly as our English text, *καιουκαθαρειτονενοχον, and he doth not purify the guilty*. The Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint, edited by Dr. Grabe, has *καιτονενοχονκαθαρισμωου καθαρει, and the guilty he will not cleanse with a purification-offering*. The Coptic is to the same purpose. The *Vulgate* is a paraphrase: *nullusque apud te per se innocens est, "and no person is innocent by or of himself before thee."* This gives a *sound* theologic sense, stating a great truth, *That no man can make an atonement for his own sins, or purify his own heart; and that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

Certainly, when the wicked reject the justice (forgiveness) and the mercy of Christ (His indwelling power to live a sanctified life), they will be without divine protection when Christ appears the second and third times on the earth. There is no vengeance in God however; **it is the spiritual condition of the person which determines their level of safety in the Presence of God.**

#29 - Denying the Sanctuary Doctrine?

Objection:

Ellen White stated that in the last days heretics would be preaching false doctrines that try to deny the doctrine of the sanctuary. Isn't what you are presenting denying the sanctuary doctrine?

Answer:

This objection appears to be a reference to the following quote by Ellen White.

Paulsen p 61 (1 Nov, 1907); Lessons from the Visions of Ezekiel, Part One Exhortation to Faithfulness, (4 July, 1906)

“New theories have been advanced as truth, which were not truth, and the Spirit of God revealed their error. As the great pillars of our faith have been presented, the Holy Spirit has borne witness to them, and especially is this so regarding **the truths of the sanctuary question. Over and over again the Holy Spirit has in a marked manner endorsed the preaching of this doctrine.** But today, as in the past, some will be led to form new theories and to deny the truths upon which the Spirit of God has placed His approval. Any man who seeks to present the theories which would lead us from the light that has come to us on the ministration in **the heavenly sanctuary**, should not be accepted as a teacher. A true understanding of the sanctuary question means much to us as a people. When we were earnestly seeking the Lord for light on that question light came. In vision I was given such a view of **the heavenly sanctuary**, and the ministration connected with the holy place, that for many days I could not speak of it. I know from the light that God has given me that there should be a revival of the messages that have been given in the past, because men will seek to bring in new theories, and will try to prove that those theories are scriptural, whereas they are error which if allowed a place will undermine faith in the truth. We are not to accept these suppositions and pass them along as truth. No, no; we must not move from the platform of truth on which we have been established.”

The doctrine which Ellen White refers to as being established by the Holy Spirit, is the doctrine of the **heavenly** sanctuary and Christ's heavenly intercession for humanity.

Ellen White prophesied that a satanic attack would be made on the doctrine of the **heavenly** sanctuary. There is a vast difference between the holy heavenly sanctuary and the earthly sanctuary.

Great Controversy, p 516

“There is nothing that the great deceiver fears so much as that we shall become acquainted with his devices.”

Satan endeavours to destroy every avenue whereby God's loving character is visible to humanity. At times the devil counterfeits God's systems, giving them a demonic flavour and casting this flavour onto God's character. Satan also attacks God's character by designing satanic inventions that directly oppose God's systems – and crediting the origin of these inventions to God.

It appears that Satan has developed both these strategies to destroy the true doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary.

- Jesus said that the Father GAVE His only Son out of extreme love for humanity (John 3:16). Satan, through the trinity doctrine, opposes this truth and claims that a role-playing arrangement existed between three co-equal, co-eternal, unrelated beings – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Christ's intercessory office is denied by the doctrine of the trinity which suggests that another being called the Holy Spirit is interceding in the sanctuary before the mercy seat “with groanings which can not be uttered” (Romans 8:26) as an Intercessor or Advocate *in the place of the Son of God*.
- The two sanctuary models were in stark contrast to each other in that they were founded on diametrically opposed moral principles:
 - The heavenly sanctuary (the council of peace) displayed the true essence of God's character – unselfish, giving love. In consolidating the plan of salvation, both Father and Son realised that in order to redeem humanity, it might cost them eternal separation from each other. The Son of God would risk His eternal life and suffer torment, torture and execution at the hands of the very people He came to save. Even though humanity was riddled with sin and in a desperately lost condition, Christ's love for sinners exceeded the risk of being separated from His Father.
 - The earthly sanctuary was constructed by men. It was founded on the principle of an arbitrary god who selfishly demanded worship and commanded perfect obedience and conformity. This false god deceived his followers into believing they would be cleansed of their sins by a system of works. This satanic system involved the butchering of innocent animals in violent blood-letting rituals as sacrificial rites to cleanse humanity. Burning flesh was to this god, a sweet savour to his nostrils. In contrast to the selfless, compassionate God of the heavenly sanctuary, the selfish, merciless god of the earthly sanctuary, would strike dead the sinner who stood before him, unless he was sufficiently appeased by the correct ceremonial rites and bloody offerings. The earthly sanctuary system was hierarchical. The priests appear to have employed secrecy. The common people were motivated by fear of death which would be inflicted for breaking any of the many compulsory, ceremonial rules that governed their society.
- The earthly (and pagan) sanctuary services required numerous sacrifices. The claim is also made that Christ dies daily in the form of the Eucharist.
- The Son of God said that out of love, He would lay down His life voluntarily for humanity (John 10:14-16), without demanding or expecting any selfish repayment other than the joy **that was set before him, He** endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2). Christ anticipated joy from His actions of saving humanity. In contrast, the sacrificial bulls, goats and lambs were tied to the horns of the altar (Psa 118:27). They did not voluntarily give up their lives, despite not being able to escape the slaughtering knife. There is no evidence to suggest the animals enjoyed being slaughtered, nor that they had any joy to anticipate in the sacrificial ritual.
- God was angered by Balaam's action of striking his donkey – angry enough to slay Balaam (Num 22:33), but then He commands the butchering of innocent animals¹⁸.

18 Thomas L Thompson, *The Bible in History – How Writers Create a Past* (1999) p 11 It appears there were two records of the prophet Balaam's story. The original story is recorded in the Deir Alla text of ancient Moab/Jordan. The original story is recorded centuries before Moses' time. Both the Israelite story and the Moab story portray the prophet speaking “as the voice of God.” In the Moab story, the “voice of god” belongs to *Shgr* – a pagan deity.

- Christ willingly risked His eternal life for the salvation of humanity. Satan glories in the death of Christ. “Dead Christs” adorn many churches as if perhaps as a token of the devil's (false) power over the Son of God. The anniversary of Christ's death is commonly known as “Good Friday”- but the disciples did not consider it a “good day.” Christians might be expected to call the resurrection day, “Good Sunday,” - but the pagan term “Easter Sunday” is used.
- A sacrificial service cannot realistically portray the resurrection of Christ and this was a vital concept in the plan of salvation.
- The sacrificial system required the brutal slaughtering of many animals, yet it was purported to offer the Jews an opportunity to develop their characters after Jesus – but there was no violence in Jesus (Isaiah 53:9).
- The Levitical law promoted kindness to animals (Exo 23:2-4; Deut 22:4,10). How could the Jews teach their children to practice kindness toward animals, and then instruct their children to slit the animals' throats? (Exo 20:24; Lev 1:5-9, 14,17; Exe 43:23-25). (Pagan religions also required that children become instructed in these “offerings to the gods”).
- How could God's original vegetarian diet be maintained, while the Jewish sacrificial system required every Jew to eat meat e.g. The paschal lamb?
- How could it be supposed that killing countless animals would teach the Israelites the dreadfulness of their sins, when according to the Torah, God supposedly commanded the Israelites to deliberately kill men, women, children and infants?
- Was it God's intention that His people feel guilty for killing a lamb and not a baby?
- Was it God's intention that His people feel guilty or that they develop love to their neighbours?
- Was it God's intention that His people feel guilty until they negated that sin with the slaughtering of an animal and then continued to traverse the cycle of “sin and sacrifice”? The sacrificial system appears to closely represent the false gospel which suggests that Christian's can continue to traverse the cycle of “sin and repent” and still be saved.
- How does killing a lamb bring repentance for sin while killing a baby brings no feelings of guilt? Surely it is logical to conclude that it must be far more traumatic to kill a baby than a lamb – and killing a baby transgresses the 10 commandment law of God. If God required the repentant sinner to feel the guilt of his sin, sacrificing a baby, as the pagans did, would certainly create a bigger guilty impact on the slayer.
- If God desired His people to “see” that sin results in death, there were countless examples of death already in the world without deliberately sacrificing animals.
- If God desired His people to “feel” the anguish of losing His own Son, sacrificing was not necessary. Countless examples of children dying already existed in the world and the accompanying grief would have been very visible.
- The sacrificial system taught brutality and effectively desensitised the Israelites to the extent that they could sacrifice their own children as they had previously sacrificed animals.

- God doesn't employ faulty systems. The sacrificial system did not appear to have successfully conveyed the plan of salvation to the Jewish people. The Jews considered they were giving a gift to God in the slaying of **their** animals; however, the real gospel teaches that **God gave** His Son to humanity. The sacrificial services convinced the Hebrews that atonement was made by the "blood" of animals, instead of the truth which Paul taught that, "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb 10:4).
- While the original sanctuary system was no doubt perfect, fashioned after the heavenly pattern shown to Moses on Mt Sinai (Exo 25:40), the plan of salvation became almost indiscernible. The message became weakened by the constant blending of theologies, brought about by the Hebrews interaction with pagan nations.
- When the books of Moses were made into a written record about 300-600 years after his death, and re-recorded and edited in the first, second and third centuries BC, the blended theology appears to have been recorded also. The blended system might well have been a ploy by Satan to deliberately misrepresent the character of true heavenly sanctuary.
- The heavenly sanctuary demonstrates a more perfect representation of the plan of salvation for it reveals the character - mind/heart of the Father and Son. Christ ministers to humanity, not only in the heavenly sanctuary, but in the minds of individuals. He is "a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb 8:2). The Son desires "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:21). Both Father and Son desire that humanity dwells "in Them" i.e. that humanity receives the unselfish mind of the Father through Christ. The earthly temple that divinity desires to dwell in, is the living human temple – the human mind becomes a willing dwelling place for the spirit of God. "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet" (Acts 7:48).

In light of these stark contrasts, without bringing into the equation the physical aspects of either model, would it be justifiable to claim that the earthly sanctuary model is an accurate type or a shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, when it appears to be completely contrary in all its principles?

EJ Waggoner did not think so. The following extract of his confession of faith was written just prior to his death (and after his separation from the SDA church).

EJ Waggoner, Confession of Faith, 27 May, 1916

*"The ancient sanctuary with its ceremonies was essentially a type by contrast. It was built because the children of Israel would not have God to dwell in them. But for their unbelief they might have come direct to the sanctuary which God's hands had established, and might have talked with God face to face, as Moses did. The promise was, if they kept God's covenant, as Abraham did, they should be a kingdom of priests; instead, the priesthood was confined to one tribe, and to one family of that tribe, and was utterly useless so far as freeing from sin was concerned. Instead of having the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, the Living Stone, from which they could drink righteousness, they had law on lifeless stone, a "ministration of death." The "tabernacle of witness" was continual witness against them. Of course they were not shut up to those weak and unprofitable things, for whoever turned to the Lord in truth had the veil taken away, and could, like Moses, behold the glory of God. **What I wish to emphasize is that we are not to spend precious time***

studying the minutest details of a system that was only the product of unbelief, when with Abraham and Isaiah and Paul we may by faith have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in referring to the tabernacle and its instruments said, "of which we cannot now speak particularly"; and it seems to me that we would do well to follow his example."

Desire of Ages, p 278, 279. (Ellen White)

*"The effort to unite the teaching of Jesus with the established religion would be in vain. The vital truth of God, like fermenting wine, would burst the old, decaying bottles of Pharisaical tradition....Jesus pointed out the power of false teaching to destroy the appreciation and desire for truth. 'No man,' He said, 'having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.' **All the truth that has been given to the world through patriarchs and prophets shone out in new beauty in the words of Christ.** But the scribes and Pharisees had no desire for the precious new wine. Until emptied of the old traditions, customs, and practices, they had no place in mind or heart for the teachings of Christ. They clung to the dead forms, and turned away from the living truth and the power of God."*

Human theology is always faulty unless founded upon the example of the Son of God in whom there is a perfect demonstration of the Father's matchless love.

Isaiah 55:8,9

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. (9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Ezekiel 11:19

"And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:"

Ezekiel 36:26, 27

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

Jeremiah 29:11-14

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. (12) Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. (13) And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (14) And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity..."

Questions on the Sacrificial Rituals of the Sanctuary

Objections: *Isn't the Old Testament basically about the sacrificial system? Would not having a earthly sacrifice take away from the heavenly sanctuary?*

Answer: The Old Testament is concerned with Christ and the signs with which to recognise His coming as the Messiah. The OT also demonstrates what happens to humanity and the earth, when people choose to live apart from the principles of God's loving law.

There is a sacrifice for sins and Jesus made it in collaboration with His Father, but the sacrifice is one that is better portrayed by the words and life of Jesus, than by the sacrificial rituals of the sanctuary. Jesus died for humanity and accepted the sins of the world upon His own self, when He took on sinful, human, mortal flesh and developed a perfect character whilst in that sinful flesh. That was the sacrifice which Christ gave for humanity. It was a total sacrifice of His entire being – His entire life. His sacrifice required that He live as a human being until His human mortal life expired. At that point the test of His character would cease. Christ gave us His perfect life - by developing a perfect human character - amidst severe temptations. His act of giving His entire being, was the sacrifice.

Hebrews 1:1, 2

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, (2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”

The heavenly sanctuary is the real tabernacle designed by God, where no human being or demonic angel can taint or corrupt the system of righteousness conducted by God.

Hebrews 8:2

“A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

Where is the real sanctuary? In heaven. What is it polluted with? The record of our sins. Only Jesus can remove the record of sins from the heavenly sanctuary and He could only accomplish this saving act by becoming the second Adam and by living a perfect life in sinful flesh. This gift was the sacrifice of heaven which made it possible for the earthly sanctuaries of our bodies to be cleansed of sin and of the power of sin.

There are no blood-letting rituals in the heavenly sanctuary or even an altar of sacrifice. The 'sacrifice' was the life of the Son of God who laid aside heaven to take on mortality. Jesus gave us His life - His perfect character – and that life saved humanity. The value of salvation was in His life – up till His death - not in His blood. Jesus did not have to shed blood to save us, but He did have to live a sinless life up to the point where He died - i.e. He had to live without sin for every second of His human life until the test ended at His death. Christ was faithful “unto death.” Rev 2:10

The Catholic religion glories in a "dead" Christ. That was considered Satan's victory over the Son of God. "Dead Christs" are seen everywhere in Roman Catholic icons, art and statues. Animists also worship the spirits of their dead ancestors.

Satan cut short the normal mortal life span that Christ would have lived as a mortal human being. Jesus was born under the law, i.e. mortal. As a human being, Christ would eventually die -be cut off - but not for His own sins (Dan 9:26) but because of humanity's sins which He took upon Himself. Christ did not have to be crucified or to shed copious amounts of blood.

God did not command that His Son be tortured as a partial payment for sin, although this doctrine appears in Roman Catholic and pagan religions. Paul said that the wages of sin was death - not torture and intentional suffering (Rom 6:23).

The Day of Atonement was a type of the cleansing of the sanctuary in 1844. How can it be proved without the sacrificial rituals of the sanctuary?

The Day of Atonement involved performing many sacrifices which were said to signify the putting away of sin and cleansing the earthly sanctuary of the year's record of the Israelites sin. Afterwards, the Day of Atonement was to signal the beginning of the cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven in 1844. The real cleansing from sin is both in the Most Holy Place in heaven and in the temple of the Christian's mind, where true conversion takes place. Ezekiel pointed this out the real temple to be cleansed is the 'heart' or 'spirit' Eze 36:26, 27.

It appears that the original system - "the pattern shown to Moses in the mount" (Exo 25:40) had been a perfectly divinely ordained system which slowly became corrupted over the years and was written down when it was polluted with pagan theology - paganism that was seeped in blood rituals.

The date of 1844 signalled the 'time of the beginning of the cleansing of the sanctuary' both in heaven and in a special sense in the minds of Christ's followers.

Daniel 8:14

"And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

1844, a date which comes from the Dan 8:14 prophecy - as explained to a Jewish man (Daniel) by the angel Gabriel - signalled a warning time - to prepare for the end of probation by cleansing the mind, separating from Babylon physically and spiritually; a time to return to the One True God and to "worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water."

When the period of the 2300 days ceased, then the sanctuary was to be cleansed. How could this occur without a sacrifice? There was a divine sacrifice, but it was not a pagan, blood-letting sacrifice.

Of course all of God's children need to cleanse their minds through submission to Christ every day, but this applies more to those who will be part of the special group - the 144000 - who will reflect perfectly the character of Jesus. Gabriel was instructed to "make this man understand the vision" so Gabriel used language which the Jewish people were familiar with in their language and cultural situations. Jesus Himself employed this strategy to teach people, though the people's cultural beliefs were not based on truth. e.g. the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; calling the Samaritan woman "a dog."

Daniel's vision predicted the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. The earthly Jewish and pagan sanctuaries extolled the virtues of the physical blood of the sacrifices. But we know that the Jewish people did not believe that simply collecting the blood would provide cleansing from sin. If collecting and applying blood to the was the only requirement for making an atonement, then one must wonder why a person might not preserve the life of the sacrificial animal, and simply have "bled" it as do the Masi tribesmen. After collecting a sufficient amount of blood to perform the sprinkling rituals, there would be no reason why the animal could not have been returned to the herd. However, the blood was not the important issue. The important fact was that the animal's blood symbolised the animal's death.

Christ's sacrifice actually represented His becoming one with the human race, putting on sinful humanity, developing a perfect character over His entire human life – and not just the event of His death. When Jesus, as our High Priest, entered into the heavenly sanctuary in 1844, He presented to the Father, the merits of His perfect life - evidenced by His perfect character. It seems obvious that God would not permit pagan blood-letting rituals to completely obscure the truth which He had originally given to Moses. Despite the pagan influences, God ensured that the truth could still be found by those who were prepared to dig as though for hidden treasure. God over-rides many situations that Satan has orchestrated to produce evil. God brings good out of evil situations. e.g. Joseph explained to his brothers, Genesis 50:20 "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. "

Why is Jesus called the "Lamb of God?"

John the Baptist was the only person who is recorded to have referred to Jesus as 'the Lamb of God.' Jesus never called Himself, the Lamb of God.

John 1:29

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

John the Baptist was familiar with the Messianic prophecies. He knew that Isaiah's prophecy declared that the Messiah's character would be as gentle as a lamb for it was predicted in the same prophecy that the Messiah would have 'no violence in Him.'

Isaiah 53:7, 9

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.... (9) And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

John the Revelator wrote (three times) that Jesus appeared as a lamb that was slain, but this lamb had 7 horns and 7 eyes. Such a lamb was not typical of a sacrificial lamb that was slain in the temple, but in typical prophetic symbolism, the lamb represented the resurrection of Someone Perfect who had been slain.

Revelation 5:6, 12; 13:18

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth....(12) Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing....(13:8) And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

The Jews believed the sacrificial services were given by Moses, and so God spoke to them in their own language just as Jesus also spoke in symbols and parables to those who couldn't understand heavenly concepts in other ways.

John 16:12 (Jesus said to His disciples)

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

To the farmers, Jesus used farming language to demonstrate the 'kingdom of heaven.' To the fishermen, He used fishing language and stories. To the shepherds, He told parables concerning sheep. However, the prophets who described the Messiah, revealed that He was lamb-like **in character.** Christ did sacrifice Himself for us, by risking His eternal existence. He took on Himself human mortality and formed a perfect character for humanity. His character achieved our salvation - not the blood shed at His death.

Would Genesis have to be thrown out as well, as that is where the first account of sacrifice is?

We don't need to 'make excuses' for God because of the bad reporting He's received whether in the Bible or elsewhere. The Bible is divinely inspired in its prophetic statements and in its revelation of the law of God. The Bible is proved to be an accurate historical record of ancient Jewish theology and of the Jewish nation's actions. However, if Jewish theology reported in the Bible, contradict the words and teachings of Christ and or are not in harmony with the 10 commandments, we need to question their veracity as theological truths.

For example: There is an apparent inconsistency between the Jewish sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary. While the Jewish sanctuary contains an altar of burnt offering sacrifices, there does not appear to be a corresponding altar in the heavenly sanctuary. In fact, every piece of appears to be mentioned in Revelation where John sees the temple of God – except for outer court items - the altar of burnt offering/sacrifice and the laver. One wonders why is the sacrificial altar and the laver are missing if everything was made “according to the pattern shown in the mount” (Ex 25:40).

Paul appears to discount the value of the sacrifices and washings which took place in the in the outer court of the earthly sanctuary.

Hebrews 9:9, 10

“Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; (10) Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”

If the sacrificial sanctuary services were set up by God to teach the Jewish race about salvation, why didn't they understand the meaning? Why does it appear that there is zero perception from the Jews of a Messiah who would come at the predicted time, to die as like a meek little lamb? Why were the Jews expecting their Messiah to be a conquering war hero? Didn't the sacrificial system work? Was it a faulty system? Does God create faulty systems? No. Rebellious people who wanted to 'be like the other nations' likely absorbed pagan influences into God's holy sanctuary services and this corruption caused the plan of redemption to become almost indiscernible.

It seems that anti-trinitarian people throw out Spirit of Prophecy and then they throw out the Bible.”

Consider how the Reformers must have experienced similar accusations. It is claimed that after Martin Luther rejected the Roman Catholic belief of justification by works, he was warned by other monks, that if he continued to question the church's position, this grave 'error' would lead him into deeper darkness and he might also throw out other catholic doctrines i.e. the eucharist and indulgences. Was Luther wrong to continue seeking truth?

When God's people cast off error, He will not lead them into sin or into evil. The SDA pioneers had to cast off Sunday-keeping. They also were required to cast off the immortality of the soul and creeds and church membership etc. Perhaps some of their friends in the church warned them that if they cast off the Sunday sacredness doctrine, that it would lead them to cast off the immortality of the soul too. However, the pioneers trusted Jesus to lead them and He did. Christ is still leading His people today if their minds are open to His spirit. He promised "You will hear a voice behind you saying, "this is the way, walk ye in it." It is not going into deeper error when we cast off error! Jesus has said He will lead us and the 144,000 have a LOT of casting off of errors to do, but not of their own doing, but only as Christ leads them.

Is anything definite in the Bible? How do we know whether the words of Jesus Himself haven't been altered?

"To the law and to the testimony" - Isaiah 8:20.

"Keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" - Rev 14:12

"Keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ - Rev 12:17

"On these (2 principles of love-laws) hang all the law and the prophets" - Matt 22:40

The two pillar supports are a recurring theme in both the Old Testament and the New Testament . Jesus upholds His Father's law. We follow Jesus by faith - the same way that Abraham and Noah and Enoch heard and recognised the voice of Jesus. They had no Bible. The voice of Jesus brought by angels to our consciences, is the promise being fulfilled that HE will lead us into all truth.

We need to know that God's character does not change because His law never changes. God's law of love is unchanging. Jesus lived the law and upheld the unselfish and loving principles of His Father's character and heavenly government. The overwhelming theme of all the Bible writers who harmonise with Jesus' words also elevate the principles of God's law. Those who don't line up "line upon line" with the commandments and the teachings of Jesus, are not inspired of God and must qualify as writings which have been interfered with by human authors / editors.

Ellen White wrote only inspired writings, not her own thoughts.

It is not disputed that when God spoke to Ellen White in vision, that she was receiving a divine, infallible message, however Christ's followers cannot accept that any human being is infallible in things not especially revealed. At times, Ellen White proved that her assumptions were made without divine revelation on the specific subject upon which she had commented and she had to rescind the information in the testimony e.g. claiming that pork eating was not an unhealthy habit. Was it possible also that Ellen White also made comments that were not especially inspired concerning God's character? While she had a better knowledge than others who had no visions of heavenly things, she did not possess complete, infallible knowledge. Only Christ and the Father are infallible and have infinite wisdom. Ellen White herself warned, that no matter how 'righteous' a particular human being appears, Christ's followers are not to establish their faith in that person, for that is making an idol of them.

Did Ellen White have a wrong understanding of the character of God?

Although Ellen White had special insights into heavenly things, it is not possible that she understood God's character perfectly while she was still a sinful human being. All humanity has a very poor understanding of the character of God. God's character exceeds anything our human minds can comprehend as **good**.

Ellen White states that the redeemed will be studying God's goodness for eternity. While certainly qualifying as Christ's messenger, Ellen White could not possibly have a **perfect** understanding of God's character and neither could anyone in the world today, but His people can ask Jesus to continue to enlighten them **to the point** where Christ's character will be perfectly reproduced in His followers, to prepare them to stand firm during the terrible times ahead. God is still refining and instructing His people. If we are content to remain only as advanced as the pioneers, we are following men and women – not Christ.

Isaiah 55:8, 9

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. (9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

#30 - My House – Clearing the Temple – Matthew 21:12-13

*“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves (13) And said unto them, 'It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.’” **Jesus used violence to cleanse the temple and He also called the temple, where sacrifices were made, 'His Father's house.'** Therefore Jesus claimed the sacrificial system as being of divine origin.*

Objection: The sacrificial system was of Divine origin

Another version of this event is recorded by Mark.

Mark 11:15-17

“And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; (16) And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. (17) And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

Luke 19:46

“Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

John 2:16

“And he said unto them that sold the doves, 'Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.’”

Answer:

When Jesus cleared the temple, He quoted from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 56:6-7

“Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; (7) Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house **shall be called an house of prayer for all people.**”

Jesus stood in the court and proclaimed that His Father's house was a house of prayer. [The temple court was designated as a place of prayer \(especially for repentance\).](#)

EG White, Education p 163

“And Jehoshaphat, standing in the temple court before his people, poured out his soul in prayer, pleading God's promise, with confession of Israel's helplessness. 'We have no might against this great company that cometh against us,' he said: 'neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee.' 2 Chronicles 20:2, 1, 3, 4, 12”

In practice, the Israelites would enter the court with a sacrificial animal. The prayer of repentance was recited and the animal slain. Christ only mentioned that His Father's house was a house of prayer – not one of sacrifice, although sacrifice was also mentioned prominently in the text (Isaiah 56: 6, 7) from which He was quoting. Christ drove the sacrificial animals out of the temple courts.

Why didn't Christ include the quotation from the text and say that His Father's house was a house of prayer **and animal sacrifice**? Why would Jesus not retain at least **some** animals in the temple so that the true worshippers, after they offered their sincere prayers of repentance, could then make their sacrifices? It would appear that Jesus quoted the Old Testament scriptures "selectively" – emphasising the true concepts, but omitting the spurious.

John reports that Jesus instructed the dove-sellers to take even the doves out of the temple.

John 2:16

"And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

Ellen White appears to disagree.

Review and Herald, 27 August, 1895

"When Christ had expelled those who had sold doves, he had said, 'Take these things hence.' He had not driven the doves out as he had the oxen and the sheep, and why?--Because they were the only offering of the poor. He knew their necessities, and as the sellers were driven from the temple, the suffering and the afflicted were left in the courts. Their only hope had been to come to the temple where they might present their offering with a petition to God that they might be blessed in their fields, in their crops, in their children, and in their homes."

This statement from Ellen White causes some questions to be asked:

- if Christ allowed the doves to remain to be sacrificed for the poor, who would have performed the sacrifices? (The priests had run from the temple and no-one else was authorised to sacrifice in the temple or to 'apply the blood' onto the altar);
- would Christ have discriminated against richer worshippers? (if Christ permitted only the doves to remain for a sacrifice, the richer people who were required to sacrifice a goat, sheep or ox, would have been unable to fulfil their sacrificial obligations according to the Mosaic law);
- if John, an eye-witness to the event, reported that Christ commanded those who sold the doves to 'take these things hence,' is it likely that they disobeyed His command, while others powerless to disobey His command, fled from the temple, driving their cattle before them?

Further evidence that Christ did not condone the sacrificial system is found when Jesus rebuked the selfishness (sins) of the Pharisees. Christ rebuked certain of their hypocritical practices, but used the opportunity to [endorse](#) their correct behaviours as outlined in the Old Testament.

Matthew 23:23

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: **these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.**"

Concerning the clearing of the sanctuary the following question could be asked:

"If animal sacrifices were required in the worship of the One True God, why didn't Jesus (in harmony with records of His usual practices) announce to the temple crowd, "My Father's house is to be a house of animal sacrifice and a house of prayer. You ought to have performed the sacrifices, but not left the other (the prayer) undone."

Jesus twice cleared the sacrificial animals from the temple. The gospels do not say that Christ struck any animal or person with the cords that He waved. No violence is recorded in Christ's actions; in fact Isaiah 53:9 states explicitly that as a prophecy of the coming Messiah, that "in Him was no violence." If there was any violence in Christ, then He could not fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9.

Jesus tried to teach the temple leaders about God's kingdom and to convince them that He represented His Father as the Messiah. What was Jesus' work in the temple? Was it sacrificing animals? There is no record that Christ ever sacrificed an animal. It might be argued that of course Christ didn't sacrifice an animal because He didn't need to offer a sin offering, since He did not sin and did not need to confess any sins. (Jesus didn't need to be baptised either, but He made a special request to have that ceremony performed "to fulfil all righteousness"). But there were many more sacrificial ceremonies that Jesus could have performed IF He considered them to have been divinely established. Perhaps Christ might be expected to make a free-will sacrificial offering in order to fulfil the Mosaic laws. Christ certainly could have offered a free-will sacrifice had He deemed the sacrificial laws to be of divine origin and value.

From an early age, Jesus was "about His Father's business" of teaching others about his Father's character. Even His mother and step-father could not understand that this constituted the true work that was required to be done in the temple.

Luke 2:46-50

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. (47) And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. (48) And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. (49) And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? (50) And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them."

The only people whom Jesus strongly denounced were the temple authorities.

Matthew 23:25-28

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. (26) Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. (27) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Jesus knew of the sinful practices of the temple chiefs, particularly Annas' family.

Matthew 15:8, 9

"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. (9) But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

George E Rice (1982: 50-56) in his book **Christ in Collision** details some of the evil practices taking place in the temple, which Christ condemned.

“By cleansing the temple, Jesus attacked the power structure of Jewish religions and secular society and threatened to destroy it. In order to understand the impact of Jesus' next move in the great controversy, the nature of this power structure must be understood.....The business activity in the temple court was a well organised financial monopoly and the priestly aristocracy manipulated the strings.The priestly aristocracy was composed of a group of men who had control over the affairs of the temple. By virtue of his office, the high priest held the foremost position in this group as well as the presidency of the Sanhedrin, the governing body of the Jewish nation. During Jesus' ministry, Caiaphas held this position. (52). While Caiaphas was high priest, a second man, Annas, the former high priest and Caiaphas' father-in-law held immense power. . Jeremias points to the Talmud for evidence that all the chief influential positions in the temple hierarchy were filled by relatives of Annas...This is supported by Acts 4:6.

The other positions filled by members of Annas' family would be these:

- 1. Captain of the Temple - next to the high priest in authority he always assisted the high priest when he ministered in the temple. The captain of the temple also held the position of chief of the temple police and he had the power of arrest.*
- 2. Seven temple overseers worked under the direction of the captain of the temple. The gospels refer to them as the captains of the temple. They would be the lieutenants of the temple police force.*
- 3. Three treasurers had charge of the temple treasury as well as other duties. Other family members may have been among the directors of the (p53) weekly and daily courses who also held positions of authority, but these directors numbered around 180 so it is difficult to see them all as members of Annas' family.*

...The power of the priestly aristocracy, came not only from their position in the hierarchy but also from their wealth. They profited in a number of ways by the merchandising that was carried on in the courts of the temple.

- Before a worshipper could purchase an animal for sacrifice, he had to **exchange his money** for temples shekels. Business was transacted in the temple only with this currency. The exchange of secular currency for temple shekel had become an opportunity for fraud and extortion, but this was only one of the sources of revenue for the priestly aristocracy. Animals for sacrifices were sold for exorbitant prices and the dealers shared their profits with the priests. **The priests in turn, taught the people that God would not bless their children and lands unless they offered a sacrifice.** They people paid the price demanded for the animals, for they felt obliged not to return home without perform the act of devotion for which they had come so far.*
- Another source of an abundant income was **the blood of the sacrifices**. The blood of the victims not used in the services was rinsed down a drain that emptied into the Kidron Valley. The farmers who worked this valley bought and used the blood from this drain as fertilizer. The temple treasurers supervised (p54) this arrangement. Jeremias points again to the Talmud which teaches that to use this blood without paying for it was sacrilege. The sale of the blood of the numberless sacrifices in this manner provided a constant source of income.*

- **The hides of animals** slaughtered in these sacrifices, provided yet another source of revenue. Dealing in hides was a lucrative business for they were in demand by tanners to make articles of leather. The leather business was so good we are told, that inn keepers in Jerusalem would take the skins of the Passover sacrifices by force from the pilgrims.
- The priestly aristocracy had found still another source of ill-gotten gain. The Old Testament specified that the tithes were to be paid to the Levites, however, sometime after the return from the Babylonian captivity, **the priests took the tithe income away from the Levites.** Therefore, Johanan Hyrcanus 134-104 BC abolished the avowal of tithes because they were no longer paid to the Levites.... the Talmud also states that **in practice the tithes were paid to the priests.**
- As if the misappropriation of the tithes was not bad enough, Josephus tells us how the high priest would send his servants to **raid the farmers' threshing floors and to confiscate the tithe of grain set aside for the priests.** The violent seizing of the hides and tithes by the priestly aristocracy caused a deep animosity between them and the common priests" (end of George E Rice's material).

Christ did not condone evil practices being done anywhere, but especially did He object to the evil being done by the religious leaders, in the temple area which was allocated for repentance, confession and prayer -in the court.

While the Jews used this area for the marketing of animals for sacrifices, the court was thought to be intended to be reserved especially for prayer – and the submitting of the heart to God. Repentance and confession and opening the heart to God, was the practice in the court yard which Christ approved, not the marketing and sacrificing of animals.

Did Jesus use violence to clear the temple?

If Jesus was the Messiah, then He could not have used violence to clear the temple, for Isaiah 53:9 predicted that the Messiah had "no violence in Him."

Jesus over-turned the moneychangers tables, but that act was not performed in uncontrolled anger or violence. It was an act of righteous indignation for His Father's honour and a caring for the needs of the common people - not a selfish action motivated by rage.

Desire of Ages, p 590

*"In fulfillment of prophecy the people had proclaimed Jesus king of Israel. He had received their homage, and accepted the office of king. **In this character He must act.** He knew that His efforts to reform a corrupt priesthood would be in vain; nevertheless His work must be done; **to an unbelieving people the evidence of His divine mission must be given.**"*

Jesus' actions aren't comparable to a frenzied riot where people are physically assaulted. Christ, as their King, defended the rights of the common people to worship in the Father's house and He did not chase the thieves from the temple; they left of their own accord, driving their own cattle before them. The thieves were terrified because of their own guilt before Christ, whose face flashed with divine light."

Desire of Ages, p 590-591

*“Divinity flashed through humanity, investing Christ with a dignity and glory He had never manifested before.The displeasure of His countenance seemed like consuming fire. With authority He commanded, “Take these things hence.” John 2:16. (p 591) Three years before, the rulers of the temple had been ashamed of their flight before the command of Jesus. They had since wondered at their own fears, and their unquestioning obedience to a single humble Man. They had felt that it was impossible for their undignified surrender to be repeated. Yet they were now more terrified than before, and in greater haste to obey His command. **There were none who dared question His authority.** Priests and traders fled from His presence, **driving their cattle before them.**”*

The common people did not flee from Christ. They appreciated His work on their behalf, so that they could again make repentance and worship God in a house of prayer.

Desire of Ages, p 592

“When the multitude fled from the temple, many had remained behind.”

While clearing the temple, Jesus reasoned with the Pharisees and temple leaders as He exposed their sinful behaviour. He told them, "My Father's house will be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." This is loving logic in action, not the ravings of a madman.

Isaiah 1:18

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Christ loved His enemies, despite their evil plans to murder Him.

Review and Herald, 27 August, 1895

“He longed to save the priests and the rulers, who, while claiming to be guardians of the people, had oppressed them, and turned aside the needy from their right.”

What does Christ's action of clearing the temple imply for Christians today?

- Jesus exposed evil practices which were disguised as works of righteousness.

God's people are authorised to expose and reprove the works of darkness.

Ephesians 5:11

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

- Jesus did not use violence against any person for there was 'no violence in Him' the Messiah (Isaiah 53:9)

God's character will motivate the actions of true Christians. Just as Jesus actively exposed and reprovved evil practices, so ought Christians to expose and reprove the works of darkness - however, exposing the works of darkness, does not include using violence against any person in either actions or words.

- When Jesus cleared the temple, He used logical arguments that presented the consequences of a certain (mis)behaviours.

Christians will also endeavour to reason with their adversaries, based on the loving principles of the 10 commandments as revealed in the the life of Jesus Christ. Christians will also demonstrate genuine love for their enemies and will extend an invitation to 'come let us reason together' over any upsets.

- Christ only revealed only a loving response to His enemies' abuse of Him.

Christians motivated by love, will endeavour to help their abusers to see the love of Jesus reflected in their own characters, which will draw them to repentance. The temple leaders ran away from Christ, exposed as thieves by Jesus. They did not run away bruised and beaten by a wrathful madman, but of their own free will.

In a similar way, sinners will of their own accord, flee from Christ when He comes in the glory of His Father and the glory of the angels and in His own glory. Sinners will not need to fear that Christ will persue them as a raving mad-god to physically assault them.

Sinners should fear their love of sinfulness, for like a terminator gene in a seed, it is that attachment to sin which will destroy them.

#31 - The Angel Wants to Kill Balaam – Numbers 22:33

Objection:

God was angered by Balaam's action of striking his donkey – angry enough to slay Balaam apparently (Num 22:33).

Numbers 22:31,33

“Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face..... And the ass saw me (the angel), and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.”

Answer:

Balaam was not an Israelite but traditions about Balaam were well known in the areas of Ammon, Moab, the Jordan Valley, and probably in Israel and Judah also (Gildas Hamel, ***An Oracle of Balaam***, from ***Comparing Mari, Neo-Assyrian, Aramaean, and Biblical Prophetic Texts***, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~hummm/Resources/OT/balaam.html>)

God in His mercy gave truth to other nations as well as Israel and Balaam was “permitted to behold the manifestation of God's presence” (Ellen White, 4 Spiritual Gifts , p 47, 48). Sadly, he was also cherishing the sin of covetousness. As Balaam clung to his sin, spurning the spirit of God which called him to repentance, he separated himself from God. This decision left him unprotected from evil angels - and unprotected in an encounter with unveiled glory and holiness.

Consider the effects that being exposed to the glory of a holy angelic being has on unrepentant, sinful human beings.

Matthew 28:2-4

“And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. (3) His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: (4) And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.”

But notice, in the next verse, the very different reaction which the repentant followers of Jesus had when ***they*** encountered the same angels.

Matthew 28: 5

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.”

It was not the intention of Gabriel to slay the soldiers guarding Christ's tomb. In fact, Gabriel did nothing to cause the guards to “fall down as dead men” except approach closer to them in order to roll back the stone from the tomb entrance.

The guards around Christ's tomb were as human as were the women whom the holy angels appeared to only hours later, but what a difference in their reactions to angelic holiness. The women who were followers of Jesus, were told, “Be not afraid.” They did not “fall down as if dead.”

What was the difference between the women and the guards? Both groups met angels at close quarters – both groups were sinners. However, there was one vital difference – and it was a difference in the people – not in the angels.

The guards were not repentant, while the women's sins were covered by their faith in Jesus. The unrepentant guards did not possess the righteous covering while the repentant women were covered by Christ's life and protected.

The people's characters – and not in the angels' actions- determined the outcome of an encounter with holy angels.

In this way, it was not the intention of the holy angel to slay Balaam. The angel simply stated that if Balaam had continued closely into his holy presence, then the angel's holiness would have caused Balaam to fall down and die – in his sins.

If Balaam had proceeded further into the presence of the holy angel, no doubt Balaam would have fallen “as one dead” just as the soldiers guarding the Saviour's tomb fell down “as dead” when a holy angel approached them.

But what about the sword which the angel held?

Angels can possess swords without murdering anyone. If holy angels wanted to cause the death of sinful human beings they would not require the use of a sword. They could simply draw closely to them and their very presence would cause the person to “fall down as dead men.”

Genesis 3:24

“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

The sword which “turned itself around” at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, was not designed as an offensive attack on human beings. Because Adam had permitted the earth to pass into Satan's dominion, it was necessary that the universe be protected against an attack of demons wanting to avail themselves of the tree of life which was planted on the earth. God stationed defensively equipped, powerful cherubim to “guard” the way to the tree of life. This was a divine, **protective** act to prevent the evolution of an immortal sinner – whether angelic or human.

Swords are also symbolic for the “word” or “spirit” of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:17

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

The word of the Lord created humanity.

Psalms 33:6

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath.”

The word or breath of God will also slay the wicked.

Isaiah 11:4

“But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

Genesis 2:17

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

God did not say He would kill Adam and Eve if they ate of the fruit. He said they would die. God simply stated a given fact.

Consider an analogy:

A man is warned by a pilot, that if he jumps out of an aeroplane without a parachute, he will die. The man decides to jump out anyway, disregarding the pilot's warning. This does not mean that the pilot has pushed the person out of the plane and murdered him. The pilot protectively warned of the danger that would follow if his warnings were disregarded.

In the same way, God will not murder any human beings. Human beings will cause their own deaths by cherishing and remaining joined to sin.

Other interesting information is that there appears to be at least three separate stories recorded that involve Balaam the son of Beor: the Biblical rendition, the Moabite version and the Talmudic record.

The Biblical Version

Numbers 22:4-6

“And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. (5) He sent messengers therefore unto **Balaam the son of Beor** to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: (6) Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.”

Numbers 24:17 (prophecy by Baalam)

“I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.”

God was said to give Balaam the words of specific prophecies, one of which accurately predicts either the Messiah's origin or a mighty king's origin from the Hebrew race. But the same prophecy also adds that the “Star” would smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth.

Jesus did not perform any war-like actions. He did not smite the corners of Moab or destroy the children of Sheth. Moab was taken into captivity well before the Messiah was born. Perhaps it might be considered that Balaam's prophecy has a double meaning and some of the prophecy refers to King David. Jeremiah appears to place at least part of the prophecy (Moab's destruction) in Cyrus' time.

Jeremiah 48:42, 47

“And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the LORD. (47) Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.” Green’s Literal Version translates it as: “But I will restore the prisoners of Moab in the end of the days).”

Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible

“The Moabites were partially restored; but never, as far as I have been able to learn, to their national consequence. Their conversion to the Christian faith must be the main end designed by this prophecy.”

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (from The Sword Project) Jeremiah 48:47:

“Yet will I bring. Many of the Moabites were afterwards restored to their country by Cyrus, as we learn from Josephus; but they never were restored to their national consequence; and perhaps their restoration in the latter days refers to the conversion of their scattered remnants to the gospel.”

The Talmudic Version (p 129)

The Talmudic version records that some enmity existed between Moses and Balaam.

*“Pharaoh awoke, and sending for his officers, he related to them this dream, which caused them both fear and amazement. Now among the magicians of Egypt there was one whom the king considered especially wise, Bil’am, the son of Be’or. For him the king sent, and desired an explanation of the vision. ‘A great evil will befall Egypt in the latter days,’ replied **Bil’am, the son of Be’or.** ‘A son will be born in Israel who will destroy Egypt, kill its inhabitants, and carry his people out from among them. Now, oh lord and king, give heed to this matter, and destroy the power of the children of Israel and their future welfare, before this misfortune to Egypt buds. ‘...Then spoke **Bi’lam,** and said: ‘None of the means proposed for the subduing of the Hebrews will prove successful. Fire cannot prevail over them, for Abraham was delivered from its power; the sword will fail, for Isaac was delivered from its edge, and a ram killed in his stead; they cannot be exterminated by rigorous labour, for Jacob worked day and night for Laban, and yet prospered. Listen, oh king, to the advice which I shall give thee. By this means only wilt thou be able to (p 125) prevail over them. Command that all the male children born to these Hebrews be cast into the river, for none of their ancestors ever escaped from the death in the water’ ... (p 126) Moses became even as a son to Bathia, the daughter of Pharaoh, as a child belonging rightly to the palace of the king. Now it came to pass when Pharaoh saw that the advice (p. 127) of **Bi’lam** did not prove effective, but that the Israelites, on the contrary, seemed to increase and multiply even more rapidly than before, he laid additional labour upon them, and issued orders that if any man failed in accomplishing his full daily task, his children should be walled up alive in the building in which he worked. This order continued in effect for many years. About this time, when Moses was three years old, Pharaoh sitting at his banquet table, with his queen upon his right, Bathia at his left, and his two sons, with Bi’lam and the princes of his realm about him, took Moses upon his lap. The child stretched forth his hand, and taking the royal crown from Pharaoh’s head placed it upon his own. In this action the king and the people around him imagined they saw a meaning, and Pharaoh asked: ‘How shall this Hebrew boy be punished?’ Then said **Bi’lam, the son of Be’or,** the magician, ‘Think not, because the child is young, that he did this thing thoughtlessly. Remember, oh king, the dream which thy servant read for thee; the dream of the balances. The spirit of understanding is already implanted in this child, and to himself he takes thy kingdom. Such, my lord, hath ever been the way of his people, to trample down those who have dealt kindly with them, to deceitfully usurp the power of those who have reared and protected them. Abraham, their ancestor, deceived Pharaoh, saying of Sarah, his wife, ‘She is my sister;’ Isaac, his son, did the same*

thing; Jacob obtained surreptitiously the blessing which rightfully belonged to his brother; he travelled to Mesopotamia, married the daughters of his uncle, and fled with them secretly, taking large flocks and herds and immense possessions; the sons of Jacob sold their brother Joseph (p 128) into slavery; he was afterwards exalted by thy ancestor and made second in Egypt, and when a famine came upon the land, he brought hither his father with all his family to feed upon its substance, while the Egyptians sold themselves for food; and now, my lord, this child arises to imitate their actions. He mocks thee, oh king, thy elders and thy princes. Therefore, let his blood be spilled; for the future welfare of Egypt let this thing be done'.....It came to pass in those days that the Assyrians rebelled against Kikanus, the king of Ethiopia, to whom they were under tribute. Kikanus, appointing Bi'lam, the son of Be'or, who had fled from Egypt, to be his representative in his absence, marched forth with a large army and subdued the Assyrians, and imposed heavy taxes upon them. **Bi'lam, the son of Be'or, was unfaithful to his trust**, and usurping the power he was delegated to protect, he induced the people of Ethiopia to appoint him their king in place of the absent Kikanus. He strengthened the walls of the capital, built huge fortresses, and dug ditches and pits between (p 130) the city and the river Gichon, which compassed all the land of Ethiopia. "

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/pol/pol09.htm>

Clearly, the true God did not inspire Balaam to suggest that baby Moses should be killed.

The Moabite Version

In the country of Jordan, at the excavation site of Deir 'Alla, (probably the Biblical town of Succoth) 119 fragments of plaster inscribed with black and red ink are thought to be evidence of the prophet Balaam's existence. The fragments were found in earthquake ruins. The inscription seems to have been at least 50 lines long. The disaster has been dated at about 760 BC. This date coincides with the severe earthquake which occurred during King Uzziah's reign (Azariah) and Amos' time also (Amos 1:1; Zechariah 14:5).

The inscription is written in Aramaic. A reference to the "Scroll of Balaam" indicates that the text was part of a pre-existing document and therefore the original date of the material would be earlier than the plaster text itself. The title appears: "Warnings from the Scroll of Balaam the son of Beor. He was a seer of the gods."

From a section called ***An Oracle of Balaam***, from ***Comparing Mari, Neo-Assyrian, Aramaean, and Biblical Prophetic Texts***, Gildas Hamel, gives the translation of the inscription as follows:

[1] Scroll of [Ba]laam [son of Beo]r, the man seeing the gods; behold, the gods came to him at night, and [spoke to] him [2] according to these words, and they said to [Balaa]m son of Beor thus: "The last flame has appeared; a fire for judgment has appeared." [3] And Balaam arose in the morning,[2] days, [...] [], and cou[ld not eat], and he wept [4] abundantly. And his people came up to him and they [said] to Balaam son of Beor: "Why are you fasting and why are you weeping?" And he [5] said to them: "Sit! ¹⁹ I'll show you what the Sh[addayin] ²⁰ are [. . .], and come, consider the doings of the gods." [6] The gods have gathered together, and the Shaddayin have held an assembly, and they have said to Sh[ama]sh ²¹ : 'Sew up, close the sky with your cloud! [Let] darkness be there, and not bright[7]ness, shadow and

19 or "Return!" (as in "Repent!").

20 The Shaddayin = the Powerful ones? Cf. the appellation "El Shadday" in the Bible.

21 Shamash is a female deity of rain.

not radiance; For you'll strike terror [with the cl]oud of darkness, and do not make noise ever but [instead??] the passer, b- [8] -at, eagle, and peli[can], vultures, ostrich, st[ork], young of falcons, owl, chicks of heron, dove, bird-of-prey, [9] pigeon and sparrow. [every bird of the s]kies ... [on earth?] below where the stick led the ewes, hares have eaten [10] [tog]ether [fr]eely....”
Gildas Hamel, January 2004

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~hummm/Resources/OT/balaam.html>

In the Moabite story, Balaam is associated not only with the pagan god *Shgr*, but also the group of gods called the **Shadday** gods and goddesses – much like the god El Shadday of Genesis 17:1 and Exodus 6:3 – and also with the goddess Ashtar.

Clearly, Balaam was not a worshipper of the One True God, nor obedient to Him, despite the fact that God had given him personal instructions. This left Balaam vulnerable and without protection from exposure to angelic glory.

#32 - I Make Peace and Create Evil - Isaiah 45:7

Objection:

"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."

Answer:

The absence of light creates darkness. The absence of life creates death. The absence of goodness creates evil. When the God of light, life and goodness departs, the result is darkness, death and evil.

(Jamieson Faussett Brown Bible Commentary)

Isaiah 45 :7

- ***"form . . . create***—*yatzar, to give 'form' to previously existing matter. Bara, to 'create' from nothing the chaotic dark material.*
- ***light . . . darkness***—*literally (Genesis 1:1-3), emblematical also, prosperity to Cyrus, calamity to Babylon and the nations to be vanquished [GROTIUS] . . . Isaiah refers also to the Oriental belief in two coexistent, eternal principles, ever struggling with each other, light or good, and darkness or evil, Oromasden and Ahrimanen. God, here, in opposition, asserts His sovereignty over both [VITRINGA].*
- ***create evil***—*not moral evil (James 1:13), but in contrast to 'peace' in the parallel clause, war, disaster (compare Psalm 65:7; Amos 3:6)."*

Scofield Reference Notes, 1917 edition

Isaiah 45:7:

"create evil Heb. "ra" translated "sorrow," "wretchedness," "adversity," "afflictions," "calamities," but never translated sin. God created evil only in the sense that He made sorrow, wretchedness, etc., to be the sure fruits of sin."

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

Isaiah 45:7:

"Verse 7. (I form the light, and create darkness] It was the great principle of the Magian religion, which prevailed in Persia in the time of Cyrus, and in which probably he was educated, that there are two supreme, co-eternal, and independent causes always acting in opposition one to the other; one the author of all good, the other of all evil. The good being they called LIGHT; the evil being, DARKNESS. That when LIGHT had the ascendant, then good and happiness prevailed among men; when DARKNESS had the superiority, then evil and misery abounded. An opinion that contradicts the clearest evidence of our reason, which plainly leads us to the acknowledgement of one only Supreme Being, infinitely good as well as powerful. With reference to this absurd opinion, held by the person to whom this prophecy is addressed, God, by his prophet, in the most significant terms, asserts his omnipotence and absolute supremacy:- "I am JEHOVAH, and none else; Forming light, and creating darkness, Making peace, and creating evil: I JEHOVAH am the author of all these things." Declaring that those powers whom the Persians held to be the original authors of good and evil to mankind, representing them by light and darkness, as their proper emblems, are no other than creatures of God, the instruments which he employs in his government of the world, ordained or permitted by him in order to execute his wise and just decrees; and that there is no power, either of good or evil, independent of the one supreme God, infinite in power and in goodness." (continued over page)

(Clarke continued)

*“There were, however, some among the Persians whose sentiments were more moderate as to this matter; who held the evil principle to be in some measure subordinate to the good; and that the former would at length be wholly subdued by the latter. See Hyde, De Relig. Vet. Pers. cap. Xxii. That this opinion prevailed among the Persians as early as the time of Cyrus we may, I think, infer not only from this passage of Isaiah, which has a manifest reference to it, but likewise from a passage in Xenophon's Cyropaedia, where the same doctrine is applied to the human mind. Araspes, a noble young Persian, had fallen in love with the fair captive Panthea, committed to his charge by Cyrus. After all his boasting that he was superior to the assaults of that passion, he yielded so far to it as even to threaten violence if she would not comply with his desires. Awed by the reproof of Cyrus, fearing his displeasure, and having by cool reflection recovered his reason; in his discourse with him on this subject he says: "O Cyrus, I have certainly two souls; and this piece of philosophy I have learned from that wicked sophist, Love. For if I had but one soul, it would not be at the same time good and evil, it would not at the same time approve of honourable and base actions; and at once desire to do, and refuse to do, the very same things. But it is plain that I am animated by two souls, and when the good soul prevails, I do what is virtuous; and when the evil one prevails, I attempt what is vicious. But now the good soul prevails, having gotten you for her assistant, and has clearly gained the superiority." Lib. vi. p. 424. I make peace, and create evil] Evil is here evidently put for war and its attendant miseries. I will procure peace for the Israelites, and destroy Babylon by war. I form light, and create darkness. **Now, as darkness is only the privation of light, so the evil of war is the privation of peace.**”*

How is God the creator of darkness? By withdrawing His light – His truth.

How is God the creator of evil or war? By withdrawing His peace – His Presence.

#33 - The Lord Has Done Evil - Amos 3:6

“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done [it]? Will the Prophet's threaten God's judgments and the people not be afraid? Does any adversity come without God's appointment?”

Objection:

The Lord brings evil on perverse people.

Answer:

The verse, in its context reads as follows - **Amos 3:1-8**

*“Hear this word that the **LORD** hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, 2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. 3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed? 4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? 5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? 6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the **LORD** hath not done it? 7 Surely the Lord **GOD** will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. 8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord **GOD** hath spoken, who can but prophesy?”*

God warned Israel that their own perverse ways would bring upon them the consequences of pain and suffering. God informed them of the source or origin of the evil – and that source was not with Him. God revealed that it was their own sin that had “trapped” them. The prophet asked, “*can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him?*”

God warns that the Israelites can expect punishment the same way that a bird is snared in a trap. Loving owners place their pets in a confined area to prevent them from being injured; but they do not place traps to snare their pets for the purpose destroying them. It is the hunter who lay snares for birds and other animals to kill them. Animals that are caught in traps, are often caught by their own behaviour, but it is not an accident on the part of the trapper, who intentionally set and hid the trap to ensnare the “prey.” God does not attempt to “trap” His people. **God** does not trick or tempt humanity.

James 1:13

“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:”

God warns sinners of the evil consequences they will endure if they persist in wandering in the devil's dangerous territory, but it is by their own doings that sinners are snared. A side-effect of being caught in Satan's trap is that his victims suffer and are tormented. This painful conditions often evokes a return to God – to escape the destroyer's grasp – and not because God is the destroyer.

(v. 4): “Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey in view?”

It is Satan, not God - who is depicted as a roaring lion, “seeking whom he may devour.” Satan – not God - stalks victims to devour and destroy them.

1 Peter 5:8

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”

#34 - The Sanctuary Services

Objection:

Ellen White is very clear that the sacrificial services were given by God.

3 Spiritual Gifts, p 301-304 (1864)

“The Lord instructed Moses definitely in regard to the ceremonial sacrifices, which were to cease at the death of Christ. The system of sacrifices foreshadowed the offering of Christ as a Lamb without blemish. **The Lord first established the system of sacrificial offerings with Adam after his fall, which he taught to his descendants.** This system was corrupted before the flood by those who separated themselves from the faithful followers of God, and engaged in the building of the tower of Babel. They sacrificed to gods of their own make instead of the God of Heaven. They did not offer sacrifices because they had faith in the Redeemer to come, but because they thought they should please their gods by offering a great many beasts upon polluted idol altars. Their superstition led them to great extravagances. They taught the people that the more valuable the sacrifice, the greater pleasure would it give their idol gods, and the greater would be the prosperity and riches of their nation. Hence human beings were often sacrificed to these senseless idols. Those nations had laws and regulations to control the actions of the people which were cruel in the extreme. Their laws were made by those whose hearts were not softened by grace, and while they would pass over the most debasing crimes, a small offence would call forth the most cruel punishment from those in authority. (p 302) Moses had this in view when he said to Israel, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep, therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (p 303) God was a wise and compassionate lawgiver, judging all cases righteously, and without partiality. While the Israelites were in Egyptian bondage, they were surrounded with idolatry. The Egyptians had received traditions in regard to sacrificing. They did not acknowledge the existence of the God of Heaven. They sacrificed to their idol gods. With great pomp and ceremony they performed their idol worship. They erected altars to the honor of their gods, and they required even their own children to pass through the fire. After they had erected their altars they required their children to leap over the altars through the fire. If they could do this without their being burned, the idol priests and people received it as an evidence that their god accepted their offerings, and favored especially the person who passed through the fiery ordeal. He was loaded with benefits, and was ever afterward greatly esteemed by all the people. He was never allowed to be punished, however aggravating might be his crimes. If another person who leaped through the fire was so unfortunate as to be burned, then his fate was fixed; for they thought that their gods were angry, and would be appeased with nothing short of the unhappy victim's life, and he was offered up as a sacrifice upon their idol altars. **Even some of the children of Israel had so far degraded themselves as to practice these abominations, and God caused the fire to kindle upon their children, whom they made to pass through the fire. They did not go to all the lengths of the heathen nations; but God deprived them of their children by causing the fire to consume them in the act of passing through it** (p 304). **Because the people of God had confused ideas of the ceremonial sacrificial offerings, and had heathen traditions confounded with their ceremonial worship, God condescended to give them definite directions, that they might understand the true import of those sacrifices which were to last only till the Lamb of God should be slain, who was the great antitype of all their sacrificial offerings.”**

Answer:

Before answering the main objection, it is interesting to note that Ellen White states that "God caused the fire to kindle upon their (the Israelites') children" when three other innocent Jewish youths – were protected from fire by Christ Himself.

Notebook Leaflets from Elmshaven Library 1985, p119

"Refusing to do as the king had commanded, they (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) suffered the penalty, and were cast into the burning fiery furnace. But Christ came in person and walked with them through the fire, and they received no harm."

Unlike other major religions, that focus on harsh and violent punishments for children's misbehaviour, ²²Christ revealed that it is not part of His character to destroy or injure a child.

Matthew 18:5

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. (6) But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

There is an obvious conflict between what Jesus said, which upheld the principles of the 10 commandments – particularly the command which prohibits the taking of life - with the words of Ellen White.

I am unaware that Ellen White made any claim suggesting that God revealed special light on this subject (of Him supposedly burning children) to her. Perhaps a vision concerning this fact is recorded somewhere, but I have not found the reference for the vision at this stage and I cannot harmonise her statement with the law of God – the great standard upon which all writings must be tested.

Concerning the question regarding the sacrificial rituals in the Jewish sanctuary, it is accepted that this objection demands a serious answer.

It appears that the original sanctuary system was set up as a copy of the heavenly sanctuary. "The pattern shown to Moses in the mount" was a perfect, divinely ordained system, a system that operated without the slightest trace of pagan theology or practice. It is therefore, a serious concern to observe that the sanctuary's sacrificial ceremonies as recorded in the books of Moses, reveal many pagan practices.

It is the presence of these pagan practices which tend to suggest that it is highly probable that the sanctuary services slowly became corrupted over the years of intermingling with pagan worshippers (as Ellen White mentions) resulting in certain pagan rituals becoming included in the sanctuary services and also finding a place in the Hebrew Scriptures.²³

22 "An 8 years old child was caught in a market in Iran for stealing bread. In the name of Islam he is being punished, his arm will be crushed by a car. He will loose forever the possibilty to use his arm again. Is this a religion of peace and love?" To view the powerpoint presentation visit: <http://eduplanet.net/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=2039&parent=2533> (**Warning, graphic photos of child's arm being crushed under a car wheel while an adult male broadcasts over a microphone, the shocking scene to gathered on-lookers**).

23 The Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt toward the end of the 6th century BC, becoming once again the central place of worship for the Jews. It remained so until the Romans destroyed it in 70 CE. Many books of the Bible were composed or edited into their final form during the two centuries of Persian rule, and it is clear that Jews absorbed much from Persian culture. **Encarta Encyclopedia** http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567959_4/Jews.html

It appears that by the time the teachings in the Torah, were finally recorded in written form,²⁴ the sanctuary services might have already have become polluted with paganistic theology.

While the pagan contamination could not destroy the basic truth of the sanctuary doctrine which pointed to Christ, the presence of pagan theology certainly hindered God's plan to save humanity.

While the sanctuary structure and furniture survived, is it possible that a particle of poison was also introduced which effected the entire demonstration of divine love?

The pagan dimension that “the life being in the blood” – replaced the real focus of the sanctuary services. The real sacrifice was made when the Son of God laid aside His glory in heaven to be born in sinful, human flesh and to accept mortality in order to save humanity. Humanity's eternal life depended upon the perfect human character which Christ developed in sinful, human, mortal flesh. Eternal life was “in Christ's character” - not “in Christ's blood.” The term “the life of Jesus Christ” is a reference to His holy character/mind/spirit.

Consider the earthly sanctuary, in the light of the heavenly pattern. While in vision, John the Revelator saw certain items in the heavenly sanctuary:

- a lampstand (candlestick) (Rev 1:20, 2:1);
- the altar of incense (Rev 8:3,4); and
- the ark of God's covenant (Rev 11:19).
- Jesus said He was the bread of life (John 6:34)
- Jesus sanctioned baptism which is similar in concept to the laver (Matt3:15)
- Paul tells us that Jesus is our High Priest (Heb 9:11).

The priest

Jesus was a priest not after the order of Aaron, who specialised in blood sacrifices, but after the order of the high priest Melchizedek, the King of Salem – The King of Peace.

The laver

Christian baptism is not a bloody ordeal, although pagan baptism was known to have been performed with blood. Jesus was able to wash away the sins of the world, only by virtue of the fact that He lived a sinless life – not by the fact that He died a bloody death.

The Father cannot legally wash away sin if sinners' claims to holiness is simply that Jesus died a bloody death. There would be no guarantee that such sinners would live a sinless life in heaven. While all sinners **are** justified because of the merits of Christ's perfect life, sinners must also be clothed in His righteous character – they must be sanctified - or they must forfeit heaven. Heaven is not entered by virtue of a bloody death – but by receiving Christ's perfect character – His spirit - in their minds. Christ freely gives His character to the world – a character which He developed despite torture and a slow, agonising and bloody death. He endured these evils in order to secure that character for humanity.

24 (between 300-600 years after Moses died) The Septuagint version of the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek some time during the 3rd century BC. The Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in 1940-50 are dated as being written during 200 B.C. to 68 A.D (based on various dating methods, including carbon 14, paleographic and scribal). Many crucial biblical manuscripts (such as Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 61) date to at least 100 B.C. Most of the texts are written in Hebrew and Aramaic, with a few in Greek. <http://www.allaboutthejourney.org/bible-manuscripts.htm>; <http://www.allaboutarchaeology.org/dead-sea-scrolls.htm>

The candlesticks

Jesus is the Light of the World – no blood required

The shewbread

Jesus is the Bread of Life – no blood required (except in Roman Catholic eucharist rituals)

The altar of incense

Jesus is the Mediator, who intercedes on our behalf to the Father when we pray. Jesus is qualified to intercede for humanity because He lived a pure holy life which covers repentant sinners. **It appears that the altar mentioned in Rev 6:9; 8:3,5; 9:13; 11:1, refers to the altar of incense.**

The ark of the covenant

Jesus upheld His Father's Law as shown in the sermon on the mount and in the Beatitudes (Matt 5).

The mercy seat

2 Corinthians 1:3

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of mercies*, and the God of all comfort;”

The burnt offering or sacrificial altar

Apart from the items of furniture in the outer court i.e. altar of burnt offering sacrifice; laver; there is represented in the heaven sanctuary, every other piece of furniture as appeared in the earthly sanctuary. The pioneer Seventh-day Adventists believed that these items of the outer court furniture were not seen in heaven, because the outer court represents the plan of salvation which transpired on the earth. Therefore only the heavenly furniture, which represents the holy and most holy apartments of the sanctuary, were seen in both John's and Ellen White's visions of the heavenly sanctuary.

The earthly altar of burnt offerings represents a sacrifice. It has already been noted that Christ's sacrifice began at His incarnation when He took mortality upon Himself as a mortal human being, born into the sinful human race. His entire life was the sacrifice of love, made on behalf of the human race. He took upon Himself, the responsibilities and consequences which the human race had incurred through their departure from God's unselfish principles of government.

Ellen White saw the heavenly sanctuary in vision also.

Early Writings, p 32

“We felt an unusual spirit of prayer. And as we prayed the Holy Ghost fell upon us. We were very happy. Soon I was lost to earthly things and was wrapped in a vision of God's glory. I saw an angel flying swiftly to me. He quickly carried me from the earth to the Holy City. In the city I saw a temple, which I entered. I passed through a door before I came to the first veil. This veil was raised, and I passed into the holy place. Here I saw the altar of incense, the candlestick with seven lamps, and the table on which was the shewbread. After viewing the glory of the holy, Jesus raised the second veil and I passed into the holy of holies. In the holiest I saw an ark; on the top and sides of it was purest gold. On each end of the ark was a lovely cherub, with its wings spread out over it. Their faces were turned toward each other, and they looked downward. Between the angels was a golden censer. Above the ark, where the angels stood, was an exceeding bright glory, that appeared like a throne where God dwelt. Jesus stood by the ark, and as the saints' prayers came up to Him, the incense in the

censer would smoke, and He would offer up their prayers with the smoke of the incense to His Father. In the ark was the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of stone which folded together like a book. Jesus opened them, and I saw the ten commandments written on them with the finger of God.”

It is not disputed that a divine sacrifice was made to redeem humanity. Christ made the sacrifice when He became incarnated in sinful, human body. Christ continued to sacrifice His life when He lived on the earth while He resisted Satan's fierce temptations - unto death - regardless of the torture and pain that Satan inflicted upon Him. However, this discussion is investigating the similarities between the heavenly sanctuary and the earthly sanctuary which was said to be modelled after the heavenly pattern (Ex 25:40).

It is clear that heaven's sacrifice was the decision to risk Christ's entire existence to save a sinful race by taking on sinful humanity and becoming mortal. The salvation of the human race was dependent on the life and character developed by the Son of God.

By contrast, the earthly sanctuary focused the attention of the worshippers on the value of the blood of an animal, which became commonly accepted as a means to atone for sin.

If blood was the most important article in the sacrificial rituals, then the animal needed only to be bled and have its blood collected. If the blood was the all-important factor, perhaps one might wonder why the animal, after making its blood donation, could not have been released into the herd again, to continue living. However, an animal's donated blood would not have been considered a complete sacrifice to the Hebrews. Blood was only valued because it was understood to have represented the total death – the absence of life - of the victim.

The Slain Lamb

John in vision, speaks of Christ as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 3:8) and yet, Christ was not physically slain in heaven; and Christ stated that no-one could slay Him (John 10:18). So why was Christ considered the Sacrifice which was “slain from the foundation of the world?”

It was the decision to take on the entire sinful human race into His own existence that caused Christ to be considered already 'slain.' Taking on the human race was a suicidal decision - for the wages or natural consequences of sin is death. (Rom 6:23) The human race was doomed; it could only offer Christ death. If Christ took the sins of the world into His own being (to give the race life/existence once again), He would die, for sin is deadly.

Taking on human nature in order to develop in it a perfectly loving character, was the only way to restore the character of God in the human race – the only way for humanity to again receive life.

When Christ agreed to become the second Adam, He agreed to take on human mortality including the fearful consequences of separation from His Father and unprotected exposure to demons. Christ accepted the challenge of preparing a holy character to offer humanity -at the risk of His own eternal existence. This decision to take the human race into His own life and to suffer the consequences, caused Christ to be considered slain from the foundation of the world. Though the human race offered Christ death, Christ offered humanity eternal life, through the donation of His perfect character. To give that precious gift, the Son of God had to become mortal. To become mortal meant to lay down His life. The act of taking on humanity, was the True Sacrifice of heaven.

The Father did not slay His Son. Satan could not slay the Son of God. Christ could not save

the human race without taking on human mortality. This voluntary action resulted in Christ's death. It was not a pagan sacrifice. Christ's throat was not slit by another hand, as was the sacrificial lamb's in the sanctuary services. It was just as Jesus stated in John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The salvation of sinful humanity required the highest donation that heaven could afford – the giving of both Father and Son. This giving action was the sacrifice.

What did the Sacrifice Involve?

The Father did not give Jesus to the world for the purpose of making His Son a bloody sacrifice, but so that His Son might - against all the odds- develop a perfect, human character in sinful flesh. In taking on sinful flesh, Christ became mortal.

Bible Echo, 15 September, 1892 p 6

"As a member of the human family, He was mortal; but as God, He was the fountain of life to the world. He could, in his divine person, ever have withstood the advances of death and refused to come under its dominion; but voluntarily He laid down his life, that He might give life, and bring immortality to light. He bore the sin of the world, and endured the penalty, that rolled like a mountain upon his divine soul. He yielded up his life a sacrifice, that man should not eternally die. He died, not through being compelled to die, but by his own free will."

If Christ was faithful until He died a human death – however that death might occur – then Christ could then legally impart the merits of His righteous human life (His character) to save sinners. Because Christ (as the second Adam) succeeded in developing a perfect, human character, He made it possible to re-establish the Father's law in minds of the human race. At the time of Jesus' death, because He lived a righteous life, all humanity had opportunity to be covered by Christ's life for Christ took on Himself the sin of the world and conquered it – with His perfect LIFE. Christ's perfect life did not terminate until He died - and Christ was faithful UNTIL death and in the face of death.

By living a human life – which extended from birth to death – Christ gave His life as a sacrifice to redeem humanity. –

The true sacrifice required by God did not require blood to be shed.

Psalm 51:17

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Since animal's life ENDS with death, the pagan sacrificial rituals focused on death and dying as having some mystical and supernatural atoning benefits.

The Hebrew ceremonies appeared to have adopted similar paganised concepts in regard to Jesus' death. The focus "on the blood," minimizes Christ's real sacrifice in taking humanity into Himself and forming a perfect life. The sacrifice of Christ's entire being – through His representation as the New Head of the human race – and His subsequent life as a human being, are discounted or devalued. It is vital to the plan of salvation that we recognise that Christ's sacrifice involved much more than His death.

Because of Christ's testimony, it can be seen that the plan of salvation was still discernible despite the pagan "blood-letting" practices which influenced the sanctuary services.

More Questions on the Sacrificial Services in the Sanctuary

Objection:

If indeed the sanctuary was built by Moses according to God's instructions and if indeed it was to impress upon the hearts and minds of the people the seriousness/gravity of sin and to point the people towards Christ, how could this have been achieved if there were to be no animals sacrifices? What would the daily and yearly services involve? There would be no blood. There would be no sin, peace, thank, etc, offerings as such.

Answer:

Your questions focus on the definition given to "sacrifice." A person can **make** a sacrifice or a person can **be** a sacrifice.

- A sacrifice can be an act of giving (a verb) e.g. *The man sacrificed his own time to build the orphanage.* Such a sacrifice often causes hardship to the giver for the benefit of another person; or
- A sacrifice can be a person, animal or object (a noun) e.g. *The Aztec religion required a human sacrifice* – offering of a human being as an appeasement to pagan gods.

The sanctuary service reveals that Christ and His Father made a total sacrifice to save humanity. In fact, Their divine 'giving,' was the greatest of all sacrifices. Satanic however, chose to disguise the genuine sacrifice of both Father and Son and to instead make Christ an 'object' that was sacrificed in order to 'placate' His angry, wrathful Father. With such pagan concepts being assumed by millions of Christian people, some important Biblical verses have been misunderstood and misapplied. Consider Paul's instructions to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:2

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”

Is Paul saying that Christ was a sacrificed object – a bloody offering - to appease an angry God in heaven? No. Not at all. Paul is reminding the Ephesians that Christ's loving and complete act of giving (of His perfect SELF – His character and life), was the sacrifice that was pleasing to God.

Who saved humanity? The Father and Son.

How did They save humanity?

- The Father permanently gave His Son for eternity to the human race.
- The Son gave Himself to humanity by becoming a mortal, human being.

Christ's death would have been effectual if He had not consented to represent the sinful human race as a mortal man - the second Adam. Nor would Christ's death benefit humanity, if Jesus had not developed a perfect character in humanity's fallen condition. Thus, salvation was achieved in a two step process. Christ brought salvation to the human race because He represented them – in life and in death. Therefore, ***because of what Christ sacrificed to become Head of the sinful, human race (accepting mortality) and because He endured temptation to develop a pure human character, the sinful human race was justified and sanctified - redeemed.***

Humanity was ***not*** redeemed on the basis that Christ's blood was shed as a sacrificial Victim, to appease an angry, wrathful god.

Objection continued:

If indeed the sanctuary was built by Moses according to God's instructions and if indeed it was to impress upon the hearts and minds of the people the seriousness/gravity of sin and to point the people towards Christ, how could this have been achieved if there were to be no animal sacrifices?

Answer: How could it be achieved WITH sacrifices? WAS it achieved with sacrifices? No. The Jews generally appeared to have NO concept that the sacrifices pointed to salvation from sin through a meek, gentle Messiah.

The Jewish nation generally believed that the sacrificial services would make atonement for their sins. It was only later that the apostle Paul informed them that this was not the case.

Hebrews 10:4

"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

Retrospectively, the ceremonies were given significance - but this meaning was not available to the average Jew prior to Christ's appearance as the Messiah. Thousands of Jews knew very little about righteousness by faith, although this is the gospel in verity. Finding out 'after the fact' certainly didn't help thousands of Jews over the previous thousand years to understand the plan of salvation – that God's plan to save them was centred on 10 loving principles and not 'of works'. How many slaughtered little lambs, goats, bulls and doves died in vain?

Jesus said if He was crucified, that He would draw all men unto Him. This drawing is through His love - not through the blood-letting that Satan inflicted on Him on the cross. Jesus confirmed that love is the drawing agent, not the crucifixion because He also said that His Father drew them and the Father was not crucified. 'Drawing' has nothing to do with blood-letting because the Father draws humanity with His love.

John 6:44

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

If it was the love of Jesus and His Father which draws sinners to Christ in the New Testament, then the same principles of salvation must apply to the Old Testament rituals, if in fact they were commanded by God.

Did the sacrificial services demonstrate the love of God to the Jews? It doesn't appear so. The Jews, though their religion was steeped in blood, were still ignorant of the supposed meaning/interpretation that the sacrifices were said to have typified. They did not recognise their Messiah. They had no idea what the Messiah's role involved. They were expecting a violent, blood-shedding war hero to deliver them from Roman bondage. There was not a trace of spiritual understanding. So much for the lesson of love which we are told was supposed to be clearly indicated in the ritualistic killings of the sacrificial services!

How could the Jews be expected to feel drawn to the god who required them to slit an innocent lamb's throat, morning and evening, continually.....and then on special occasions to kill multiple animals per day, until there were over 1000 lambs, goats, bulls, birds sacrificed every single year – just in the official rituals of the temple alone?

It is difficult to accept that slaughtering animals would engender the development of the fruits of the spirit - love, joy, peace, long-suffering GENTLENESS, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. As a nation, the Jews kept wandering away from God's 10 commandments of love, in order to serve other gods who promoted the same sacrificial rituals - but whose religion did not require the keeping of the principles of love - the 10 commandments. Despite their profession, even a casual glance at the historical record reveals that the Jews considered sacrificial rituals their focus of worship, rather than realising the sanctifying power of God to enable them to live according to the holy law of God .

Objection continued:

What would the daily and yearly services involve? There would be no blood. There would be no sin, peace, thank, etc, offerings as such.

Answer:

The sanctuary services were capable of giving excellent instruction in the plan of salvation and righteousness by faith through bloodless confession and a bloodless sacrifice. The furniture of the sanctuary reveals the same principles of salvation as does the gospel today - a turning away from sin by faith in the Messiah. Sin-offerings, peace offerings and thank offerings, could have been bloodless offerings which might have been made to represent the bloodless sacrifices – the gift of the heart - which God especially values.

Psalm 51:16, 17

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

All the furniture, including the sacrificial altar, could have played a significant role in the revelation of the plan of salvation through bloodless operations in the sanctuary.

Old Testament Sanctuary Scenario

For the sake of a simple scenario, consider what might have happened if the sinner went to the (bloodless) temple to confess His sins.

On entering the **courtyard**, the sinner would enter through a **door** and be greeted by the sympathetic **priest** – both door and priest represented the Messiah. ²⁵

The sinner might find encouragement in the words of the priest, that whatever sin the Jew had committed, the Messiah would forgive it.

The **altar of sacrifice** might be noticed to be empty. The priest would explain that one day, the altar would be occupied by the Son of God who would risk and give (sacrifice) His entire existence - as an offering to the world. He would forego the glories of heaven (a sacrifice) and risk His entire existence to save repentant sinners from the death which must come to those who have separated themselves from God through sin.

25 Review and Herald, 6 May, 1902 p 13 ***"In all true disciples this love, like sacred fire, burns on the altar of the heart. It was on the earth that the love of God was revealed through Jesus. It is on the earth that his children are to let this love shine out through blameless lives. Thus sinners will be led to the cross, to behold the Lamb of God."***

The Messiah would be shown to be willing to go to any lengths -to sacrifice all - including laying down His life (enabled by His taking on sinful human mortality) – to save the humanity He loved so much. ²⁶

The sinner sacrificed his/her sinful self, but the Messiah sacrificed (risked) His eternal existence as the Son of God by taking on Himself, mortal humanity.

While standing beside the huge altar of sacrifice, the priest might instruct the sinner that in order to be forgiven, he must first confess his sins to those injured by his sins. If the sinner had already done that, then the priest might instruct the sinner to leave his 'sins' on that altar. e.g. The sinner would pray for forgiveness for his sins at the altar, claiming forgiveness by faith in the coming Messiah. The sinner is required to give his 'all' to Christ in order to be saved. His 'all' must be laid on the altar of sacrifice ²⁷ but there is nothing 'good' that the sinner can give to God. The priest might instruct the sinner that God's own Son would take humanity into Himself – sacrificing His own existence to become his substitute. The Son of God would develop a perfect character in sinful human flesh/body at risk of His own existence. The Messiah's clean and holy character would be given freely as a substitute for the sinner's polluted character, if the sinner laid their 'all' on the altar of sacrifice.

The true sacrifice is one of giving of our sinful SELF to Christ. Christ likewise made a True sacrifice by entirely giving His Righteous SELF to humanity.

Perhaps then the sinner, motivated by love and gratitude, might place a self-imposed fine (like Zacchaeus imposed upon himself) on the altar; or he might place some other offering of value which could be used to help others. ²⁸ Or the sinner, again motivated by love, might make a sacrifice of time - by making a promise to perform a service for others, perhaps those whom his actions had injured (like community service- not senseless penance).

Reimbursing a person for damages would not be seen as 'a payment to have sins forgiven' - but neither OT sins nor NT sins could be forgiven without a demonstration of a genuine sorrow for sin. These sinner's offerings would be free-will and not imposed, because God's system does not use violence or force.

The priest might then ask the repentant sinner if he would like to declare his repentance and conversion by being baptised in the **laver** or by washing the feet of the person he had injured.

26 Review and Herald, 15 April, p 14 “*If the man who feels that he is called of God to be a minister will humble himself and learn of Christ, he will become a true preacher. **If his lips are touched with a live coal from the altar, he will lift up Jesus as the sinner's only hope.... The Holy Spirit has fallen upon him, his soul has felt the vital, heavenly fire, and he is able to compare spiritual things with spiritual. Power will be given him to tear down the strongholds of Satan. **Hearts will be broken by his presentation of the love of God, and many will inquire. "What must I do to be saved?"*****”

27 Signs of the Times, 21 October, 1889 p 6 “*When the Majesty of Heaven became a babe, and was intrusted to Mary, she did not have much to offer for the precious gift; but when she brought her two doves to the altar; they were received as an acceptable offering to the Lord. ... **It was the willingness of her heart that the Lord looked upon, and her love made her offering sweet.***”

28 Review and Herald, 23 December, 1890, p 6 “*The love to Jesus that once burned upon the altar of the heart, has become dimmed and nearly extinguished. Spiritual strength has become enfeebled. The displeasure of the Lord is against his people. **In their present condition it is impossible for them to represent the character of Christ.***”

To encourage him in his new life, the priest might mention the **candlesticks** which provided the light in the sanctuary. The priest might point out that the Messiah would be the light of his world - to guide the sinner into righteousness in future.

The priest might also say that the Messiah's loving principles were as necessary as food to his spiritual life; the **Bread of Life** would enable him to apply the principles of the 10 commandment law which were in the **Ark of the Covenant** - to his daily life.

The priest might explain that the **mercy seat over the Ark**, containing God's holy law, would be - by divine mercy - placed "in the sinner's heart/mind" and that Christ Himself, as the Priest before the **altar of incense**, would apply that love to the sinner's heart through His divine mediation²⁹ and present the sinner's earnest prayers to the Father.

After confessing his unworthiness, but also his faith in the coming Messiah, the repentant sinner would be forgiven and possibly baptised. By so doing, he would make a sacrifice of his soul. He might wish to make a freewill offering - a donation, not a payment - to celebrate being forgiven and to express his thankfulness to God and the priest who explained to him the spiritual things in the sanctuary.

The **lampstand** required no blood to represent that the Messiah as the light of the world. The **oil in the lamps** in the lampstand required no blood to represent the spirit/mind/presence of the Messiah. The **table of shewbread** required no blood to convey that the Messiah was the sustenance of His people. The **altar of incense** and the incense itself required no blood to convey that the Messiah was interceding for sinners and their prayers were ascending to heaven with the aid of their Mediator. **The Ark of the Covenant** required no blood to hold its special significance as the written, expressed character of God which the coming Messiah would express in His life. The **laver** required no blood to represent the washing away of guilt and shame of the sinner, much as foot-washing requires no blood in SDA churches services today. The laver was large enough to act as a baptismal font - (baptism does not require the shedding of blood).³⁰ And the empty sacrificial altar represented the coming sacrifice of Jesus – the Son of God who would give Himself to the human race, so that humanity could receive His pure character and life.

29 **Review and Herald, 10 February, 1903, p 7** *“Jesus will be our theme; his love, burning upon the altar of our hearts will reach the hearts of the people. The truth will be presented, not as a cold, lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. But the power is of God through his Spirit, which works effectually on heart and mind.”*

30 Baptism was practised prior to Christ's death also. Where did this practice originate? Is it possible that it was the original purpose of the sanctuary laver?

Questions:

- Was salvation different for the Old Testament Jews than it is for today's Christians?
- Don't all human beings have to give their ALL to follow Jesus Christ?
- Did the Jewish nation err by thinking the sacrificial system pointed to salvation they could **purchase** (i.e. justification by works) as they focused in giving their cattle to the sanctuary, instead of surrendering their hearts and minds to Christ?
- Did the sanctuary services correctly instruct the people in the nature of the true sacrifice which was acceptable by God?
- Did God accept the animal offerings which were slaughtered as blood-letting gifts **despite** the Hebrews' misunderstanding, **because of the motives in their hearts**?
- Jesus is referred to by John the Baptist, as "the Lamb of God," but many other animals were said to have represented the Son of God in the sanctuary rituals. Why is there no Biblical record of Jesus being called the "Bullock of God," the "Red Heifer of God," the "Ram of God," the "Turtle-Dove of God," or the "Goat of God?" These other animal titles seem almost blasphemous, and yet the title, "Lamb of God" is accepted. Why?
- If the slaughtered lamb represented Christ as a blood sacrifice, giving His all for humanity, what part of the sanctuary services demonstrate the sinner giving his/her all to Christ – which is a vital part of the gospel? Where is it shown that the sinner must place him/herself on the altar of sacrifice – to love the Lord with all His heart, mind, strength and soul which is the first great commandment according to Jesus? Does the lamb simply represent Jesus' gentle and harmless, non violent and righteous character – as the gift of God to humanity?

#35 - Jesus called the Syrophenician Woman a Dog - Mark 7:27

Mark 7:27,

“But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.”

Objection:

Jesus referred to the Gentile woman as a 'dog,' which Jewish culture intended as racist euphemism for anyone who was not a Jew. Thus, non-Jewish persons, by virtue of their racial inheritance, was considered unclean and detestable. Was Jesus a racist?

Answer:

The seemingly callous and racist words of Jesus to a Gentile woman as expressed in Mark 7:27, need closer examination.

The Syrophenecian woman had approached Jesus asking for healing of her demon-possessed daughter, but Jesus seemed to initially refuse her request, justifying it on racist grounds.

Mark 7:27

“But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.”

The Fourfold Gospel and Commentary on Acts of Apostles comments:

Mark 7:27:

#Mr 7:27] Let the children first be filled. By the use of the word "first" Jesus suggested that there would come a time of mercy for the Gentiles. For it is not meet. Suitable, becoming. To take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. He uses the diminutive for the word "dog," thus indicating a tame pet, and suggesting rather the dependence and subordinate position than the uncleanness of the dog. By so doing he gave the woman an argumentative handle which she was not slow to grasp. (TFG 401)

Mark 7:28:

#Mr 7:28] Yea, Lord; even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. Jesus had suggested that domestic order by which dogs are required to wait until the meal is over before they receive their portion; but with a wit made keen by her necessity, she replies by alluding to the well-known fact that dogs under the table are permitted to eat the crumbs even while the meal is in progress; intimating thereby her hope to receive and before all the needs of Israel had first been satisfied. By using the word "dogs" Jesus did not mean to convey the impression that he shared the Jewish prejudices against Gentiles; a construction which would be contrary to #Lu 4:25,26], and #Mt 8:10-12]. (TFG 401).

Similarly, Jesus had told His mother Mary, when she also requested a miracle from Him, that His time had not yet come.

John 2:1-11

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: (2) And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. (3) And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. **(4) Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. (5) His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.** (6) And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. (7) Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. (8) And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. (9) When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, (10) And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. (11) **This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.**”

Notice that Mary's reaction of faith, is similar to the Syrophenecian woman's reaction – persistent faith in the goodness of the Messiah's character.

Both women persisted in their belief that Jesus would not turn them away, but would help them by performing a miracle.

Mary urged the servants at the wedding feast, to do anything that Jesus instructed them to do. Her great faith lay in the pure and loving character of the Son of God, who up until this stage, had not performed a miracle at all.

The Syrophenecian woman also persisted in faith, asking Christ to perform a miracle to heal her daughter – prior to the time when the gospel was appointed to be preached to the Gentiles.

Christ operated to a divinely constructed timetable, which was set down by the prophets in the Scriptures. These appointed times were revealed in the Old Testament messianic prophecies (compare Isaiah 61:2; Luke 4:18).

Jesus did not promote or hold racist views or theology.

#36 - Fire Consumes the Disrespectful - 2 Kings 1:8-15

Objection:

God answered Elijah's prayer to send fire down to consume disrespectful soldiers three times. This is clear evidence that God does indeed destroy the wicked. What is your response to this Biblical evidence?

Answer:

This story appears in 2 Kings chapter 1.

2 Kings 1:8-15

“And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite. (9) Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. (10) And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. (11) Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. (12) And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. (13) And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. (14) Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight. (15) And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king.”

Elijah was **reportedly** motivated by the disrespect shown by a captain and fifty soldiers who was sent from King Ahaziah to ensure that he presented himself at the royal court.

However, it appears that the captain failed to show respect due to a prophet of the Lord. The captain did not bow respectfully and ask Elijah 'nicely,' to accompany him to the King. Instead, the captain relayed the king's command - ordering him to accompany them 'in the name of the king.' Because of this demonstration of disrespect, it appears that the writer of 2 Kings considered Elijah was justified in 'calling down fire from heaven' to destroy them.

Thus, it is recorded in scripture, that a dreadful fiery explosion sent from heaven from God - and by inference from the One True God – and incinerated the captain and his fifty soldiers. This destructive 'divine act' was said to have occurred twice – swelling the tally of dead soldiers to 102 men in one day, all at the command of Elijah and performed by the One True God.

Is this Old Testament report true? Does it correctly demonstrate the character of the One True God?

The life, experience and teaching of Jesus hold the answer. An incident occurred just prior to Jesus' trial and crucifixion which casts much light on the Old Testament story of Elijah and the fire from heaven which supposedly consumed 102 soldiers.

Luke 9:51-55

“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, (52) And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. (53) And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. (54) 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? (55) But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, **Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.**”

Notice that the disciples referred to an Old Testament story in 2 Kings 1:8-15. In that passage of scripture it is reported that Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume approximately 100 soldiers who didn't respect him as being a prophet of the Lord.

The disciples presented this Old Testament Scripture to Jesus as justification for their desire to destroy the population of the Samaritan townfolk who had shown disrespect to Jesus (by denying Him lodgings in their village).

Jesus' response to the disciples' question did not sanction their desires nor did they give justification to Elijah's (supposed) actions.

Instead Christ seriously reprimanded the disciples by saying that the desire to destroy someone for showing disrespect to them, is not motivated by the spirit of the One True God.

Jesus simply turned away from those who refused His presence. Jesus did not try to punish those who rejected Him. He even told His disciples that their thinking – of calling down fire to destroy the disrespectful village - was Satanic.

It is interesting to note that Christ did not mention the incident of Elijah calling down fire on the two groups of 50 soldiers (2 Kings 1:9-15), but he told the disciples that their suggestion (to imitate Elijah's act), was inspired by Satan.

One wonders why Christ didn't go a step further in correcting His disciples and pronounce directly to them that the Old Testament story of Elijah calling down fire on the soldiers, also demonstrated the 'wrong' spirit.

Ellen White appears to make some significant comments in The EG White 1888 Materials p 526, 527; MS Rel #1037 (MS 25, 9 Jan, 1890). She states that when Christ came to the earth as a human being, He recognised that the truth about God's character had been *“buried and had apparently become extinct.”* It was *“placed in a framework of error”* and *“disconnected from its true position.”*

The Jewish religious leaders, despite being in possession of the Old Testament scrolls, and despite having committed it to memory and teaching the books of Moses to their youth, despite having all that knowledge, Christ recognised that they did not possess the *“gems of truth.”* For this reason, Christ endeavoured to bring the essential truths about God's character to the minds of the people. Ellen White, from the same manuscript, reveals a significant teaching strategy which Christ employed to achieve His tutorial goal.

The EG White 1888 Materials p 526, 527; MS Rel #1037 (MS 25, 9 Jan, 1890)

“As Christ presented these truths to minds, He broke up their accustomed train of thought as little as possible. Nevertheless a new and transforming economy of truth must be woven into their experience. He therefore aroused their minds by presenting truth through the agency of their most familiar associations. He used illustrations in His teaching which called into activity their most hallowed recollections and sympathies, that he might reach the inner temple of the soul.”³¹

Desire of Ages (1898), p 299

“Christ disappointed the hope of worldly greatness. In the Sermon on the Mount He sought to undo the work that had been wrought by false education, and to give His hearers a right conception of His kingdom and of His own character. Yet He did not make a direct attack on the errors of the people. He saw the misery of the world on account of sin, yet He did not present before them a vivid delineation of their wretchedness. He taught them of something infinitely better than they had known. Without combating their ideas of the kingdom of God, He told them the conditions of entrance therein, leaving them to draw their own conclusions as to its nature. The truths He taught are no less important to us than to the multitude that followed Him. We no less than they need to learn the foundation principles of the kingdom of God.”

It can be easily seen that Ellen White's comments harmonises with Christ' own statement that He could not reveal all the truth to the disciples as they “could not bear it.”

John 16:12

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”

Paul also recognised that instructing others requires a 'holding back' and regulated release of the 'gems' of truth, which if given 'all in one go' would have a negative, perhaps disillusionary effect on the seekers of truth.

31 The full quote from the EG White 1888 Materials Vol 2. p 526, 527; Manuscript Release #1037 (MS 25, 9 January, 1890) reads as follows:

“Christ was the originator of all the ancient gems of truth. Through the work of the enemy these truths had been displaced. They had been disconnected from their true position, and placed in the framework of error. Christ's work was to readjust and establish the precious gems in the framework of truth. The principles of truth which had been given by Himself to bless the world had, through Satan's agency, been buried and had apparently become extinct. Christ rescued them from their rubbish of error, gave them a new, vital force, and commanded them to shine as precious jewels, and stand fast forever. Christ Himself could use any of these old truths without borrowing the smallest particle, for He had originated them all. He had cast them into the minds and thoughts of each generation, and when He came to our world He rearranged and vitalized the truths which had become dead, making them more forcible for the benefit of future generations. It was Jesus Christ who had the power of rescuing the truths from the rubbish, and again giving them to the world with more than their original freshness and power. As Christ presented these truths to mind, He broke up their accustomed train of thought as little as possible. Nevertheless a new and transforming economy of truth must be woven into their experience. He therefore aroused their minds by presenting truth through the agency of their most familiar associations. He used illustrations in His teaching which called into activity their most hallowed recollections and sympathies, that he might reach the inner temple of the soul.”

1 Corinthians 3:1, 2

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. (2) I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.”

It appears likely, according to Christ's own words, Paul's teaching strategies and Ellen White's statements, that Christ purposely did not expose and confront all the false, traditional beliefs which the people held as truth. Instead Christ endeavoured to establish correct concepts of God's character initially and then as the believers were converted by recognising the love of God, they would grow spiritually and be able to 'bear' more 'cutting away' of their errors and be open to receiving more of the true gems of truth. Christ promised that the holy spirit of God would lead them into **all** truth (John 16:13).

Conclusion

If the Old Testament report of fire consuming the soldiers at Elijah's command is to be believed, one must ask the question, “Did Elijah command the incineration of the soldiers by the spirit of Christ – or by the spirit of Satan?”

Christ clearly stated that the spirit which motivated the disciples to want to destroy the Samaritians for their disrespect of their Leader, was the spirit of Satan.

If showing disrespect for the Son of God did not justify calling down fire from heaven to destroy the unbelievers, how can it be justified that Elijah was correct in calling down fire to consume those who showed disrespect to him?

It is more likely that the story has been misrecorded and misreported in the Old Testament writings.

The Son of God, Jesus Christ was not a racist. Christ stated that the spirit which motivated the disciples to want to destroy the Samaritians was the spirit of Satan.

The reason given by the disciples for wanting to murder the Samaritians was because these Gentiles rejected their theology. Christ stressed the point that even if correct theology was rejected - as it was in this case, (that He was the true Messiah) – the people still had a right to reject that theology without fear that the “holy, righteous theology” adherents would attack them.

Christ patiently bore with those He was endeavouring to instruct in the ways of love. For His instruction to be successful, it was required that He would not attack their cherished, but false doctrines. This was not 'bearable' to the people who considered error as precious truth. Christ therefore focused on setting before the people the truth about the character of God, as seen in nature and as demonstrated in His own perfect, human life.

Christ's life demonstrates that it is the spirit of love, patience and passivism that stands vindicated and contrasted against the satanic spirit of selfishness, intolerance and violence.

#37 - Cain and Abel's Sacrifices - Genesis 4:3-5

Objection:

If God did not require animal (blood) sacrifices to atone for sin, why did He accept Abel's offering as a lamb from his flock? Why was Cain's rejected?

Answer:

The most important concept that needs to be examined from this question, is not if the Cain and Abel story is legitimate, but on what basis does humanity achieve salvation?

Down through the ages, God has always accepted sinners who demonstrate faith in the Messiah. To evaluate the quality and genuineness of the sinner's repentance, God marks the motivation of the heart – not the quality/quantity of the gift that the sinner brings.

1 Samuel 16:7

“... for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”

Proverbs 23:7

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:”

In Matthew chapter 23, Jesus confirms this principle – that motivation from the heart is what is important to God – not ritualistic ceremonies.

Matthew 23:25-28

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. (26) Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. (27) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

Again the principle is demonstrated by Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem.

Mark 12:41-44

“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. (42) And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. (43) And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: (44) For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

God accepts repentance born of genuine faith that is motivated by love.

1 John 4:7

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”

Galatians 5:6

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

God accepted Abel's faith that the Saviour would give him victory over sin. Regardless of any rituals that he carried out, it was Abel's faith in Christ that affected his salvation.

Some theologians suppose that religious rituals are necessary for human salvation.

Entire religions support this theology which is simply the doctrine of salvation by works. Pagan religions, the Canaanite religions, the Israelite religions and the Roman Catholic religion believe that the worshipper must DO something to secure his/her own salvation. This belief, carried to its logical conclusion requires that the correct performance of rituals and ceremonies be held as the standard upon which all humanity is to be compared in the judgment. For example, Author W. Pink, from the Fundamental Baptist Institute writes in ***Gleanings in Genesis***, the following:

"The ultimate difference, then, between Cain and Abel was not in their characters, but in their offerings. In one word, it was a difference of blood. Abel was accepted because he offered to God a bleeding lamb. Cain was rejected because he refused to offer such. Here, then, we have traced back to their fountain head the two streams which empty themselves in Heaven and Hell, namely, the saved and the lost, and the dividing line between them in a line of blood. That was the difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians. On the night when God's avenging angel passed through the land of Pharaoh and found a house upon whose door blood was sprinkled—the blood of a lamb, he passed over. But, when he found a house without blood upon it, he entered and slew the firstborn, from the king upon his throne to the prisoner in the dungeon. This will be the test in the day of judgment—all whose names are not found written in the Lamb's book of life shall be cast into the lake of fire. Redemption is to be obtained only through Jesus Christ. 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood'" (Rom. 3:2[6]sic). http://www.fb institute.com/genesis-pink/genesis_08.htm

Although the author of ***Gleanings in Genesis***, appears to quote Romans 3:25 in support of the supposition that salvation is based on the shedding of blood, the Bible is clear that is faith in the Son of God and ***HIS*** actions, which saved humanity, as the following texts reveal.

Romans 3:23-26

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which ***believeth*** in Jesus."

Paul clearly states that humanity is saved by faith in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

Galatians 3:26

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Romans 3:22, 23-28

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:”(26) To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (27) Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. (28) **Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**”

Can there be any doubt that humanity can do nothing that can affect their salvation? Humanity cannot 'save themselves' by performing any rituals whatsoever. Humanity is saved by the loving actions of divinity – not by the actions (works) of humanity.

Was it a ritualistic blood sacrifice that Christ made to save the world? Was it a blood-letting ritual that saved sinners from satanic power? No.

The wages of sin is death.

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Humanity's sins naturally bring forth death.

Proverbs 8:36

“But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.”

Christ voluntarily took the wages of death into His own body. Sin worked death in Christ's body as He lay down His life for humanity. The Father, abiding by the 'counsel of peace which was made between them both' did not intervene with this natural law. Sin brings forth death. Christ's death was not a ritualistic, divine killing. Christ suffered the wages of the law of sin which resulted in death. Though possessing a sinless character Himself, Christ voluntarily laid down His life on behalf of sinful humanity.

Once again it is necessary to ask the question, What saves humanity? The blood of sacrifices? Paul, Jeremiah and David answer that question.

Hebrews 10:4

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

Jeremiah 7:22

“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.”

Psalam 69:30-31

“I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. (31) This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.”

It is not the spilling of animal blood that saves humanity.

Salvation is only available by faith which is placed in the perfect life – the perfect character – of Jesus Christ. This perfect life Christ voluntarily laid down in order to relieve humanity of paying the wages of their own sins ie. reaping the consequences of their sinful actions.

Christ's life demonstrated that the foundation of His Father's government is pure love. The life of Christ is a transcript of the 10 commandment law – the Father's government in visible form to all humanity.

John 14:8-9

“Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. (9) 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, Show us the Father?”

Pagan religions and those who advocate salvation by works, tend to believe that Christ was offered as a blood sacrifice to appease an angry 'God.' Although this theology appears to be reflected in certain places in the Old Testament, such thinking is not demonstrated in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Jesus made it clear to His followers that the entire law and the prophets were embraced by the commandment to love God and to love one another (Matt 5:17).

Ellen White confirms Christ's words.

Review and Herald, 26 October, 1897

“Again, Christ repeated the condition of union with him. This promise is made to every sincere Christian. Our Saviour speaks so plainly that no one need fail to understand that true love will always produce obedience. Obedience is the sign of true love. Christ and the Father are one, and those who in truth receive Christ **will love God** as the great center of their adoration, and **will also love one another**; and in so doing they will keep the law.”

Conclusion

Whatever the gifts that Cain and Able offered, it is certain that God 'looks on the heart' of the giver and is less concerned with the contents of the gift (1 Sam. 16:7). God loves a cheerful giver, not necessarily a rich giver (2 Cor 9:7).

Regardless of the gifts that were given, God esteemed Abel's gift because of the genuineness of Abel's desire to please Him, not because it was a blood sacrifice.

The Christian places their faith in the merits of the life of Christ Jesus alone – not in rituals or ceremonies – the works of humanity.

In Hebrews 11, many sinners have been saved by grace, through faith. Some of the faith 'heroes' include Samson, Gideon, Barak, Japhath, Rahab. When these 'heroes' histories are considered, it is very clear that God did not save these people because of their righteous works, but by their faith.

Though these faith heroes were very sincere, they made many errors concerning God's character and the principles of His government. Despite their lack of knowledge, God granted salvation to the heroes because they obeyed those principles which they genuinely **believed** were truth. Their faulty, but best efforts to obey God (their works) were counted to them as righteousness – because of their faith in the Messiah.

Abel was likewise saved by faith – not by his works - nor by his blood sacrifice. Able was not saved in any manner different to that by which every repentant sinner is saved.

Cain was not saved, but his sad plight was not because he did not present a blood sacrifice, but because he was not repentant for his sins.

Note that even after the rebellious man murdered his brother, the loving Creator placed a protective mark on Cain. This loving act was especially done in order to protect Cain from similar violence that others might be tempted to inflict upon him.

Questions:

- If God authored the principles of the Mosaic law, why didn't He apply the 'eye for an eye' principle to Cain? (Exodus 21:24-25).
- If God authored the principles of the Mosaic law why didn't He command Cain's parents to execute their murderer son as the Israelites were required to enforce? (Exodus 21:12)
- If the story of Ananias and Sapphira demonstrated that God would strike dead anyone who lied to Him, why didn't God strike Cain dead, when he lied about not knowing where his brother was?

The mark of Cain demonstrates God's gentle, loving and protective character. In accordance to His eternal principles of love as seen in the 10 commandments, God showed love to His enemy.

God did not impose the death penalty on Cain according to the Mosaic law of 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound and stripe for stripe" (Exodus 21:24-25).

Nor did God impose the penalty for murder against Cain when he broke the principles of the Mosaic law: "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death" (Exodus 21:12).

Regardless of whether sinners accept or reject Him, God's response to humanity is the same. Love. Instead of annihilating Cain for breaking His commandments, God reached out in compassion, showing mercy and unquenchable love, to entice the rebel to reconsider and to return to Him (Gen 4:15).

Genesis 4:15

"And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him."

Blood sacrifices didn't save Abel and they didn't cause Cain to be rejected. Human beings decide their own salvation. They either accept Christ as their Saviour by faith, or they reject Him. Their faith in Christ will be reflected in their characters which will be formed in obedience to the 10 commandments - the law of love - not in obedience to violent rituals.

#38 - A Time to Kill – Ecclesiastes 3:3

“Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: (2) A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; (3) A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; (4) A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance” King James Version

1. “To everything--a season, and a time to every delight under the heavens: 2 A time to bring forth, And a time to die. A time to plant, And a time to eradicate the planted. 3 A time to slay, And a time to heal, A time to break down, And a time to build up. 4 A time to weep, And a time to laugh. A time to mourn, And a time to skip”. (Young’s Literal Translation, 1898)

Objection: *There is a time to kill.*

Answer:

In this chapter, Solomon (as Job did) considers many of the routine events and emotions which are experienced by those who live in this sinful world. In his considerations, the king selects qualities that he has observed and experienced; and he compares them with their opposite quality. He notes that in a sinful world, there are tears and yet there is the opposite of tears - there is laughing; just as there are deaths and there are births which bring new life.

Solomon continues “ **8** *A time to love, And a time to hate. A time of war, And a time of peace.” Then he questions, **9** *“What advantage hath the doer in that which he is labouring at? **10** I have seen the travail that God hath given to the sons of man to be humbled by it.”**

Solomon concludes that there is no escaping the good and the evil in everything human – in the human experience of life in an sinful world. However, Solomon knows that one day, God will judge between the righteous and the wicked (which he has just compared in the beginning of the chapter).

Ecclesiastes 3:17

“I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.”

Till the judgment day arrives, both good and evil will continue in the world.

#39 - Picking up Sticks on Sabbath – Numbers 15:32-36

Numbers 15:32-36

“And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. (33) And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. (34) And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. (35) And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. (36) And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.”

Objection:

The Old Testament book of Leviticus, reports an incident whereby a man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath, thereby breaking the commandment, was locked up by Moses until he inquired of God what should be done with the law-breaker. It is claimed that the man was stoned to death at the express command of God.

Answer:

This is the record of the event in the Old Testament, recorded by scribes who Paul says, only saw things “through a glass darkly” or “through a veil.”

2 Corinthians 3:14-17

*“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. (15) But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. (16) Nevertheless **when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.** (17) Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”*

God's people should turn to the Lord and then the veil of Old Testament confusion will be taken away from the character of God.

Ellen White states that the man who broke the Sabbath by collecting sticks, performed a deliberate act, defiant of the law of God. For this rebellion he was condemned to death.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p 408, 409

“Soon after the return into the wilderness, an instance of Sabbath violation occurred, under circumstances that rendered it a case of peculiar guilt. The Lord's announcement that He would disinherit Israel had roused a spirit of rebellion. One of the people, angry at being excluded from Canaan, and determined to show his defiance of God's law, ventured upon the open transgression of the fourth commandment by going out to gather sticks upon the Sabbath. During the sojourn in the wilderness the kindling of fires upon the seventh day had been strictly prohibited. The prohibition was not to extend to the land of Canaan, where the severity of the climate would often render fires a necessity; but in the wilderness, fire was not needed for warmth. The act of this man was a willful and deliberate violation of the fourth commandment--a sin, not of thoughtlessness or ignorance, but of presumption. (p 409) He was taken in the act and brought before Moses. It had already been declared that Sabbathbreaking should be punished with death, but it had not yet been revealed how the penalty was to be inflicted. The case was brought by Moses before the Lord, and the direction was given, "The man shall be surely put to

death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp." Numbers 15:35. The sins of blasphemy and willful Sabbathbreaking received the same punishment, being equally an expression of contempt for the authority of God."

Recalling that we should, "look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" we might ask if an event exists in the life of Jesus Christ that is comparable with the event of the man who was stoned because he knowingly, deliberately broke a commandment of God?

A comparable incident is probably the story of the woman who was found in the very act of adultery. This woman was dragged before Jesus to be sentenced.

In an amazing turnaround, Jesus refused to condemn this woman who knowingly, deliberately broke the 7th commandment. The Old Testament law commanded that she be stoned to death – but Jesus instructed that such a woman should be loved into repentance and given forgiveness freely – not condemned. He saved her physical life and gave her eternal life – without condoning her sinful act.

Ministry of Healing p 89

*"The woman had stood before Jesus, cowering with fear. His words, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone," had come to her as a death sentence. She dared not lift her eyes to the Saviour's face, but silently awaited her doom. In astonishment she saw her accusers depart speechless and confounded; then those words of hope fell upon her ear, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Her heart was melted, and, casting herself at the feet of Jesus, she sobbed out her grateful love and with bitter tears confessed her sins. **This was to her the beginning of a new life, a life of purity and peace, devoted to God. In the uplifting of this fallen soul, Jesus performed a greater miracle than in healing the most grievous physical disease; He cured the spiritual malady which is unto death everlasting. This penitent woman became one of His most steadfast followers. With self-sacrificing love and devotion she showed her gratitude for His forgiving mercy. For this erring woman the world had only contempt and scorn, but the Sinless One pitied her weakness and reached to her a helping hand. While the hypocritical Pharisees denounced, Jesus bade her, "Go, and sin no more."** Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. **The greater the sinner's guilt, the more he needs the Saviour. His heart of divine love and sympathy is drawn out most of all for the one who is the most hopelessly entangled in the snares of the enemy. With His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race."***

The contrast between the actions and words of Christ to the adulterous woman, and the words supposedly given by God in the Old Testament, condemning the Sabbath-breaking man, is glaringly obvious. Jesus saved the woman from her would be murderers, but the poor man was murdered supposedly "by the command of God, through Moses."

The Mosaic law required death for both of the crimes committed - by the man and also the crime committed by the woman.

Consider: Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow. The principles of His government are unchangeable, based on His law/character.

Is it likely that Christ - ***in whom is justice and mercy*** - would have treated the guilty man in the opposite manner to the guilty woman?

If Christ commanded the destruction of the Sabbath-breaking man, to be just, He would also need to require the destruction of the adulterous woman.

Conversely, because Christ redeemed and forgave the guilty adulterous woman, could His response to the guilty man, have been any less merciful than that which He gave the adulterous woman?

If the guilty stick-collecting Sabbath-breaking man had been brought to Jesus and thrown at His feet, guilty of breaking the fourth commandment, would Christ have condemned him of this crime? Would He have thrown the first stone in condemnation?

Moses prophesied that the Messiah would be like him.

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18

“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;...(18) I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”

Moses is described, (in Numbers, which was a book supposedly authored by himself) as 'the meekest man in the earth.'

Numbers 12:3

“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”

Ellen White, Life Sketches, p 245

“The close intercourse which Moses had with God, and the glorious manifestation vouchsafed to him, caused his face to shine so brightly with heavenly luster that the people of Israel could not look upon him. He appeared like a bright angel from heaven. This personal experience of the knowledge of God was of more value to him as a man bearing responsibilities as a leader than all his former education in the learning of the Egyptians. The most brilliant intellect, the most earnest study, the highest eloquence, can never be substituted for the wisdom and power of God in those who are bearing the responsibilities connected with His cause. Nothing can be substituted for the grace of Christ and the knowledge of God's will.”

Moses prophesied that the Prophet which God raised up, would be meek, like him. And that He would speak the words of God as did Moses.

Moses surely must have been meek and of holy character, for he is currently in heaven. We know this, because the testimony of Peter confirms that Moses appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and Elijah.

Moses compared his character with that of the Messiah. We have an accurate record of the Messiah's character, by many eye-witnesses in the gospels. If the two characters – that of Christ's and that reportedly to be of Moses – **are found to be dissimilar**, then it would appear that Moses has received 'bad press' at the hands of the Jewish scribes, perhaps occurring when they converted the Old Testament from an oral history into a printed record. That this might have occurred, is highly probable. Moses was considered to have been a highly honoured and respected prophet of God by the common people. From the discussion that Christ held with the Jewish leaders, it is not difficult to envision their use of Moses' name in order to secure their leadership and authority and to retain political and religious control of the nation.

John 5:45

“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. (46) For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. (47) But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

The Pharisees bragged that they trusted in and kept the law of Moses, yet they did not believe Moses' prophecies concerning the Messiah and neither did they understand that the law of God was built on principles of love.

Ellen White comments on this situation.

Review and Herald, 9 March, 1905 p 3, 4

“We are to copy no human being. There is no human being wise enough to be our criterion. We are to look to the man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the pattern Man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. **His character is our model.** Let us, then, take our minds off the perplexities and the difficulties of this life, and fix them on him, that by beholding we may be changed into his likeness. We may behold Christ to good purpose. **We may safely look to him;** for he is all-wise. As we look to him and think of him, he will be formed within, the hope of glory. Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand.”

Another incident that might be helpful to examine in the life of Jesus occurred when, one Sabbath day, the Jewish leaders observed Jesus' disciples 'collecting' grain. The disciples were not collecting sticks, like the law-breaking man in the Old Testament, but it was a similar crime in the religious leaders' estimation. The ever vocal and critical Pharisees judged the disciples' actions as being the same crime as the one committed by the man (in the Old Testament) who had picked up sticks on the Sabbath day. It was righteously concluded that Jesus' disciples were guilty of breaking the Sabbath commandment. In the Pharisees' minds, the death penalty was applicable to Christ and his disciples. It appears that the same harsh, merciless judgement was also made earlier, by Jewish leaders who condemned the man who had collected sticks in the wilderness on Sabbath.

Given that the Jewish oral traditions and Mosaic laws, were only written down in the days of Ezra, and such evidence only dates to 300 BC, could the sad incident of the man collecting sticks, as recorded in the Old Testament, have been slightly different from that which actually transpired many years before? Or could this incident possibly be an inclusion by zealous scribes and priests, even centuries before, who were keen to press their legalism on the nation of Israel and through fear, rather than love, gain their obedience?

Because of the evidence of Jesus' testimony and witness, there is sufficient cause to doubt whether God actually commanded the leaders to stone the Sabbath-breaker to death. Is it not more likely that the leaders, in keeping with the practice of other pagan religions, authorised this murder by claiming that “God” commanded them to perform it?

Ellen White, Signs of the Times 11 June, 894 p 6

“The origin of false commandments may be clearly discerned by the principles which underlie them. All that is not in accordance with the known and expressed will of God, is at enmity with God, and has its origin in the synagogue of Satan. The will of God is expressed in his law, and sin is the transgression of the law. Those who disregard the commandments of God, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men, are working in Satan's line, and are in harmony with the great leader of apostasy...”

Signs of the Times, 23 April, 1896

“The inhabitants of worlds unfallen could view in this case the attributes of Satan and the character of God. The law of God is a transcript of his character. The rebel leader (Satan) was in opposition to the law of God, and revealed the fact that his principles were those that actuated one who is lawless, disobedient, unholy, an accuser, a liar, and a murderer. The true character of the ruler of the synagogue was laid bare, and it was made manifest that he was on the side of the great rebel, tho sanctimoniously professing to be very punctilious concerning the law of God. He knew not the principle of love that underlies the commandments, ...yet the ruler never forgave Christ for departing from the maxims, customs, and commandments of men, with which the rabbis had burdened the law of God and obscured its spiritual significance.”

If things said to be commanded by the Lord (including Bible verses) don't line up with the words, teachings and life example of Christ, it isn't truth! If it doesn't line up with the 10 commandments, it isn't truth! If it doesn't line up with the principles of love, it isn't truth!

#40 - Nadab and Abihu – Ananias and Sapphira – Lev 10: Acts 5

Objection: *God killed Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament and Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament.*

Leviticus 10:1, 2

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. (2) And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. (3) Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace. (4) And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp. (5) So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.”

Acts 5:1-5

*“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, (2) And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it, at the apostles' feet. (3) But Peter said, Ananias, **why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost**, and to keep back part of the price of the land? (4) Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. (5) And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things (9) Then Peter said unto her (Sapphira), How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. (10) Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.”*

Answer:

God kills no man. Sin, cherished by sinners until their probation ends, causes their own deaths.

Ellen White, 5 Testimonies for the Church, p 120

“This case is placed on record for our benefit. Just what took place in Pharaoh's heart will take place in every soul that neglects to cherish the light and walk promptly in its rays. **God destroys no one.** The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence. When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved. We want all to understand how the soul is destroyed. It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved. He does not throw a darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and, having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. Then comes the harvest to be reaped from the seed of unbelief and resistance. Oh what a harvest of sinful indulgences is preparing for the sickle!”

The cases of Nadab and Abihu and Ananias and Sapphira both demonstrate what occurs to unrepentant sinners who cling to sin. When their probation is over - they die -because they reject the protection of God. Eventually unrepentant sinners will stand before God and come into His divine presence. God is at all times, a consuming fire to sin, therefore unrepentant sinners will destroy themselves when sin within them is consumed by God's presence. Such deaths occur only as a consequence of natural law.

God destroys sin in the same way that light destroys darkness; heat destroys cold; love destroys hatred; life destroys death.

Nadid, Abihu, Ananias and Sapphira clung to their sins. Their permanent decision resulted in their complete and final rejection of God. When God is told to 'go away' He does not force His presence upon anyone. Instead, as a true gentleman, He removes His unwanted presence from those who tell Him to leave them. Sadly, when God is forced to abandon a person who rejects Him, the person forfeits divine protection. Unrepentant, confirmed sinners are left unprotected from the 'god' they have chosen to follow - Satan. Ananias and Sapphira rejected God's protection. Therefore they exposed themselves to Satan's attacks. Nadab and Abihu likewise spurned God love and their sins were uncovered when they dared to go before God's presence. God is a consuming fire to sin and Nadab and Abihu's sins caused the destruction of their bodies when they entered God's presence. The presence of God always destroys sins – but sinners have a choice as to whether they will be found contaminated with sin, or if they will be free of sin through Jesus Christ. Those who separate from sin will not be in danger on the judgment day. Those who have clung to their sins will be 'joined to their idols' and God's presence will be a consuming fire to their sins. Those who have permitted 'sin to reign in their mortal bodies,' will perish along with their sins.

Some might suppose that this argument is 'far-fetched' or that it can only be sustained by a 'twisting of the facts in order to sustain a certain belief.' Therefore, in order to establish the veracity of the argument, it might be well to consider another Biblical example where both the Divine and the satanic characters are contrasted and their opposing strategies clearly demonstrated.

Job 1:9-12, 16; 2-7

“Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? (10) 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. (11) But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. (12) 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... (16) While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.... (Job 2:4) And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. (5) But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. (6) And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. (7) So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.”

In the book of Job, the source of Job's physical, emotional and spiritual harassment is revealed. In the conversation between God and Satan, Satan endeavoured to credit God with destroying Job's possessions.

God did not accept the blame or credit for these destructive acts, but He clearly exposed the source of the destruction.

The conversation reveals that Satan wished to inflict death on Job - and to cause Job to blame the attacks on God, however God prevented Satan from murdering Job. Had it not been Satan's intention to murder Job, God would not have instructed Satan that Job was 'in his hand, except for his life.' God instructed Satan that the hedge surrounding Job would not be completely removed. Why? God knew that Satan would kill Job if he was given opportunity – and that the devil would try to implicate God in the crime.

The first two chapters in the book of Job clarify that Satan was responsible for:

- Job's afflictions (including causing a destroying fire to come down from “God” out of heaven - Job 1: 16);
- for desiring to kill Job;
- blaming God for the afflictions; and
- making it appear that God was punishing Job.

The principles of Satan's government are exposed by his cruel treatment of Job:

- Satan desires to kill God's people;
- God puts a hedge of protection around His people;
- Satan harasses God's people to whatever extent God permits;
- Satan and his agents accuse God of causing the harassment (perhaps by sending the fire from heaven, or from the sanctuary to kill people);
- When a person rejects God completely, God reluctantly withdraws His holy presence/spirit (i.e. the hedge is completely removed) and as demonstrated by Jesus in Gethsemane (who took humanity's sin into His own body), Satan crushes out the unprotected life;
- When the unrepentant sinner is unprotected and Satan destroys his/her life, those who do not understand God's character presume that God has destroyed them;
- God's character is confused with Satan's character and God's love is obscured;
- People obey God out of fear instead of being drawn to Him through unfailing love. To do this is to be ignorant of the true gospel which is that God's love draws the person to repent.

Therefore, it is logical to expect those same satanic principles or strategies will be repeated in other situations. Does the Bible record other incidents where the same principles are identified? Yes – as demonstrated in the cases of Nadab and Abihu, and Ananias and Sapphira - but often the blame for deaths and tragic events are blamed on God, even ignorantly, by those who are His followers.

The devil is able to destroy his rebellious, human followers and agents at any time, for they are unprotected by God's angels. Satan might not instantly destroy the physical life of unrepentant sinners because as his agents, wicked human beings can assist him to achieve certain evil purposes. However, Satan might choose to kill unrepentant sinners with the purpose that he can cause humanity to blame his own satanic, murderous actions on God.

Regarding the death of Ananias and Sapphira, it would appear that Satan thought it profitable to destroy some professed (but unrepentant) 'Christians' in the early church for the express purpose of casting aspersions on God's character by suggesting to them that God would kill the disobedient. Similarly, in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Satan took the same opportunity in the Old Testament. In contrast, in His demonstration of the Father's character, Christ gave no such example of using fear and coercion to obtain obedience, but only used love to "draw all men unto him" (John 12:32).

The Bible states that God is a consuming fire to sin - not sinners. On judgment day, sinners die as a consequence of the sin in them combusting in God's presence. Repentant sinners will be free of sin, covered by Christ's righteousness and therefore protected, while unrepentant sinners who are joined to their sins, will have a fire come forth **from within them** that devours them.

Isaiah 33:11

"Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: **your breath (#7307), as fire, shall devour you.**"

The Hebrew word 'rwach' is legitimately translated as breath, but also as spirit/mind³²

Ezekiel 28:18

"Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore **will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee**, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

Isaiah 29:5

"Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, **it shall be at an instant suddenly.**"

Ellen White was told of this serious consequence by Jesus, in a vision.

Ellen White, Early Writings, p 54 (End of the 2300 Days)

"I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. **I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, 'If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.'**"

32 Strong's Hebrew concordance #7307 ruwach roo'-akh from 7306; wind; by resemblance breath, i.e. a sensible (or even violent) exhalation; figuratively, life, anger, unsubstantiality; by extension, a region of the sky; by resemblance spirit, but only of a rational being (including its expression and functions):--air, anger, blast, breath, X cool, courage, **mind**, X quarter, X side, **spirit**((-ual)), tempest, X vain, ((whirl-))wind(-y). see HEBREW for 07306

We can ask God to consume the sin in us now, but if we don't, His presence at the 2nd coming, will still be a consuming fire to the sin in us. If a person has clung to sin when Jesus comes, the presence of God will cause the sin to ignite in that person's body. Sin (and the bodies that house those sins) will be consumed together. This reaction occurs in the same way that water, when dropped onto a hotplace, evaporates (or is in a sense, consumed).

Death occurs as a natural consequence of sin being swallowed up in the presence of the Life-Giver. There is no malice involved. It's just how it is! God is a consuming fire to sin.

Consider again how their spiritual decision resulted in a painful physical situation in the case of Nadab, Abihu, Ananias and Sapphira:

When Ananias and Sapphira confirmed again with a lie that they would give their allegiance to Satan and abide by the principles of his government, they took themselves out of God's hands. As God removed His sustaining presence from them, Ananias and Sapphira were left unprotected from Satan's attack. When Nadab and Abihu again went into the presence of God, this time knowingly with unconfessed sin, they placed themselves in mortal danger. God didn't destroy them. They destroyed themselves.

If a man walks in front of a moving train, the man destroys himself, despite the fact that the train caused his death. In this way, God is implicated in the death of sinners who place themselves in His presence with unconfessed sin. God says, "Oh, why will ye die.....?" Jesus wept bitter tears and enduring a similar heartache over lost, unrepentant Jerusalem.

As they continually insulated themselves from the Source of all Life, Ananias and Sapphira, Nadab and Abihu must have suffered similar (although much milder) physical sensations which Christ endured in the Garden of Gethsemane. During that period of trial, Christ suffered in the sinners' place, both mentally and physically as Satan afflicted Him. The physical stress Christ endured was evidenced in that His sweat was mixed with blood. Ellen White explained that, had God not sent an angel to strengthen His Son, Christ would have died in the garden.

Bible Training School, 1 September, 1915, p 5

"In the garden of Gethsemane Christ suffered in man's stead, and the human nature of the Son of God staggered under the terrible horror of the guilt of sin, until from His pale and quivering lips was forced the agonizing cry, 'O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me;' but if there be no other way by which the salvation of man may be accomplished, then 'not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' **Human nature would then and there have died under the horror of the sense of sin, had not an angel from heaven strengthened Him to bear the agony.** The power that inflicted retributive justice upon man's substitute and surety, was the power that sustained and upheld the suffering One under the tremendous weight of wrath that would have fallen upon a sinful world. Christ was suffering the death that was pronounced upon the transgressors of God's law."

Ellen White explained that the power which inflicted retributive justice upon Christ was the Father. How is this possible? Did Ellen White mean that the Father killed and tortured His own Son?

No, never. The Father's retributive justice was His moving away from His Son while Satan rushed in to persecute the innocent Son of God.

EG White, Sufferings of Christ, p 17, 18

“Could mortals view the amazement and sorrow of the angels as they watched in silent grief the Father separating His beams of light, love and glory, from his Son, they would better understand how offensive is sin in His sight. As the Son of God in the Garden of Gethsemane bowed in the attitude of prayer, the agony of his spirit forced from His pores sweat like great drops of blood. It was here that the horror of great darkness surrounded Him. The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man’s stead, as a transgressor of His Father’s law. Here was the scene of temptation. *The divine light of God was receding from His vision*, and *He was passing into the hands of the powers of darkness*. In the agony of His soul He lay prostrate on the cold earth. *He was realizing His Father’s frown*. The cup of suffering Christ had taken from the lips of guilty man, and proposed to drink it Himself, and, in its place, give to man the cup of blessing. *The wrath that would have fallen upon man, was now falling upon Christ.*”

From the above quote, it is explained by EG White that *the wrath of the Father is called “the Father’s frown.” It is described as the separating of His light, love and glory. When the Father withdraws His spirit (light, love and glory) then Satan and his demons – the powers of darkness - rush in and bring horror and destruction.*

Ellen White here states that the Father turned away from His Son and Satan rushed in to destroy Him. Jesus could have resisted the death coming upon Him, by taking again His divine powers upon Him, but He chose not to resist Satan's evil attack by supernatural methods. Christ laid down His life, though not compelled to do so, to demonstrate to the world that it is NEVER necessary to lay aside any of God's commandments of love.

If Ellen White's definition and understanding of the Father's wrath is rejected, there is no other conclusion remaining than to suppose that the Father killed His Son, or that the Son committed suicide. Both these options accuse Father and Son of breaking Their own commandments - “thou shalt not kill.”

But the words of Jesus reassure us that Satan was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Neither the Father nor the Son are murderers.

Prior to the judgment day, only an unprotected and unhappy temporary existence remains certain for everyone who separates themselves from God.

Ellen White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p 98

“So when Christ shall cease His intercession for guilty men, before His coming in the clouds of heaven, the door of mercy will be shut. Then divine grace will no longer restrain the wicked, and Satan will have full control of those who have rejected mercy. They will endeavor to destroy God's people; but as Noah was shut into the ark, so the righteous will be shielded by divine power.”

Ellen White, 1 Testimonies for the Church, p 346

“I saw that in our journeying from place to place, he had frequently placed his evil angels in our path to cause accident which would destroy our lives; but holy angels were sent upon the ground to deliver. Several accidents have placed my husband and myself in great peril, and our preservation has been wonderful. I saw that we had been the special objects of Satan's attacks, because of our interest in and connection with the work of God. As I saw the great care which God has every moment for those who love and fear Him...”

Ellen White, Review and Herald, 8 May, 1894

*“With all his hellish arts, Satan has sought to lead men into practices that would destroy and debase, and **destruction is sure to him who does not repent and turn to God for his healing grace.** The soul that has not the grace of God can make no efforts to resist Satan, but will co-operate naturally with the Satanic agencies, and disregard and oppose the law of God; and the sure result of such a course is that men become the willing slaves of Satan, and work with him in influencing others in the way of disobedience.”*

#41 - God Commanded Genocide - The Amalekites – 1 Samuel 15

1 Samuel 15:1-3

“Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. (2) Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. (3) Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”

Objection:

God apparently command His 'holy' people to commit genocide against the Amalekites.

Answer:

What was the heinous crime that the Amalekites committed, to be 'divinely' condemned to extermination as a race?

According to the Old Testament record, the Amalekites were a Canaanite tribe. The Israelites had been given the command to “go up and possess the (Promised) Land,” but they balked, fearful of the numerous inhabitants. Their refusal was considered a serious sin and their lack of faith as rebellion against God. In consequence, it was then divinely declared that all males 20 years and older, would die in the wilderness.³³ With much regret at the divine decision, the rebellious Israelites decided to attack the Amalekites anyway. Moses warned that God would not be with them, but this warning fell on deaf ears - and the Israelites were soundly defeated.

From this passage, it appears that the Amalekites committed the crime of defending their own land from Israelite attack, and in the process, defeated them.

Strangely, the Old Testament records that it was not national or human revenge that prompted the pronouncement made against the Amalekites, but divine revenge which was prescribed because the Amalekites' **ancestors** opposed the Israelites' invasion (1 Samuel 15: 2). So it was 'God' who supposedly determined that a feudal war was necessary to completely and permanently annihilate the Amalekite tribe (Exodus 17:16) for defending their homes and families.

It is logical to believe that it was the Israelites (rather than God) who decided that revenge and genocide of the Amalekites was necessary.³⁴ This position is harmonious with the loving principles that Jesus repeatedly demonstrated, and which Ellen White affirms.

³³ *God did not withdraw His divine protection from those who truly repented. Thus Satan was not able to strike dead the fearful Israelites.*

³⁴ *In the account of the war in 1 Samuel 15, the Israelites are reported to have killed all the Amalekites, including finally the king himself, however, in the period of the judges, under Deborah and Barak, the Amalekites still presented an opposing army. How could they be an army, if the race was already exterminated years before by Saul's forces? Judges 6:3 “And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them.”*

Ellen White states in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p 392

“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.”

As the details concerning the Israelites' hostility toward the Amalekites are examined, a familiar, **human** pattern emerges:

- a desire to acquire land by warfare;
- an invasion;
- a failed conquest;
- a desire to revenge the defeat;
- the formation of a racist culture toward the victors; and
- clan wars.

The very common, sinful, human response to racial conflict between the Amalekites and the Israelites is obvious. Rather than support a 'divinely-inspired' genocide, the facts logically tend to support the human desire for revenge and conquest.

When one considers other 'divinely-inspired' battles in the Old Testament, the human trend is further confirmed.

In a previous battle with the Philistines, (in 1 Samuel 13:15) Saul hesitated to attack the enemy – not because he loved them, as the spirit of Jesus would have inspired – but because he only had a tiny army of 600 soldiers. Saul's forces therefore were heavily outnumbered.

Many of the Canaanites were superstitious³⁵ and it appears the Israelites were also affected by similar beliefs.

Conveniently for the Israelites, an earthquake shook the ground. It was immediately presumed by both the Philistines and the Israelites, that the Israelite 'god' was angry and that the quaking earth was a sign of His intervention. Since the Israelites were known as the people who worshipped the “gods of the hills” (1 Kings 20:23), the superstitious Philistines retreated in fear and the Israelites, in the same manner as the pagans (Judges 16:23), credited God with their victorious slaughter of their enemies.

Many pagan doctrines were built on the assumption that when the 'gods' of nature were angry, 'natural calamities' occurred. It was also taught that lightning occurred when 'god' hurled lightning bolts to the earth to destroy his enemies.

However, it is well-known today, that because of its geological position situated over fault lines, the Promised Land, was and still is prone to suffer earthquakes and fiery explosions.³⁶

35 1 Kings 20:23 *“And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their (the Israelites') gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.”*

36 The Encyclopedia Britannica states: *“The Dead Sea occupies part of a graben (a downfaulted block of the Earth's crust) between transform faults along a tectonic plate boundary that runs from the Red Sea–Gulf of Suez spreading centre to a convergent plate boundary in the Taurus Mountains. The eastern fault, along the edge of the Moab Plateau, is more readily visible from the lake than is the western fault, which marks the gentler Judean upfold.... Thermal sulfur springs also feed the rivers” (i.e. the four perennial streams that flow into the Dead Sea.)*
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9029627>

Furthermore, the story of Job reveals that Satan, 'the prince of the power of the air' (Ephesians 2:2) is quite capable of causing earthquakes and storms.

It is interesting to remember what the One True God revealed about Himself. When hidden in the cave on Mt Sinai (Horeb), Elijah learned that 'God was not in the earthquake'³⁷ nor in the destructive forces of nature - but in the still, small voice.

Was the earthquake which occurred during the battle with the Amalekites, a 'natural disaster' or one that Satan especially provoked to convince the Israelites that 'god' was with them?

History of the War with the Amalekites

Condemnation of the Amalekites was pronounced when the Israelites were not long out of Egyptian bondage.

Exodus 17:8-16

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. (9) And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. (10) So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. (11) And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. (12) But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. (13) And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (14) And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. (15) And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: (16) For he said, **Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.**"

What happened to the divine principles set out in Ezekiel 18 – that punishment for the personal sins of the fathers, will definitely not be transferred to the children? Did this principle, which God was so definite about, somehow **not** apply to the warring Israelites?

Numbers 13:29-31

"The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. (30) And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. (31) But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."

37 1 Kings 19:11-12 *"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: (12) And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."*

Numbers 14:36-45

“And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, (37) Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD. (38) But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still. (39) And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly. (40) And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned. (41) And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. (42) **Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. (43) For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you.** (44) But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. (45) Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.”

In a previous battle recorded in 1 Samuel 13:13, 14, Saul was informed that the kingdom would be taken from him because he had disobeyed the Lord by offering sacrifices himself. Undeterred, he continued to rouse his army of only 600 footmen to do battle with the Philistines. Unbeknown to the king, his son Jonathan and his armour-bearer were fighting some unsuspecting Philistines at an outpost. Suddenly an earthquake shook the earth. Saul asked the priest to pray for divine instruction, but then decided there was no time to wait upon the Lord for advice (1 Samuel 14:19). Saul attacked the large Philistine army ONLY when the earthquake caused their enemies to retreat in fear. The Israelites celebrated a great victory that 'the Lord' had given them (verse 45).

When Saul attacked the country of Amalek, he did so with an immense army of 200,000 footmen (verse 4). It is interesting to note that, when Saul had a huge number of soldiers available to go into the battle against the Amalekites, the command was given that 'the Lord' would be with him. Victory was certain, but was it because 'the Lord' fought for him, or because his forces outnumbered the enemy considerably? How strange! Samuel was recorded to have said that God would not be with Saul anymore and that the kingdom would be taken away from him and given to another who was 'after God's own heart' (1 Samuel 13:13, 14). Suddenly, without any proper confession of sins, Saul is being again blessed by 'god' with another amazing victory over the Amalekites. Does the One True God bless those who do not repent and enable them to kill others in war?

According to the Old Testament writers, God was given the credit for the outcome of victorious battles. If God commanded Saul to kill the Amalekites, (who were coincidentally, the very same people to whom they held a grudge and wanted to revenge anyway), then, by believing that 'God' ordered the murders of their enemies, their guilty consciences could conveniently be soothed. The Israelites might desire to murder the Amalekites in order to revenge their earlier defeat in battle with them, but if God sanctioned it, even commanded the killings, then there was no need of confession or repentance for killing those people from a race whom they hated anyway.

Another 'convenient' outcome was that if 'God' commanded the Israelites to totally destroy their enemies from off the face of the earth, all their enemies' land and possessions would belong to the 'holy' victorious warriors. This battle strategy is referred to as 'plunder.'

In keeping with wartime mentality, the Israelites indeed, did reserve the best plunder and livestock from the Amalek genocide for themselves, despite the supposedly 'divine' command to kill the Amalekites because 'their cup of iniquity was full.' Can we really believe that the Israelites were not interested in taking the plunder of the Amalekites?

King Saul claimed that the Israelites were certainly interested in the plunder!

1 Samuel 15:21

“But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.”

The sinful, selfish human stamp is all over the genocide of the Amalekites.

Is it logical to suggest that God commanded Saul to fight a 'holy' war – against the Amalekites for sins that their ancestors committed when Ezekiel 18 clearly states that God operates under a very different principle?

Is a doctrine of 'divinely-inspired' genocide, harmonious with Jesus' demonstration of the Father's character?

Is the 'divine' command to slaughter of all the Amalekite's cattle, in keeping with the principles of divine economy demonstrated when Christ fed the multitudes with loaves and fish? Christ organised that there be no wastage (Matthew 14:20), while the Israelites were supposedly instructed by 'god' to destroy all the apparently healthy cattle.

It is more than interesting to note that, in the time when there was no king in Israel, that when 'every man did what was right in his own eyes,' (Judges 17:6; 21:25) the actions of the Israelites were incredibly similar to the events previously declared to be 'divine' commands.

Judges 21:9-12, 25

“For the people were numbered, and, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead there. (10) **And the congregation** sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, **Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. (11) And this is the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man.** (12) **And they found among the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh,** which is in the land of Canaan....(25) In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

Compare this event with that commanded by 'god' in Deuteronomy 20:16-18 and also in Deuteronomy 21:10-14.

Deuteronomy 20:16

“But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt **save alive nothing that breatheth:** (17) **But thou shalt utterly destroy them;** namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; **as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:** (18) **That they teach you not to do after all their abominations,** which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.”

Deuteronomy 21:10-14

“When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, (11) And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; (12) Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; (13) And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. (14) **And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go** whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.”

In Judges 20, the shameful story is told of an Israelite and his concubine who stayed overnight in a small town called Gibeah. Appallingly, the concubine was gang-raped and died, killed by wicked men who resided in that Benjaminite town. When the Israelite husband complained, by cutting his murdered wife into 12 pieces and sending a body part 'to all the coasts of Israel,' there was a strong reaction to her murder.

The Israelites decided to kill the rapists and petitioned the tribe of Benjamin to 'hand over' the offenders. The Benjaminites refused and a decision to go to war was made by the Israelites (verses 8-14), but later this decision was said to be endorsed by God (verse 18). Quite unexplainably, after 'God' supposedly told them to go to war, the Israelites suffered a dreadful defeat (verse 21). 22,000 Israelite men were killed. (Perhaps God was with the Benjaminites?) Again the Israelites wept before the Lord and asked if they should resume the battle the next day (verse 23). Again, God is presumed to have instructed them to go to battle (verse 25). Again the Israelites are defeated. 18,000 Israelite men died. After more weeping and fasting before the Lord (verse 26) and the offering of sacrifices (verse 27) the Israelites enquired again of 'the Lord', through Aaron's grandson, Phinehas, if they should make another attack on the tribe of Benjamin on the third day (verse 28). For the third time, 'God' commanded the Israelites to attack the Benjaminites and promised the Israelites that at that time, for some undisclosed reason, they would win (verse 28). On the third day, the Israelites altered their battle strategy and deceived the Benjaminites into thinking they were retreating, when they were actually enticing their victims into a trap.

Of this encounter, the Old Testament records that 'The Lord smote Benjamin before Israel' (verse 35, 46) and that the Israelites slaughtered 25,000 Benjaminites. It was claimed that 'God' gave them the victory. Yet, the Israelites were shown to have been victorious, not because of their trust in God, but because 'they trusted unto the liars in wait which they had set beside Gibeah' (verse 36). Was it 'god' or a war strategy that effected the battle victory on the third attempt?

The Benjaminites also worshipped the same 'god' as the Israelites, so one must wonder: *Which 'god' were the Benjaminite warriors consulting for war advice? To which 'god' were the Benjaminites offering their sacrifices?*

Ellen White, Great Controversy, p 589

"Satan delights in war, for it excites the worst passions of the soul and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. It is his object to incite the nations to war against one another, for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God."

After the adrenalin-rush of the battle, in an apparent after-thought, the Israelites bemoaned the fact that one tribe of the Israelites was doomed to extinction. In their distress, they again consulted the Lord – the same Lord who had 'given' them the victorious slaughter against the Benjaminites earlier that day.

Judges 21:3

“And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to day one tribe lacking in Israel?”

Incredibly, instead of realising the obvious answer - that their frenzied warfare had caused the near extinction of the tribe of Benjamin - the Israelites immediately offered more burnt offerings to the Lord (verse 4) as if to appease their wrong doing.

However, before any answer was received from the Lord, every man among the Israelites again 'did what was right in his own eyes' (Judges 17:6; 21:25) and decided to inflict another death penalty upon those towns which had chosen not to “come up for the Lord” and fight against the Benjaminites (verse 28).

More human-inspired destruction followed.

Judges 21:10-12

“And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. (11) And this is the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man. (12) And they found among the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.”

The Israelites then considered that the Lord has caused the problem and that He was to blame for the situation.

Judges 21:15

“And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.”

It is clear that again, God is credited with events that He does not prevent. It is obvious that the Lord did not involve Himself in confusion and war, but that the Hebrew scribes recorded the events, but sadly they put their own interpretation on them. The Israelites themselves had created the appalling situation, by their own, violent mismanagement of the original crime of rape.

The 'war stories' of the Old Testament reveal interesting and important comparisons between what God was supposed to have commanded and what men commanded and then often attributed to God.

<u>'God' Commanded</u>	<u>Men Commanded</u>
Destroy men, sexually active women, children and infants 1 Samuel 15:3	Destroy men, sexually active women and children Judges 21:9-12, 25
Desirable virgins captured in war can be married to the victors, but discarded after 'humbling' if they are no longer desired Deuteronomy 21:10-14	Desirable virgins captured in war can be 'married' to the victors Judges 21:12
To war against their own people Judges 20:18	To war against their own people Judges 20:8-14
War on evil doers Deuteronomy 20:17	War on evil doers Judges 20:8-14
Fasting, offering peace offerings to win the battle (serving the Lord) in order to win the battle Exodus 20:24: chapters 28-30; 31:3-9; 2 Kings 17:36-39	Fasting, offering peace offerings (serving the Lord) in order to win the battle 1 Samuel 14:24; 1 Sam 12:10

Did the Lord Jesus ever set an violent, warring example for humanity to follow?

The entire episode of war is an attempt to convince humanity that God's holy law cannot be kept in a sinful world, amid demon-possessed, violent men and women.

The entire example of Jesus' life was to meet Satan's challenge and to prove that God's law can be kept under any circumstances. Christ proved that the law of God can be kept and is the best, logical, most reasonable government of the universe.

The 144,000 will confirm that fact that the law of God – His character – is ONLY holy, just and good - and Satan's false accusations against God and His law – His character - will finally be silenced.

**God sent His Son to earth
at the worst possible time
to prove that Love indeed conquers all.**

Ellen White, Signs of the Times, 5 February, 1894

“At the time when sin had become a science, when the hostility of man was most violent against heaven, when rebellion struck its roots deep into the human heart, when vice was consecrated as a part of religion, when **Satan exulted in the idea that he had led men to such a state of evil that God would destroy the world, Jesus was sent into the world, not to condemn it, but, amazing grace! to save the world.** The unfallen worlds watched with intense interest to see Jehovah arise and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth, and Satan boasted that if God did do this, he would complete his plans and secure for himself the allegiance of unfallen worlds. He had arguments ready by which to cast blame upon God, and to spread his rebellion to the world's above; but **at this crisis, instead of destroying the world, God sent his Son to save it.** The apostle caught a glimpse of the plan, and he kindled into inspiration upon the great theme. Language cannot express his conception, but ever falls below the reality. John exclaims: 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; **therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.'** Before the coming of Christ to the world evidences abundant had been given that God loved the human race. But in the gift of Christ to a race so undeserving was demonstrated the love of God beyond all dispute. **This gift outweighed all else, showed that his love could not be measured.** We have no line to measure it, no plummet by which to sound its depths, no chain by which to encompass it, no standard with which to compare it. All we can say is that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Jesus said, 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.' He gave his life for the sheep. **The only-begotten Son of God accepts all the liabilities that fall upon the transgressor of the law, vindicates its unchangeable and holy character. The death of Christ removes every argument that Satan could bring against the precepts of Jehovah. Satan has declared that men could not enter the kingdom of heaven unless the law was abolished and a way devised by which transgressors could be reinstated into the favor of God, and made heirs of heaven. He made the claim that the law must be changed, that the reins of government must be slackened in heaven, that sin must be tolerated, and sinners pitied and saved in their sins.** But every such plea was cast aside when Christ died as a substitute for the sinner. **He who was made equal with God bore the sin of the transgressor, and thereby made a channel whereby the love of God could be communicated to a fallen world, and his grace and power imparted to those who came to Christ in penitence for their sin.**”

Ellen White, Desire of Ages, p 764

“But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law.”

#42 - The Red Sea Closed on the Egyptians – (Exo 15:4)

Objection:

The Old Testament records the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red sea 'by God' who expressly instructed Moses to stretch his rod over the waters in order that they might come back together upon the Egyptians.

Answer:

The above passage describes how the Old Testament writers perceived the events that occurred when their ancestors crossed the Red Sea. These writers did not have the benefit of seeing and knowing fully the character of Jesus (and through Him, the Father).

2 Corinthians 3:14-16

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. (15) But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. (16) Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.”

The ancient Israelites simply did not know or understand the depth of God's love, but modern Israel has had the benefit of Christ's own testimony for Christ revealed the Father.' Sadly, Christians have attributed many things to His Father's character that required Christ's correction (Matt 5).

It is not certain whether the plagues were caused by natural disasters or by Satan's special interference, however there is strong evidence that the plagues were the naturally occurring effects which have been reported following a large volcanic eruption. Very similar 'plagues' have been experienced by survivors of well documented, more recent volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.³⁸

Is it outrageous to consider that during the plagues in Egypt, perhaps it was God's intention not only to preserve the Egyptians lives if possible, but to warn them of the danger before every plague occurred? When the plagues were falling in Egypt, God protected those who trusted Him and stepped out in faith – both the Israelites and the Egyptians who joined them. Perhaps God, who knows the future, lovingly warned both the Israelites and even His enemies of imminent natural disasters or of Satan's pre-meditated attacks. This is in keeping with His character as demonstrated by Jesus.

38 Recent archaeological studies from both geological and literary sources, have suggested that the plagues which fell on Egypt and the changes in the Red Sea might have been caused by volcanic and seismic activity. The island of Thera, which is now called Santorini, exploded with thirty times the force of Krakatoa in the 15th century BC. The explosion and the ash caused conditions strikingly similar to the plagues of Egypt. For more information, refer to: ***The Eruption of Thera - Devastation in the Mediterranean*** available at: <http://www.mystae.com/restricted/streams/thera/thera.html> or view the video, “Moses” which was produced by the BBC (viewed locally- 9 July, 2006) and which is available at BBC centres. Thera's eruptions effected and are recorded in Crete, China, Greece, but the records from Egypt are missing, despite evidence a huge tsunami occurring in Egypt at the same time as Thera exploded – during the period of Hyskos occupation of Egypt (the Hyskos were shepherds who had come from an area north of Egypt. (Many suppose the Hyskos were Jacob and his descendents). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thera_eruption

Matthew 5:44

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (46) For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?”

If the Son of God had purposed to kill the Egyptians – perhaps because they were pagans - He could have permitted the destroying angel (Rev 9:11) to kill all of them at the same time as when the firstborn perished.

Or perhaps, prior to entering the Red Sea path, it would have been a powerful warning to others, if God destroyed the pagans by sending fire from out of the cloud of His presence.

However the record states that when the rebellious Egyptians entered the sea-path and came near to His presence in the cloud, God retreated from them. The cloud that separated them from the Israelites was the final, protective, divine warning to the Egyptians that they should remain safe on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. However, as the cloud of God's presence moved to cover and protect the Israelites, the Egyptians still followed, intent on murdering or enslaving again the Israelites.

Perhaps if, the Son of God (whose presence was veiled in the cloud), had not retreated from the advancing Egyptians, His presence would have been to them 'a terror.' When sinful humanity comes into contact with holy beings, there is a distressing physical reaction to the sinful, human being. e.g. Roman soldiers were physically effected by an angel's presence when Jesus was resurrected and became as 'dead men' (Matt 28:4). Balaam, the false prophet, fell on his face (Numbers 22:31). Even God-fearing prophets became weak and fell down 'as one dead' in the presence of divinity (Rev 1:17). It is even prophesied that at Christ's second coming, the wicked will try to flee into caves to escape His glory and they will prefer to die than to be in His holy presence (Rev 6:16).

However, just as the redeemed will not flee from Christ's presence when He comes the second time, but will be strengthened to stand in the presence of God (because they are 'in Christ'), so the Israelites were not terrified by the Divine Presence veiled in the cloud.

Just as the wicked will be unable to tolerate Christ's purity when He comes the second time, it is most likely that the Egyptians in the Red Sea crossing were also effected by the veiled, but divine presence of the holy Son of God.

At the close of probation, the wicked will have repeatedly confirmed that they refuse to serve the One True God – and as a result the separate themselves from God – just as the Egyptians did.

At the close of probation, the wicked forfeit divine protection which has been sustaining them to that point and they have to endure the terror that sinful beings will experience when in the presence of a Holy God.

In a similar way, the Egyptian army must have experienced this terror as they came close to the divine presence. Surely they must have 'fallen as dead men also' perhaps unable to move when the water returned to its normal place.

If the archaeological and historical literature is correct - that a huge tsunami occurred in that area - caused by the eruption of Thera, then it is possible that God could have timed the Israelites' crossing during the period that the sea waters initially retreated, and then held back the returning waters until the Israelites were safely across the Red Sea.

When the Red Sea closed on the Egyptian army the fact was demonstrated that God can not morally offer protection to those who reject His leadership. If God did protectively surround those who rejected His leadership, this would be interfering with their freedom of choice regarding which god they wished to serve.

The Egyptians had spurned the option to join the Israelites and flee from Egypt – indeed some grasped the opportunity and were saved. However, those Egyptians who remained opposed to the Israelites and their God, confirmed that they chose to remain loyal to their pagan gods - and Satan was their master.

After much warnings, these Egyptians were “given into the hands of Satan” (See similar concepts in Job 1:12; 2:6; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20).

God's government of love and freedom renders Him unable to interfere with humanity's choice. After Pharaoh's final rejection of God's spirit - the Egyptians were left defenceless against natural disasters and also against Satan's attacks.

Whether it was a natural disaster such as a tsunami (from which God protected those who would come under His care) or whether it was an evil event caused by Satan, the end result was that the Egyptian army perished because they placed themselves outside divine protection.

God is bound to honour an individual's free choice concerning worship. When the divine Presence sadly retreated, the Red Sea closed on the Egyptian army. No doubt the death of the unrepentant Egyptians caused the Son of God to wept as He later wept similar bitter tears over unrepentant Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37).

#43 - Does God Change the Rules to Suit Himself – Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18

Objection: Three opposing objections concerning the character of God have been raised.

(a) *God has emptied Himself of the freedom to choose how He will behave. What ever He does, He cannot break the commandments; and*

(b) *God has a perfect right to govern the world in any way He chooses. If He decides to order people to kill others, (break the commandments) that is His right. Christians just need to obey whatever God tells them to do;*

(c) *God can put aside or adjust His laws temporarily when He needs to deal with a certain situation as it is occurring. When God breaks the commandments, it is not sin. It is His right as the Creator. It is a loving divine act, despite it not appearing horrendous to human beings.*

Answer:

Certainly God has a right to govern the world in any way He chooses, however, the Christian can be certain that God will not put aside His own commandments. When called upon to obey God, Christians will not be commanded to kill their enemies or to break the other commandments of God.

To demonstrate the fact that God adjusts His responses to a given situation, advocates of this objection have used the example that God cannot lie. The apostle Paul clearly instructed the new Christian church that God cannot lie.

Titus 1:2

“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”

Hebrews 6:18

“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:”

(a) Some suppose these texts teach that God has emptied Himself of the freedom to choose how He will behave. While God's law is the 'law of liberty' and the 'royal law' it is somewhat surprising that God Himself is considered by some, to lack the freedom of choice as to whether He will abide by its principles of unselfish love or to choose otherwise.

Are such persons correct in assuming that God cannot sin? Should Christians suggest that God is incapable of sinning – or that He lacks the freedom of choice that He grants to all His created beings and subjects?

The suggestion has been made that if God spoke something that was untrue, suddenly divine creative power would cause the statement to occur. This might be mistakenly understood to convey the thought, that if God speaks a lie, it becomes truth the instant that He speaks it. However, the truth is that God does not lie; not even for a micro-second. For example, In Genesis 1: 2-5, God did not say, "There is light," when in truth there was only darkness covering 'the face of the deep.' God was not *in denial* about the existence of darkness. He didn't tell a lie. God recognised that there was darkness and then, as a consequence of that fact, commanded that light be formed.

It seems dangerous for Christians to accept the concept that God can tell a lie, and endeavour to justify it by adding that, because He's a creative God, His power makes the lie (a sin), miraculously become a reality.

In fact, the truth would be that God told a lie, but that He changed the rules so that the lie 'didn't count.' Can God morph a sin into truth?

The Bible says that God cannot lie, and this is truth – but it is not good scholarship to assume that God cannot lie because by telling the lie, (breaking the 9th commandment which forbids the bearing of a false witness), He simply creatively adjusts the situation so that the lie is no longer applicable to the new situation. This objection cannot be substantiated because it demonstrates a god who doesn't 'play by the rules', but who makes up new rules to suit Himself when the situation demands it, as suggested in objection (c).

The Biblical reason as to why God does not sin relates directly to His character. God chooses not to sin. It is impossible for Him to sin, because He has never, will never adjust His loving, pure and truthful character to embrace the slightest hint of sinfulness. Therefore the One True God would never choose to speak a lie. Such an adjustment would result in a complete character change – from absolute unselfishness to selfishness. The purity of God's unselfish character is the sole reason why it is impossible for Him to sin. Sin requires selfishness, therefore God cannot sin because there is no darkness – no selfishness - in His character at all. God pledges that His character will not ever change .

James 1:17

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

Malachi 3:6:

"For I am the LORD, I change not..."

Hebrews 13:8

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.”

God has chosen to forever observe the principles of pure, unselfish love. This promise ensures that God's character will never change. For this reason alone, God cannot sin. He refuses to abide by any principles other than unselfish love.

Consider that if God's character did change -in opposition to His statements that it cannot change, it would mean that His character contains some evil tendencies or other commandment-breaking traits.

(b) Is it safe to suggest that God can break any of His commandments because He has a perfect right to do whatever He desires to do? Certainly God is omnipotent and is unlimited in power, however, God's own moral integrity protects Him from performing any sinful (selfishness).

It appears extremely dangerous for human beings to attempt to justify the righteousness or holiness of a god who 'changes the rules' and breaks His own commandments.

It is dangerous to suggest that God is entitled to break His own commandments. It is dangerous to endeavour to justify God's perceived 'commandment breaking.' It is dangerous to suggest that God covers up his sinful behaviour (eg telling a lie) by adjusting the situation using His divine, creative power so that the new situation becomes a reality.

All these attempts to justify God's (perceived) law-breaking are actually admitting that God does not abide by the principles of His own law – and that He changes the rules to selfishly suit His own circumstances.

Such reasoning is an attack on God's character and even supportive of the claim that Satan made about God's law; that the law of God was faulty. The law of God is a transcript of His perfect, unchanging pure, loving character.

Did God order anyone to break His commandments? If so, the belief must be also accepted that His character has changed.

To accept that God changes the rules, is to stand in defiance of God's expressed statements that He has not, does not and will not change under any circumstances (James 1:17; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8).

The principles of God's law is unchangeable because God character is guaranteed to be unchangeable.

Ellen White emphasises this fact.

8 Testimonies for the Church, p 207

"By His life and death Christ taught that only in obedience to God's commandments can man find safety and true greatness 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' Psalm 19:7. God's law is a transcript of His character."

A Christian can have absolute certainty that God's character will never change from the principles of unselfish love contained in the 10 commandments. They can "know their God" (Daniel 11: 32) and recognise Him in the life of Jesus Christ.

The disciple John made when he stated that a Christian 'cannot sin.'

1 John 3:9

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

John's statement does not mean that the Christian's freedom of choice is removed, but that he/she can be powerfully and divinely equipped to resist temptation in the same way that Christ overcame temptation as a human being - by the indwelling of the holy spirit of God – the unselfish mind of Christ - which dwells in them and guides their thinking, speaking and actions. Thus they are 'kept from falling' (Jude 24).

Does the process of salvation require that a Christian surrender his/her freedom of choice on their conversion?

No!

Not even in the eternal ages when sin has been destroyed, will humanity, nor any creation of God be denied the freedom of choice.

Great Controversy, 1888, p 504

"The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate his love and establish his honor before a universe of beings who delight to do his will, and ***in whose heart is his law***. Never will evil again be manifest. Says the Word of God, 'Affliction shall not rise up the second time.'" [Nahum 1:9] (continued)

(Ellen White continued)

“The law of God, which Satan has reproached as the yoke of bondage, will be honored as the law of liberty. A tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested before them as fathomless love and infinite wisdom.”

The redeemed realise that unselfish love is the only sane rule of the universe and while always able to do so, they will forever refuse to choose to sin.

God is the Sovereign of Universal liberty and freedom of choice. That which He values Himself, He imparts to His subjects and always God abides by His own commandments of love (absolutely unselfishness).

#44 - They are Enemies of God for your Sake – Romans 11:28

Objection:

Romans 11:28 states that God has enemies.

Answer:

God's enemies are those who declare themselves to be His enemies, by their persistent refusal to live according to the law of selfishness and to flout His laws of unselfish love.

Robertson's Word Pictures – Commentary on Romans 11:28:

As concerning <2596> (PREP) **the gospel** <2098> (N-ASN), **they are enemies** <2190> (A-NPM) **for** <1223> (PREP) **your** <5209> (P-2AP) **sakes** <1223> (PREP): **but** <1161> (CONJ) **as touching** <2596> (PREP) **the election** <1589> (N-ASF), **they are beloved** <27> (A-NPM) **for** <1223> (PREP) **the fathers'** <3962> (N-APM) **sakes** <1223> (PREP).

As touching the gospel (κατα το ευαγγελιον). "According to (κατα with the accusative) the gospel" as Paul has shown in verses 11-24, the gospel order as it has developed.

Enemies (εχθρο). Treated as enemies (of God), in passive sense, because of their rejection of Christ (verse 10), just as αγαπητο (beloved) is passive.

As touching the election (κατα την εκλογην). "According to the election" (the principle of election, not as in verses 5f. the elect or abstract for concrete).

For the fathers' sake (δια τους πατερας). As in 9:4; 11:16f.

Bible in Worldwide English Version translates these verses as:

"The Jews make themselves enemies of God because they do not want the good news of Jesus Christ. That helps you since the good news has then come to you. But God still loves the Jews because of the promise he made to their fathers long ago."

By using the passive tense, Paul makes it clear that God is acknowledging the painful rejection that the Jewish nation actively determined **toward the Messiah**. God is not actively making enemies. God is not rejecting anyone; not even the Jewish race. Therefore, because of ***their rejection*** of the Messiah, ***they have chosen to be enemies*** of the One True God. God did not choose to be their enemies because they rejected His Son. They became enemies BECAUSE their own choice to reject the Messiah placed them in opposition to God. Jesus said in Luke 9:50, "he that is not against us is for us." and in Luke 11:23, He states, "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."

Jesus is demonstrating the application of an unalterable principle. God doesn't cast off any man who comes to Him; who is drawn to Him through the Son's demonstration of love. The fact of the matter is clearly explained by Jesus: Either we accept God and His government of love, or we choose ***by default*** to serve Satan and be governed by his selfish principles.

#45 - Jesus Told the Leper to Offer Sacrifices – Matthew 8:4

Objection:

In Matthew 8:4 "And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Jesus told the cleansed leper to offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded, therefore the sacrificial ceremonies were legitimate and recognised by Jesus.

Answer:

In Matthew 8:4 Jesus told the leper whom He had just cleansed, to go to the temple and offer the gift that Moses commanded ***in accordance with their rules, for a testimony unto them.***

Firstly, why was the testimony 'unto them' necessary.

The Jews believed that sickness was caused by a sin committed by the sick person or by their parents.³⁹ This was not correct and Jesus explained the truth in John 9: 1-3.

Jesus often said to a person whom He had healed, "Go and sin no more," or, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." We know that the leper had not committed a sin that resulted in the sickness of leprosy, which was a contagious disease. We also know that in order to be cleansed, only faith in Jesus was necessary. Therefore why was a sacrifice necessary?

The sacrifice was not necessary for the leper to be cleansed. Christ already had cleansed him when He had healed him, both spiritually and physically.

Christ stated that the only reason a sacrifice was necessary was 'as a testimony against them' and He was referring to the Jewish leadership.

The Jewish society required a priest to inspect a leper who thought himself healed and to declare him either clean or unclean. Authority to be accepted into society rested with the priest and only he could authorise the former leper's re-entry into the society from which he had been cast out previously.

In instructing the healed man to seek this authorisation, did Jesus condone the unnecessary slaying of several animals as a sacrifice for forgiveness of sins?

Leviticus 14 states that lepers had to offer 3 sheep and 2 turtle doves for a trespass offering, a sin offering and a meal offering in a bloody ritual in which the priest would declare the leper to be 'clean.' If the lepers were too poor however, it is likely that they could offer only a handful of flour as a meal offering according to Lev 5:15. The meal offering was not a blood sacrifice; it required no shedding of blood and yet atonement was said to be made by this ritual and sins were said to be forgiven.

39 John 9:1-3

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. (2) And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? (3) Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

In announcing the sacrifices required to achieve a 'trespass' offering, a person was required to do the following:

Leviticus 5:11-13

"But if he be not able to bring two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, then he that sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall put no oil upon it, neither shall he put any frankincense thereon: for it is a sin offering. (12) Then shall he bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it, even a memorial thereof, and burn it on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the LORD: it is a sin offering. (13) And the priest shall make an atonement for him as touching his sin that he hath sinned in one of these, and it shall be forgiven him: and the remnant shall be the priest's, as a meat offering. "

Jesus told the leper to offer his **gift** (singular) to the priest. Jesus did not state that the leper should offer his **gifts** (plural). Why would Jesus specify that a single gift should be offered, when the Mosaic law suggested that at least 6 gifts should have been offered?

Matthew 8:4

"And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift (#1345) that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."

Strong's Greek Concordance - gift (singular, not plural)

01435 doron do'-ron a present; specially, a sacrifice:--gift, offering.

What work opportunities for a leper existed in the Hebrew society? It is almost certain that the leper was living on charity with nil income. How could a long-term leper purchase an animal for a sacrifice – prior to his healing? Lepers were considered unclean and not permitted to approach 'clean' members of society. All options of income earning and purchasing animals would have been non-existent. It is likely that Jesus knew that this leper had no money and no income. Jesus also knew that an alternative offering existed for him to offer the priest for his acceptance back into society: the meal offering. A cleansed leper could afford to borrow some meal and repay the flour when he began again to work in society.

If the leper offered this borrowed gift of flour to the priest, as was accepted from an extremely poor person, it is likely that he would meet the ritualistic requirement and be permitted to re-enter Jewish society.

Jamieson Fausset Brown Bible Commentary

Lev 6-14. he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sins which he hath sinned—A trespass offering differed from a sin offering in the following respects: that it was appointed for persons who had either done evil unwittingly, or were in doubt as to their own criminality; or felt themselves in such a special situation as required sacrifices of that kind [BROWN]. The trespass offering appointed in such cases was a female lamb or kid; if unable to make such an offering, he might bring a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons—the one to be offered for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering; or if even that was beyond his ability, the law would be satisfied with the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour without oil or frankincense.

#46 - Let Him Die the Death – Matthew 15:4

Objection:

Jesus quoted the Mosaic law and said that God commanded the death of those who cursed their mother and father. In Matthew 15:4 Jesus said, "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death." Therefore, Jesus condoned the killing of commandment-breakers in the Old Testament.

Answer:

The relevant passage in context appears in both the gospel of Matthew and also in Mark.

Matthew 15:3-9

“But he (Jesus) answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? (4) For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. (5) But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; (6) And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. (7) Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, (8) This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. (9) But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Mark 7:7

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (8) For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. (9) And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. (10) For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: (11) But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. (12) And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; (13) Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”

Matthew's gospel states that God commanded that cursing children should “die the death.” In the gospel of Mark, Jesus is said to have stated that Moses commanded the law.

Indeed, God did give Moses a law that denounced the cursing of parents.

Exodus 20:12

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

These words 'which proceeded from the mouth of God,' promised long life to those who respected and consequently cared for their parents. If God's principles of loving concern for the parents were ignored, then the disobedient and selfish commandment-breaker would bring upon themselves 'a curse.' The natural consequences of sin – death - accompanies all sinful behaviour.

God warned Adam and Eve that if they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die.

Genesis 2:17

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

God did not state that “in the day thou eatest thereof, I will surely kill you.”

What reason therefore, can be given for the supposed existence of a divine command that human beings should kill other human beings?

Exodus 21:17

“And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.”

Leviticus 20:9

“For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him.”

Does God change His method of dealing with sinners? Instead of sin bringing death, did God especially interfere to ensure that sinful behaviour brought death to sinners? Did He introduce an 'artificial' consequence to sin?

It seems very unlikely that God changed His method of dealing with sin – which was to continue to plead with the sinner to repent before his probation was over.

It is much more likely than Jewish scribes became confused in their understanding of God's character, and knowing that disobedience brought death, they attributed the cause of death to God, instead of to sin.

The Pharisees did not understand that sin brought death. Instead, they appear to have believed (as did the pagan religions) that God inflicted death and suffering on sinners as payment for their sins.

Despite their false perceptions, Jesus reminded the Pharisees of the danger in breaking the fifth commandment of God. On Mt Sinai, God had commanded that parents should be honoured and their needs provided, however the Pharisees were advocating that neglecting one's parents was in fact not sinful, but acceptable – if the money, instead of being used to support the parents, was instead given to support the priests in the temple.

The Ten Commandments promised long life to those who honored father and mother (Exodus 20:12; Deut 5:16). The resultant 'long life' would be a natural consequence of loving behaviour; in fact, it would be in eternal life that such loving obedience would result.

In a similar way, the self-inflicted punishment for dishonoring and neglecting parents brought a life without the blessing of God – death. Certainly, the sinner's blood would be upon himself (Lev 20:9). On the day of judgment, such a selfish person will stand without the covering of the righteousness of Christ's loving character. Such a perilous situation – separation from God - would certainly bring death upon the sinner.

Consideration might be given to the definition and meaning of the phrase “die the death.”

Die the Death

Numbers 23:10

“Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”

The false prophet Balaam used these words. The verse reveals that there is a 'death of the righteous' (eternal life). There is also a 'death of the wicked' (eternal death - Mark 9:44, 46,48; Revelation 14:10, 11; 20:9,10).

Ecclesiastes 7:15-17

“All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and **there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.** (16) Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: **why shouldest thou destroy thyself?** (17) **Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?**”

Ezekiel 33:11

“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

Clearly, the fact is repeated continually in both the Old and New Testaments that sin brings death to those who do not live according to God's commandments – as a natural consequence – for selfishness.

How did the distorted view of this natural consequence occur? The Roman Catholic Church states that neither Christ nor His disciples advocated the death penalty for commandment-breakers, but such a doctrine was brought in when papal rulers assumed political power (i.e. By formation of an 'image to the beast' type of organisation – a theocracy).

The Catholic Encyclopedia on CD-ROM

“The Christian teachers of the first three centuries insisted, as was natural for them, on complete religious liberty; furthermore, they not only urged the principle that religion could not be forced on others -- a principle always adhered to by the Church in her dealings with the unbaptised -- but, when comparing the Mosaic Law and the Christian religion, they taught that the latter was content with a, spiritual punishment of heretics (i.e. with excommunication), while Judaism necessarily proceeded against its dissidents with torture and death. (2) However, the imperial successors of Constantine soon began to see in themselves Divinely appointed "bishops of the exterior", i.e. masters of the temporal and material conditions of the Church. At the same time they retained the traditional authority of "Pontifex Maximus", and in this way the civil authority inclined, frequently in league with prelates of Arian tendencies, to persecute the orthodox bishops by imprisonment and exile. But the latter, particularly St. Hilary of Poitiers (Liber contra Auxentium, c. iv), protested vigorously against any use of force in the province of religion, whether for the spread of Christianity or for preservation of the Faith. They repeatedly urged that in this respect the severe decrees of the Old Testament were abrogated by the mild and gentle laws of Christ.” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08026a.htm>

Was the Hebrew religion based upon the Mosaic law, a theocracy/autocracy that resorted to force worship and religious behaviour - on pain of death? Yes.

Ellen White states in Signs of the Times: 6 May, 1897, p 16
"Force is the last resort of every false religion."

The only logical conclusion appears to me to be that the Mosaic laws represent human (mis)perceptions and resultant editing of the pure laws given by God.

The religion of Jesus is pure and unforced.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

#47 - Tread Down the Wicked - Job 40:9-12

Objection: "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place."

God is definitely treading doing the killing in these verses.

Answer:

Is God saying through Job, that He is going to abase the proud by literally pushing them face down in the dirt and stomping on their necks so that they die?

What about these equally violent verses?

Isaiah 51:21:

Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine;

Psalms 75:8,9

For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, with foaming wine, full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same; surely the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall drain them, and drink them.

Jeremiah 25:26:

And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth.--And the king of Sheshach (According to ancient tradition, a cypher for Babel) shall drink after them.

Jeremiah 25:27:

And thou shalt say unto them: Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink ye, and be drunken, and spew, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.

Isaiah 63:6:

And I trod down the peoples in Mine anger, and made them drunk with My fury, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.'

Are we to believe that God is bringing His own sword to mutilate people? Is He literally meaning that He – or His holy angels or perhaps holy men - are going to tread on these people and crush them until He pours out their life-blood on the earth?

Consider an analogy. A wife is waiting for her husband to arrive at a tennis court. The crowd is cheering for the players, when all of a sudden, the visiting player begins to win over the hometown player. A crazed psychopathic jumps up and begins thrusting a sword into people who are cheering for the 'wrong' player. He is mutilating people and jumping up and down on their bodies and having a blood-bath. Everyone looks in horror, but none is more horrified than the wife who thought she knew her kind, gentle husband –the man doing the killing. To her absolute shock and horror, her husband is a stranger, whom she doesn't know. He is no longer her loving husband, but an insane murderer. Is it likely that the wife will willingly accompany her husband home? Is it likely that their relationship could ever be the same again? No. Fearful terror would take the place of restful love.

So it is with God. Jesus said that if He is lifted up, His love will draw people to Him. If however, He begins a murderous attack, people will not be drawn to Him for they cannot trust Him. Love requires trust. Unconditional love, unchanging love establishes trust/faith. Love casts out fear, but violence builds fear.

Compare the preceding violent verses with Isaiah 51:17.

Isaiah 51:17:

Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, that hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of His fury; thou hast drunken the beaker, even the cup of staggering, and drained it.

Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem would drink the full wine from the cup of God's fury. Jerusalem did indeed drink of that cup, but was it God who destroyed Jerusalem? No. **It was the Roman armies that did the destructive deed.**

Ellen White states very clearly that God performed no destructive action toward Jerusalem, but that the Bible credits God with that action and "it is thus that the deceiver, Satan seeks to conceal his own work."

Great Controversy, p 35-36

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. p 36 We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. 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.** Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. 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."

If we credit God with destroying Jerusalem, we are helping to cover Satan's tracks.

#48 - The Wine of the Wrath of God - Revelation 14:8-10

Objection:

Revelation 14:8 -10

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. (9) And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, (10) The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

Answer:

If we interpret the symbols in the Bible as we do in all other places in the Bible where visions and prophecy are concerned, we can see a very different picture than one of an insane, crazy, angry super being. Coupled with cultural understanding, a much clearer picture arises.

The People's New Testament Version

John 14:10

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God. Those who received the mark of the beast, worshiped the beast, drank the wine of Babylon, shall drink the wine of God's wrath. His judgments shall be poured out on them. **He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone.** These are symbols, just as wine and cup are symbols. The meaning is that they shall suffer bitter anguish. But who inflicts the anguish?

In prophecy, 'wine' represents false doctrines. In Daniel and Revelation it is clear that these false doctrines are clearly aimed at misrepresenting God and His Son and the principles of their government. The Babylonian anti-christ power speaks great words against the Most High (Daniel 7:25)

The following are taken from Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible.

Rev 12 :8

The wine of the wrath of her fornication - There is an allusion here to a custom of impure women, who give philtres or love potions to those whom they wish to seduce and bind to their will; and these potions are generally of an intoxicating nature, greatly inflaming the blood, and disturbing the intellect. Fornication and adultery are frequently used in Scripture as emblems of idolatry and false worship.

The wine of the wrath - is another expression for the envenomed or poisoned cup given by such women.

The wine of the wrath of God] - As they have drunk the intoxicating wine of idolatry or spiritual fornication, they shall now drink the wine of God's wrath, which is poured out into the cup of his indignation. This is an allusion to the poisoned cup, which certain criminals were obliged to drink, on which ensued speedy death.

When God – the Source of all Life - totally withdraws from His created beings, only death remains. This is not a mystery. If the Sole Source of Light is removed, only the deepest darkness remains. If all heat is removed, only bitter cold remains.

If God – the Source of ALL Eternal Life is forced to withdraw from His creatures (whom He sustains moment by moment), then only death remains for those who reject their Creator.

God doesn't inflict death. Death is a consequence of a creation that is devoid of its Source of Life.

This cup - The word **cup** is frequently used in the Sacred Writings to point out sorrow, anguish, terror, death. It was a custom in ancient times to execute criminals by making them drink a cup of poison. Socrates was adjudged to drink a cup of the juice of hemlock, by order of the Athenian magistrates.

Jesus referred to a cup in Mt 26:39: O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Pass from me - Perhaps there is an allusion here to several criminals standing in a row, who are all to drink of the same cup; but, the judge extending favour to a certain one, the cup passes by him to the next.

We know that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).

We know that sin when it is finished, it brings forth death. (James 1:15).

We know that God has no delight in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11).

We know that the wicked shall suffer bitter anguish, but it will not be something that God inflicts upon them (Great Controversy, p 35, 36).

We know this is true, because Jesus tasted the same death ie. He suffered the same fate that the wicked will die (Heb 2:9).

We know that the Father did not inflict suffering on His Son in Gethsemane or on the cross (EG White, Sufferings of Christ, p 17, 18).

We know very well which desperate angel did go on a violent rampage against the Son of God. It was the destroyer. Satan stirred up the religious people to a malicious frenzy so that they would be satisfied with nothing less than Christ's torture and death (John 8:44; Rev 9:11).

Signs of the Times 20 January, 1890, p7

"The Father was revealed in Christ as altogether a different being from that which Satan had represented him to be. Said Christ, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." The love of Jesus, expressed for the fallen race in his life of self-denial and sufferings, is the manifestation of the Father's love for a sinful, fallen world. Christ endured shame and grief and death for those who despised his love and trampled upon his mercy. He paid the debt of man's transgression upon the cross of Calvary with his own precious blood. The men of his own nation, the leaders of the people, were so ensnared by the deceptions of Satan that the plan of redemption for a fallen race seemed to their minds indistinct and unexplainable."

We don't need to put the Bible in the place of the Divine Son of God. If there is any misunderstanding, it is in the Bible, and how humanity tried to relate the divine message they received. The misunderstanding is never in the life of Jesus or in the 10 commandments which is a transcript of His character and the basis of His universal government. God is love – always has been, always will be.

Sin will always be destructive, until it destroys itself completely along with whatever or whoever is attached to it.

#49 - Uzzah Slain by God – 2 Samuel 6:6-8

Objection:

2 Samuel 6:6-8 “And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth [his hand] to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook [it]. (7) And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for [his] error; and there he died by the ark of God. (8) And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day.

Answer:

Evil events occur when God removes His protection from those who reject His love and guidance.

When Saul had taken the Ark into battle against the Philistines, he superstitiously believed that God would be ‘with’ him (despite the fact that he had just visited the witch of Endor to ask for advice from demons, because the Lord no longer communicated with him through “dreams, Urim or prophets” – 1 Samuel 28:5,6).

Saul's superstitious belief failed to force the Lord to be present with him in battle. The presence of the Ark of the Covenant failed to protect the Israelites from danger. God cannot be transported or made to be present in a box.

1 Kings 8:27

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”

God dwells with those who love Him; those who accept His principles of government and obey His guidance.

The Bible contains many examples of instances where God judges a person on the motives that prompts their actions. A person can have many incorrect concepts about God, but God will honour them because their ‘heart’ is with Him.

Paul records this important principle – God does not judge humanity on what little truth that we might know, but on our response to that truth.

Acts 17:30

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:”

The Bible records many faithful people who served God to the best extent of their knowledge, but who were nevertheless, very wrong in their perceptions of God's character. They did not know very much ‘truth’ but God did not refuse to help them because of their misperceptions. Some believers in this situation were:

- **Job** - Despite his holy life, Job was completely wrong about God's character. Job thought that God originated evil and destruction upon him, but note that God did not forsake or even chide Job about his misunderstanding. God did not attempt to defend His character to Job. God valued the intention of Job's heart and pointed out to him, that there were some things that were 'too high for him.' Job's knowledge remained incomplete. The Bible never reveals whether Job was ever shown that Satan had been his attacker and that God was completely innocent of any wrong-doing, but the main focus of God's speech to Job, was that Job simply did not understand. Job 38:1, 2; 42:1-3 *"Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 'Who [is] this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?' (42:1) Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do every [thing], and [that] no thought can be withholden from thee. Who [is] he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not."* When face to face with God, Job was quick to admit that he didn't know many things about God, but he repeatedly asserted that God knew his heart and that he truly wanted to serve the Lord.
- **Jephthah** the Gileadite, an Israelite leader (Judges 11) thought that if he 'devoted' something important to God, it would persuade God to 'fight' for him against the Ammonites, but Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world, or else would my servants fight" (John 8:36);
- **Moses and Joshua, Samuel, Gideon, Samson** and other Israelite leaders listed by Paul in Hebrews 11 – the 'by faith' chapter - were supposedly instructed by God to violently and mercilessly kill the pagan inhabitants of Canaan, (1 Sam 15; Num 31; Deut 21; Judges 14:4) but Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world, or else would my servants fight" (John 8:36). Whose servants were the Israelites when they were committing genocide against the Canaanites?
- **David**, (prophet and king) believed that God would be pleased if he built a temple for the Lord. God refused this offering (despite the genuine motivation that inspired it), because David was a man of war (1 Chron 28:3);
- Both **Jonah** (a true prophet), **and** the pagan sailors thought that God was very angry with them and would kill them (Jonah 1:14), but God preserved them all from the storm at sea. An obvious example that Jonah was ignorant of spiritual principles was demonstrated when he expressed his desire God destroy his Assyrian 'enemies,' regardless of their genuine repentance;
- **Abraham** (patriarch and visionary) thought it was in accordance with God's will that he take another wife while Sarah was still alive. He thought that God would be pleased to fulfill His promise to give him an heir through Hagar (Genesis 16:15). Though in Eden, God ordained a man to have only one wife at a time, He did not give Abraham a vision to reveal His perfect will concerning marriage; nor did He condemn Abraham's polygamy though it was an obvious demonstration of his lack of faith. Abraham was so sure that God was involved in the conception of his first son, that he called his son ***Ishmael*** which means 'God will hear' (Strong's # 3458), but God revealed that Abraham's innocent assumptions were not divinely inspired. Despite his genuine love for God, and the frequent communications he received from God, Abraham made several faulty decisions. These errors were made because he did not know God's character well enough.
- **Sarah** thought the Lord had especially intervened to prevent her from having children (Genesis 16:2), when in fact, God performed a miracle so that Sarah could have a child (Romans 4:19).

- **Nathan** the prophet was so sure that God would be pleased to have David build a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant, that he did not hesitate to grant his approval for David to begin the project. Although genuine in his approval, Nathan nevertheless gave David faulty information because he misunderstood how negatively God viewed war and bloodshed. God later instructed Nathan to relate to the king that his acts of killing actually disqualified him from building the temple. The conclusion is somewhat confusing: If God had indeed instructed David to commit these acts of war and bloodshed, and David obediently carried out the killings, how could his obedience disqualify him from building the temple? Did the killings make him somehow unholy? Furthermore, Moses was also a man of war and bloodshed, killing heretics by ‘divine’ command, yet he was not prohibited from building the first sanctuary. Where is the consistency? Should not the restrictive principle that applied to David, apply to Moses also?
- **Saul** thought he was doing God’s will by persecuting Christians, but Jesus corrected him with a question, “Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

James 4:17 Therefore to him that **knoweth** to do good, and doeth [it] not, to him it is sin.

The chapter of 2 Samuel reveals that God did not completely leave the Philistines defenceless when they mistreated the Ark of the Covenant. He simply permitted the superstitious nation to suffer an outbreak of disease inflicted upon them by Satan (as occurred when Pharaoh suffered when he took Sarah to his palace).

Jamieson-Fausset Brown Bible Commentary

“2 Samuel 6: 6-8. they came to Nachon's threshing-floor—or Chidon's (1Ch 13:9). The Chaldee version renders the words, "came to the place prepared for the reception of the ark," that is, near the city of David (2Sa 6:13).

*the oxen shook it—or, "stumbled" (1Ch 13:9). Fearing that the ark was in danger of being overturned, Uzzah, under the impulse of momentary feeling, laid hold of it to keep it steady. **Whether it fell and crushed him, or some sudden disease attacked him, he fell dead upon the spot.** This melancholy occurrence not only threw a cloud over the joyous scene, but entirely stopped the procession; for the ark was left where it then was, in the near neighborhood of the capital. It is of importance to observe the proportionate severity of the punishments attending the profanation of the ark. The Philistines suffered by diseases, from which they were relieved by their oblations, because the law had not been given to them [1Sa 5:8-12]; the Bethshemites also suffered, but not fatally [1Sa 6:19]; their error proceeded from ignorance or inadvertency. But Uzzah, who was a Levite, and well instructed, suffered death for his breach of the law. The severity of Uzzah's fate may seem to us too great for the nature and degree of the offense. But it does not become us to sit in judgment on the dispensations of God; and, besides, it is apparent that the divine purpose was to inspire awe of His majesty, a submission to His law, and a profound veneration for the symbols and ordinances of His worship”.*

In the superstitious, traditional thinking of the Israelites, Uzzah might well have been crushed by the cart, however, this accident was clearly interpreted by the suspicious on-lookers as being ‘the curse of God.’ The belief that God caused evil things to happen to sinners, was also encountered by Jesus and shown by Hiim to be a faulty concept (see section “The Curse of God”).

#50 - Gideon – Judges 6, 7

Objection: *Gideon was one of the judges. He was visited by an angel, spoken to by the Lord and special instructions, accompanied by miracles that he should attack the Midianites.*

Answer:

Gideon lived around 1200—1020 BC. Along with Samson, Barak and Deborah, he was said to have judged or 'led' Israel for some time during that time period.

Reading through Judges chapters 6 and 7 reveals the following information.

- Pagans nations conquered the Jews whenever they faltered in loyalty to Yahweh;
- Gideon's father owned a Baal idol, an altar and a 'grove'; (sacred prostitute house)
- Gideon's father worshipped Baal;
- The Israelites were in bondage to the Midianites;
- Angelic visits, animal sacrifices and miraculous events convinced Gideon that God wanted him to commit genocide;
- Despite all the miraculous events, angel visions etc, Gideon was still very hesitant to attack the Midianites and Amalekites;
- Eventually Gideon and 300 Israelites attack the 'enemy'.
- The enemies flee.
- Soon 120,000 Midianites;
- Gideon captured 2 Midian princes whom he kept alive for a time;
- Gideon then ordered his firstborn son to execute the two Midian kings, but the boy is too young and refuses, so Gideon kills the princes himself, cutting off their heads;
- 15,000 extra idol worshippers (pagans) are then killed;
- Gideon vowed to seek revenge on the men of Penuel because they had refused to feed his army;
- Gideon kept his vow and killed all the men of Penuel;
- Gideon then rewarded 'the lord' for His assistance in helping him win the war. Gideon melted down gold from earrings of dead victims and from the 2 kings victims and from their camels
- Gideon made an ephod presumably so he could communicate with God as had the priests in the sanctuary services;
- The ephod was not a good idea as it was instrumental in turning his whole family and in fact, all Israel into Baal worshippers;
- Gideon had many wives and at least one concubine;
- Gideon had at least 72 sons;
- Abimelech, Gideon's son, killed his 70 half brothers – one brother escaped. (Obviously, under Gideon's intense home-school education programme, his sons learned the 'skill' of violent killing and warfare).

Gideon must have lived up to the truth as he understood it to be, for his name appears in the faith chapter of Hebrews 11, however he too saw through a veil and did not understand the depth of God's loving character.

Gideon possessed serious character flaws. He committed many sins e.g. marrying multiple wives/concubines; inspiring violence in his children; seeking a killing revenge on those who didn't assist him; making an idol; etc. Perhaps Gideon believed these flaws were actually according to 'God's commandments.'

Rather than think that Gideon's violent and murderous actions were 'legalised' or somehow justified by God, we should instead appreciate God's incredible love.

Romans 5:8

"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In times of ignorance, God winked at our ignorances (Acts 17:30) – i.e. God doesn't lay upon us the guilt for sins we perform in ignorance; but in no way does God condone unloving behaviour.

Compare Gideon's character and deeds with those of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Ellen White wrote the following about Napoleon.

Signs of the Times, 11 October, 1910

"Sad Examples From History.--The character of Napoleon Bonaparte was greatly influenced by his training in childhood. Unwise instructors inspired him with a love for conquest, forming mimic armies and placing him at their head as commander. Here was laid the foundation for his career of strife and bloodshed. Had the same care and effort been directed to making him a good man, imbuing his young heart with the spirit of the gospel, how widely different might have been his history."

Neither Gideon or Napoleon had good "Christian" training in their childhood.

Both Gideon and Napoleon were trained in violence and warfare.

Both generals committed crimes of bloodshed and led wars against their fellow-men.

When the actions of Gideon and Napoleon were the same, how can Christians suppose that

- Gideon was a 'man of God,' 'following the violent and destructive, killing-commands of God'; BUT that
- Napoleon was a blood-thirsty, military man (and as Ellen White's quote reveals, that he was not considered to be a 'good' man)?

The divinely approved standard for determining which people are heroes from those who are murderers, is the Law of Love – the 10 commandments - as seen in the life of Jesus Christ.

Did God really tell Gideon to attack the Midianites?

What do you think after comparing those instructions with the holy law of God?

The Focus of the Conflict

1 John 1:5

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

1 John 4: 8, 16

"God is love."

What is love? Have Christians forgotten Christ's living demonstration and example?

1 Corinthians 13:4-13

"Love suffers long, and is kind; love does not envy; love does not push itself forward, is not puffed up, (5) Does not behave itself unseemly, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; (6) Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; (7) Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never fails: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. (9) For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. (10) But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. (11) When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (12) For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (13) And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

What will be the works of those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus?

Galatians 5:22, 23

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

What are the works of Satan and his agents?

Galatians 5:19-21

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (20) Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (21) Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Review and Herald, 18 November, 1890 p3

"The enemy of Christ, who rebelled against God's law in heaven, has, as a skilled, trained general, worked with all his power, bringing out one device after another, full of deception, **to make of none effect the law of God, the only true detector of sin, the standard of righteousness.**"

Signs of the Times, 24 April, 1893 p 4

"The Lord would not leave the enemy any opportunity to perplex the soul or to becloud the mind as to the commandments of which he is speaking. ***It is the commandments which he made when the foundations of the earth were laid, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Away back in the world's history, before there were any people distinguished as Jews, he laid the foundations of his***

law, when he laid the foundations of the world. ...Thank God, we are not left in mist and confusion in regard to the commandments.”

Review and Herald 3 May, 1898 p 2

“God requires obedience to his law. But Satan, ever since his fall, has been working against this law. He created disaffection in heaven by his ambition to be higher than Christ, the Commander of the heavenly host; and then **he attacked the law of Jehovah.** He held a position next to Christ, and in his rebellion he carried the angels with him.”

Signs of the Times, 20 January, 1890 p 6

“Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with power and intelligence, and could break away from the captivity in which he had bound him. Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. **He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that men might lose the true views of God's character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth.** He had caused truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. **Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes.** That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature.”

Review and Herald 23 May, 1899 p 3,5

“In his sermon on the mount, Christ stripped away the mass of rubbish that had been wrapped about the law of God, and gave no honor to their human traditions. He proclaimed the true character of the law, revealing it as he had given it in Eden and from Mount Sinai. **He presented it in its elevated character as binding upon all ages and conditions of men, as a law that will never lose its force in time or eternity.** Christ lived the law, and his life of purity and holiness was a constant rebuke to the religious teachers of the day..... **The law of God is the expression of his goodness and love, the transcript of his character.** There is no power in the law to pardon the transgression of law; but the tidings of salvation through a Mediator was the only hope for the transgressor.”

Southern Watchman, 4 February, 1908 p 1

“God will test all, even as he tested Adam and Eve, to see whether they will be obedient. Our loyalty or disloyalty will decide our destiny. Since the fall of Adam, men in every age have **excused themselves for sinning,** charging God with their sin, saying that they could not keep his commandments. **This is the insinuation Satan cast at God in heaven.** But the plea, "I cannot keep the commandments," need never be presented to God; for before him stands the Saviour, the marks of the crucifixion upon his body, a living witness that the law can be kept. **It is not that men cannot keep the law, but that they will not.**”

Signs of the Times, 25 January, 1905 p3

“Some claim that the commandments are not binding on those who are led by the Spirit. What spirit? we inquire. Certainly not the Spirit of Christ; for He declared, 'I

came not to destroy the law.' 'Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments,' He said, 'and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.' He is a rebel against God's government. He is sinning himself, and is leading others in the path of disobedience. 'He shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.' For him there will be no place in God's kingdom. He is a transgressor of the law, and into the holy city no transgressors are admitted."

Jesus said that anyone who teaches men to break God's commandments will be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven.

But in the Old Testament, the accusation is made that God Himself ordered the Israelites to break His law by killing heretics and pagans! Jesus said desire, to destroy a person's enemies, was the wrong spirit! (Luke 9:55) Would Christians accuse the Father, God Himself of having the 'wrong spirit?'

Matthew 5:17-19

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Christ's words in Matthew 5:17-19 are self-condemnatory – if Christ commanded the Israelites to murder the wicked nations in Canaan. Christ Himself would be implicated in the commandment-breaking sins that He commanded (taught) the Israelites to perform.

Ellen White explains that Satan brought certain charges against God's character, the law of unselfish love, the concept of which is demonstrated by the 10 commandments.

Desire of Ages 1898, p 308

"Since 'the law of the Lord is perfect,' every variation from it must be evil. Those who disobey the commandments of God, and teach others to do so, are condemned by Christ. The Saviour's life of obedience maintained the claims of the law; **it proved that the law could be kept in humanity, and showed the excellence of character that obedience would develop.** All who obey as He did are likewise declaring that the law is "holy, and just, and good." Rom. 7:12. On the other hand, **all who break God's commandments are sustaining Satan's claim that the law is unjust, and cannot be obeyed.** Thus they second the deceptions of the great adversary, and cast dishonor upon God. They are the children of the wicked one, who was the first rebel against God's law. To admit them into heaven would again bring in the elements of discord and rebellion, and imperil the well-being of the universe. **No man who willfully disregards one principle of the law shall enter the kingdom of heaven.**"

Signs of the Times, 16 January, 1896

"Satan declared that it was impossible for the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God, and thus charged upon God a lack of wisdom and love. If they could not keep the law, then there was fault with the Lawgiver. Men who are under the control of Satan repeat these accusations against God, in asserting that men can not keep the law of God. Jesus humbled himself, clothing his divinity with humanity, in order that **he might stand as the head and representative of the human family, and by both precept and example condemn sin in the flesh, and give the lie to Satan's charges.** He was

subjected to the fiercest temptations that human nature can know, yet he sinned not; for sin is the transgression of the law. **By faith he laid hold upon divinity, even as humanity may lay hold upon infinite power through him. Altho tempted upon all points even as men are tempted, he sinned not. He did not surrender his allegiance to God, as did Adam.**”

Patriarchs and Prophets, p 68- 69

“But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; **but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe.** To this result of His great sacrifice--its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man--the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: 'Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.' John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. **It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.** (69) **From the first the great controversy had been upon the law of God. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, that His law was faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed. In attacking the law he aimed to overthrow the authority of its Author.** In the controversy it was to be shown whether the divine statutes were defective and subject to change, or perfect and immutable.”

Signs of the Times, 22 December, 1914

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

Ellen White, Review and Herald, 15 July, 1890

“We must inquire what captain we are following, under whose banner we are standing. Satan was the first transgressor of the law of Jehovah. We read in the Bible how sin entered into the world. **Satan was the first one who ever questioned the holy will of God, and his very first work was to transgress God's law,** and then he came to Adam and Eve in Eden, and through his temptations caused them to break the commandments of God. **Satan thought to win the human family to his side that they might war against the family in heaven. It was Satan's plan to war against the God of heaven. God has a constitution and laws to govern those whom he has created,** and it would be a terrible thing if any of us should be found on the wrong side, warring against the government of Heaven.”

Signs of the Times, 29 August, 1892

“There are many who in their hearts murmur against God. They say, **“We inherit the fallen nature of Adam, and are not responsible for our natural imperfections.” They find fault with God's requirements, and complain that he demands what they have no power to give. Satan made the same complaint in heaven,** but such thoughts dishonor God...”

If a Christian believes that Christ ordered the Israelites to commit genocide, infanticide and to plunder the wicked Canaanites' possessions, one must ask the question: Couldn't Christ have solved the situation in a different manner – a manner that permitted Him and the Israelites to keep His Father's commandments? Or was breaking the commandments – to murder and steal – the only possible solution to the “Canaanite problem?”

Jesus said it is vitally important to know the Father's character for it is the basis of His government. All citizens of God's kingdom abide within the boundaries of His law of love in every situation; however if people choose to become citizens in Satan's government and accept his selfish principles, then this choice will deprive them of divine protection.

John 17:3

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

So what is the Father's character like? It is not a mystery. Jesus said we **need** to know what God is like. But how do we know God? Philip asked the same question. “Show us the Father.”

John 14:6-11

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (7) If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. (8) Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. (9) 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, Show us the Father? (10) Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. (11) Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else **believe me for the very works' sake**.”

In other words, Jesus appears to be saying, *“if you can't see that I'm the divine Son of God by my character, then at least believe it because of the good works you see me doing. Those works reflect the Father's character.”*

If Christians teach and believe the fallacy - that Christ commanded the Israelites to commit murder - it is necessary to accept that Satan must have been right in His claims against God's government – for it would prove that even God Himself couldn't keep His own law.

Every Earthly Support Cut Off

Ellen White was given a dream of the emotional experience of God's commandment-keeping people at the time when "every earthly support will be cut off

Review and Herald 12 January, 1869

"While at Battle Creek, about five months since, I dreamed of being with a large body of people. A portion of this assembly started out prepared to journey. We had heavily-loaded wagons. As we journeyed, the road seemed to ascend. On one side of this road was a deep precipice. On the other side was a high, white, smooth wall, like the hard finish upon plastered rooms. As we journeyed on, the road grew narrower and steeper. Some places in the road seemed very narrow, so much so that we concluded that we could travel no longer with the loaded wagons. We then loosed them from the horses, and took a portion of the luggage from the wagons and placed it upon the horses, and journeyed on horseback. As we progressed, the path still continued to grow narrow. We were obliged to press close to the wall, in order to save ourselves from falling off the narrow road, down the deep precipice. In doing this, the luggage on the horses pressed against the wall, and caused us to sway toward the precipice. We feared that we should fall, and be dashed in pieces on the rocks. We then cut the luggage from the horses, which fell over the precipice. We continued, on horseback, greatly fearing as we came to the narrower places in the road, that we should lose our balance, and fall. At such times, a hand seemed to take the bridle and guide us over the perilous way. As the path grew more narrow, we decided that we could go no longer on horseback with safety, and we left the horses and went on foot, in single file, one following in the footsteps of another. At this point, small cords were let down from the top of the pure white wall, which we eagerly grasped, to aid us in keeping our balance upon the path. As we traveled, the cord moved along with us. The path finally became so narrow that we concluded that we could travel more safely without our shoes; so we slipped them from our feet, and went on some distance without them. Soon it was decided that we could travel more safely without our stockings; these were removed, and we journeyed on with bare feet. We then thought of those who had not accustomed themselves to privations and hardships. Where were such now? They were not in the company. At every change, some were left behind, and those only remained who had accustomed themselves to endure hardships. The privations of the way only made these more eager to press on to the end. Our danger of falling from the pathway increased. We pressed close to the white wall, yet could not place our feet fully upon the path, for it was too narrow. We then suspended nearly our whole weight upon the cords, and would exclaim, "We have hold from above! We have hold from above!" The same words were uttered by all the company in the narrow pathway. As we heard the sounds of revelry and mirth that seemed to come from the abyss below, we shuddered. We heard the profane oath, the vulgar jest, and low, vile songs. We heard the war songs and the dance songs. We heard instrumental music, and the loud laugh, mingled with cursing and cries of anguish and bitter wailing, and were more anxious than ever to keep upon the narrow, difficult pathway. Much of the time we were compelled to suspend our whole weight upon the cords. And these increased in size as we progressed. I noticed that the beautiful white wall was stained with blood. It caused a feeling of regret to see the wall thus stained. This feeling, however, lasted but for a moment, as I soon thought that it was all as it should be. Those who are following after will know that others have passed the narrow, difficult way before them, and will

conclude that if others were able to pursue their onward course, they can do the same."

(Ellen White continued)

“And as the blood should be pressed from their aching feet, they would not faint with discouragement; but, seeing the blood upon the wall, they would know that others had endured the same pain. At length we came to a large chasm at which our path ended. There was nothing now to guide the feet, nothing upon which to rest them. Our whole reliance must be upon the cords, which had increased in size, until they were as large as our bodies. Here we were for a time thrown into perplexity and distress. We inquired in fearful whispers, ‘To what is the cord attached?’”

“My husband was just before me. The large drops of sweat were falling from his brow. The veins in his neck and temples were increased to double their usual size, and suppressed, agonizing groans came from his lips. The sweat was dropping from my face, and I felt such anguish as I had never felt before. A fearful struggle was before us. If we failed here, all the difficulties of our journey had been experienced for naught. Before us, on the other side of the chasm, was a beautiful field of green grass, about six inches high. I could not see the sun, but bright, soft beams of light, resembling fine gold and silver, were resting on this field. Nothing I had seen upon earth could compare in beauty and glory with this field. But could we succeed in reaching it? was the anxious inquiry. Should the cord break, we must perish. Again, in whispered anguish, the words were breathed, ‘What holds this cord?’ For a moment we hesitated to venture. Then we exclaimed, ‘Our only hope is to trust wholly to the cord. It has been our dependence all the difficult way. It will not fail us now.’ Still we were hesitating and distressed. The words were then spoken, ‘God holds the cord. We need not fear.’ These words were then repeated by those behind us, accompanied with, ‘He will not fail us now. He has brought us thus far safely.’ My husband then swung himself over the fearful abyss into the beautiful field beyond. I immediately followed. And oh, what a sense of relief and gratitude to God we felt! I heard voices raised in triumphant praise to God. I was happy, perfectly happy. I awoke, and found that from the anxiety I had experienced in passing over the difficult route, every nerve on my being seemed to be in a tremor. This dream needs no comment. It made such an impression upon my mind that probably every item in it will be vivid before me while my memory shall continue.” (end quote Ellen G. White).

1 Testimonies for the Church, p 29; Early Writings p 81; Life Sketches p 36; Signs of the Times 24 February, 1876; 2 Spiritual Gifts p 20

“The green cord represented faith to my mind, and the beauty and simplicity of trusting in God began to dawn upon my soul.”

4 Testimonies for the Church, p 558

“It is safe to let go every earthly support and take the hand of Him who lifted up and saved the sinking disciple on the stormy sea.”

Desire of Ages p 121

“In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy or sell. It will finally be decreed that they shall be put to death. See Rev. 13:11-17. But to the obedient is given the promise, ‘He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.’ Isa. 33:16. By this promise the

children of God will live.

The Last Message

Revelation 14:1

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, **having his Father's name written in their foreheads.**”

4 Testimonies for the Church, p 58

“The most eloquent sermon that can be preached upon the law of Ten Commandments is to do them.”

Christ's Object Lessons, 1900 p 415

“Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, “Behold your God.” **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.”

WW Prescott , The Present Message, Reading for Friday, 25 November, 1897 p 221, 222

*“It is the character of God that is on trial in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. The question to be settled is, Who is God? Lucifer said: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.” Isa. 14:13, 14. In his effort to dethrone God and to put himself in the place of God, Satan has involved man in the rebellion, through misrepresentation of God's character; but in the gospel, the good news of a Saviour, God has revealed his true character, and the whole world is now called upon to acknowledge that ‘the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king.’ The settlement of this question involves everything else. When the true God is known and acknowledged for what he really is, when he is given the place which belongs to him in all things, and we take the place which belongs to us, then he is glorified and we are glorified in him. This means our salvation from sin now and eternally....**And so the work of every man is to reveal the character of God in his daily life, and thus to bear witness that He is good. And by this revelation of God's character, the gospel of his glory will be preached, and the way of the Lord will be prepared.** Then it will be seen and acknowledged that all flesh is grass, that the only glory in the world is God's glory, and that to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness is to glorify God and to obtain eternal salvation.”*

Elder RC Porter, The Mind of Christ (SDA General Conference Bulletin Daily) #93 p 145

“Now let us proceed with the mind of Christ. ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus’.... We have seen Christ in his exalted position where he had all the plan of God in his mind - the eternal purpose. That purpose was a kingdom of love, with a God of love at the head; Jesus as equal with the Father, and ruling over all, and all a dominion of love. If we study the nature of God's kingdom we shall find that the principles that underlie the third angel's message were the principles of God's government back in the very beginning. There was every principle there that we need to stand upon now. God was a God of love. All things were created for his pleasure. He takes pleasure only in love. ‘Love seeketh not her own.’ That is the way God purposed to rule the worlds he had created. But what did Satan say? ‘God is not a God of love. He is not the truth.’ He impugned God's character. Was God's law not the law of love? Was Satan's charge true? He was a liar, a

*murderer from the beginning. Let us see how he got the dominion from Adam.
He was a usurper.” (continued)*

(Elder RC Porter continued)

*"It was originally Christ's dominion. Christ was appointed heir of all things. Heb.1:1. How many things? Of 'all things.' But Christ gave it to man. It was Christ's by right, and it was man's by right. Has every man who will receive the image of God a right to this earth? Of course he has. Then when Satan took the dominion he took it by fraud and deception. As we go we are to tell (people) that **God is a God of love.** We shall tell them that Satan is a usurper and a liar. **That God is right, and that his character and his law is right. That his law being right is unchangeable.** We are to tell them how Satan got possession of the dominion by fraud, by deception; and the third angel's message that we are going to preach is **the same old gospel taught by Jesus back in the Eden of God.** The same gospel that was presented to Adam, **the gospel of love.** **'The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness.** God desires from all his creatures the service of love. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience.' Patriarchs and Prophets, p.34. **What then is to be the propelling power of the message? It is the love of God.** **We are to show God's love in contrast with Satan's malice and hate.** God manifests his great love to us through Jesus Christ, and asks us for our voluntary service. He asks us for a service of love to him and to our fellow-beings. We are to contrast this with Satan's government, that was begun in deceit and carried on by usurpation, and who still holds his subjects by the unwilling chains of force."*

Home Missionary, 1 August, 1894, p 2

*"But the truth must be brought into the inner sanctuary of the soul. We must by living faith grasp the arm of Omnipotence; for Christ has said, ' Without me ye can do nothing.' But if we are laborers together with God, we shall be able to do all things. We shall be tested, we shall be proved to see what kind of material we have brought into our character building. If we have brought material into our life and character that is not of a divine order, this will be made manifest in the moral warfare in which every soul will be called upon to act a part. **The truth cannot be justly sustained or defended by words that arouse the unbeliever to resistance and contention.** The true spirit that controls the heart will be revealed in a company where ideas are presented that are opposed to ideas that others hold. **If those who stand in defense of truth are under the control of the Spirit of Christ, they will be calm and self-possessed, kind and courteous, and will not be betrayed into the use of harsh language. They will not be accusers of those who honestly differ from them in opinion, nor regard their own ideas as infallible, and thus be led to look upon all those who differ with them as enemies and apostates. They will not make them the subjects of jest and ridicule.**"*

Ellen White comments on the assassination of the character of God which has been instigated by Satan.

Review and Herald, 22 October, 1895 **Satan's Malignity Against Christ and His People**

*"Speaking of Satan, our Lord says that "he abode not in the truth." He was once the covering cherub, glorious in beauty and holiness. He was next to Christ in exaltation and character. It was with Satan that self-exaltation had its origin. He became jealous of Christ, and falsely accused him, and then laid blame upon the Father. He was envious of the position that was held by Christ and the Father, and he turned from his allegiance to the Commander of heaven and lost his high and holy estate. **Though the angels had a knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, though they were happy in the glorious service which they did for the***

King of heaven, yet, through his crooked representations of Christ and the Father, the evil one deceived a great company of angels, drew them into sympathy with himself, and associated them with himself in rebellion. Satan and his sympathizers became the avowed antagonists of God, established their own infernal empire, and set up a standard of rebellion against the God of heaven. All the principalities and powers of evil rallied to the work of overthrowing the government of God.

Satan accomplished the fall of man, and since that time it has been his work to efface in man the image of God, and to stamp upon human hearts his own image.

Possessing supremacy in guilt, he claims supremacy for himself, and exercises over his subjects the power of royalty. He cannot expel God from his throne, but through the system of idolatry, he plants his own throne between the heaven and the earth, between God and the human worshiper. He intercepts every ray of light that comes from God to man, and appropriates the worship that is due to God.

Satan has wrought with deceiving power, bringing in a multiplicity of errors that obscure the truth. Error cannot stand alone, and would soon become extinct if it did not fasten itself like a parasite upon the tree of truth. Error draws its life from the truth of God. The traditions of men, like floating germs, attach themselves to the truth of God, and men regard them as a part of the truth. ***Through false doctrines, Satan gains a foothold, and captivates the minds of men, causing them to hold theories that have no foundation in truth. Men boldly teach for doctrines the commandments of men; and as traditions pass on from age to age, they acquire a power over the human mind. But age does not make error truth,*** neither does its burdensome weight cause the plant of truth to become a parasite. The tree of truth bears its own genuine fruit, showing its true origin and nature. The parasite of error also bears its own fruit, and makes manifest that its character is diverse from the plant of heavenly origin.

It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the human mind. We can see the extent to which he exercises his power by the disloyalty that is in the world. Even the churches that profess to be Christian have turned from the law of Jehovah, and have erected a false standard. Satan has had his hand in all this; for by directing men to false standards, he misshapes the human character, and causes humanity to acknowledge him as supreme. He works counter to the holy law of God, and denies God's jurisdiction. It is at his throne that every evil work finds its starting-point and obtains its support.

Satan has charged injustice upon God, and at various times has set in motion all his supernatural agencies, in order to cut off from men the knowledge of God, to turn their attention from the temple of God, and to establish his own kingdom in the earth. At different times he has almost succeeded in spreading idolatry throughout the world. The history of the past shows that he has striven to obtain the mastery upon earth, and that his strife for supremacy has seemed to be almost wholly successful. He has worked in such a manner that the Prince of heaven has seemed to be lost sight of. It has seemed that the confederacy of idolatry has borne supreme sway, and that Satan had indeed become the god of this world. But the only begotten Son of God has looked upon the scene, has beheld human suffering and misery. ***With pity he has seen how his human agencies have been blinded by the deceptions of the enemy, and have become victims of Satanic cruelty.***

“He has seen how Satan has exalted men simply for the purpose of casting them down, how he has flattered them, in order to draw them into his net and destroy them. He looked upon the schemes by which Satan works to blot from the human soul every trace of likeness to God; how he led them into intemperance so as to destroy the moral powers which God gave to man as a most precious, priceless endowment. He saw how, through indulgence in appetite, brain power was destroyed, and the temple of God was in ruins. He looked with compassion upon men who were becoming corrupted, ruined, murdered, and lost, through choosing a ruler who chained them to his car as captives, and yet these slaves were so bewildered, so beguiled and deceived, that they were actually pleased with their

slavery as they moved on in gloomy procession toward eternal ruin,--to death in which is no hope of life, toward night to which comes no morning. He saw human beings possessed by devils, saw Satanic agencies incorporated with men, saw the bodies of men become the habitations for the degrading indwelling of demons. Man, made for the dwelling-place of God, became the habitation of dragons. The senses, the nerves, the passions, the organs of man, were worked by supernatural agencies in the indulgence of the grossest, vilest lust. The very stamp of demons was impressed upon the countenances of men, and human faces reflected the expression of the legions of evil with which they were possessed. Such was the prospect upon which the world's Redeemer looked. What a horrible spectacle for the eyes of infinite purity to behold! Wherein can he behold his image? And yet God, the infinite One, "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son [for such a world!], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Christ came to our world, sent of God to take human nature upon him. The mysterious union was to be formed between human nature and the divine nature. Christ was to become a man, in order that he might unfold to men as fully as possible the mysteries of the science of redemption. But the scheme of redemption far exceeds the comprehension of the human mind. The great condescension on the part of God is a mystery that is beyond our fathoming. The greatness of the plan cannot be fully comprehended, nor could infinite Wisdom devise a plan that would surpass it. It could be successful only by the clothing of divinity with humanity, by Christ becoming man, and suffering the wrath which sin has made because of the transgression of God's law. Through this plan the great, the dreadful God can be just, and yet be the justifier of all who believe in Jesus, and who receive him as their personal Saviour. This is the heavenly science of redemption, of saving men from eternal ruin, and can be carried out through the incarnation of the Son of God, through his triumph over sin and death. In seeking to fathom this plan, all finite intelligences are baffled.

Before the world was created, infinite Wisdom provided for the terrible possibility of man's disloyalty. **Though man transgressed God's law, yet the law was not weakened in the slightest particular. It stands fast forever and ever as his eternal throne. No hope could be found for man through the alteration of God's law,** but God so loved the world that he gave himself in Christ to the world to bear the penalty of man's transgression. God suffered with his Son, as the divine Being alone could suffer, in order that the world might become reconciled to him." (end quote)

Review and Herald, 29 October, 1895 (part 2)

"From the moment that Christ entered the world, the whole confederacy of Satanic agencies was set at work to deceive and overthrow him as Adam had been deceived and overthrown. Could he win the victory over Christ, the world that God had created would become his empire.... **Satan saw the image of God in the character and person of Jesus Christ. He knew that if Christ carried out his plan, his Satanic authority would be at an end. Therefore, the life of Christ was a perpetual warfare against Satanic agencies.** Satan rallied the whole energies of apostasy against the Son of God. The conflict increased in fierceness and malignity, as again and again the prey was taken out of his hands. Satan assailed Christ through every conceivable form of temptation.... Failing to lead Christ into sin, the prince of darkness gathered together his human agencies in the religious world, and instilled into men the enmity which he felt against the champion of truth. He led them to reject Christ, to expel the Prince of truth from his territory. For a time success seemed to attend his efforts... The condition of the world at the time of Christ is well described by the prophet Isaiah. He says that the people were found "transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey; and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. And he saw that there was no man, and

wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head. The condition of the world previous to the first appearing of Christ is a picture of the condition of the world just previous to his second advent. The same iniquity will exist; Satan manifests the same delusive power upon the minds of men. He is setting his trained agents to work, and moving them to intense activity. **He is securing his army of human agents to engage in the last conflict against the Prince of life, to overthrow the law of God, which is the foundation of his throne.** Satan will work with miraculous presentations to confirm men in the belief that he is what he claims to be,--the prince of this world,--and that victory is his. He will turn his forces against those who are loyal to God; but though he may cause pain, distress, and human agony, he cannot defile the soul. He may cause affliction to the people of God as he did to Christ, but he cannot cause one of Christ's little ones to perish. The people of God in these last days must expect to enter into the thick of the conflict; for the prophetic word says: "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

The EG White 1888 Materials p 526, 527; M/script Release #1037; MS 25, 9 Jan, 1890
"The Lord Jesus awakens an interest in man by **encouraging him to draw nigh and become acquainted with His character.** 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent' [John 17:3]. **We do not contemplate as we should the character of God.** 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life [John 3:16]. **Although Satan has misinterpreted God's purposes, falsified His character, and caused man to look upon God in a false light, yet through the ages God's love for man has never ceased. Christ's work was to reveal the Father as merciful, compassionate, full of goodness and truth. The character of Christ represented the character of God. The only begotten Son of God sweeps back the hellish shadow in which Satan has enveloped the Father, and declares, 'I and My Father are one; look on Me and behold God.'** **Through every hour, through all ages, God's love stands revealed as without a parallel.** When the fulness of time was come, a suitable channel was prepared in Christ Jesus, through whom the streams of heavenly grace could be poured into the world. God so loved that He made a gift of the world which defies all computation. That the abundance of His grace should be revealed, He could not give less than fulness, nor was it possible for Him to give more."

The Ellen White 1888 Materials, Vol 3 p 932
"It is easier to crush and destroy the world than to reform it, but Christ gave His life to reform it. Disorder, darkness and death cover the world like a funeral pall. Cannot men limited in experience learn by sitting at Jesus' feet? By beholding His ways and His works, and viewing His self-denying life, they become changed. 'Learn of me,' He says, 'for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest [peace] unto your souls.' Matt 11:29" (parenthesis is original).

Ellen White 1888 Materials, Vol 3 p 1048, 1050
"The great want of the soul is Jesus, the hope of glory. Through the Holy Spirit this unity may be attained and love for the brethren will abound, and men will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. **Our life will be a reflection of His holy character.** As believers in Him we shall represent His meekness of spirit, His gentleness of demeanor. Individually the church of God must answer the prayer of Christ till we all come into the unity of the Spirit. What is it that causes dissension and discord? It is the result of walking apart from Christ.....(p 1050) Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and **the glory of our Redeemer is His character;** this we must behold with spiritual vision. I would

pray as did the apostle, 'that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints'[Eph. 1:17, 18]."

Conclusion

Jesus said that **HIS** words were eternal life. **HIS** life reflected the true character of His Father. Did He do a faulty job of reflecting God's character? Did He omit the "black, evil, wrathful, murdering, out-of-control" side of the Father's character? Hardly. Where should the Christian rest his/her faith? Is it in Christ Jesus our Lord - the Spoken Living Word of the Father - or in a Book? Do you worship the Bible or the God of the Bible who sent His Son to show us the truth about His character?

Review and Herald, 9 March, 1905 p 3, 4

"We are to copy no human being. There is no human being wise enough to be our criterion. We are to look to the man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the pattern Man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. His character is our model. Let us, then, take our minds off the perplexities and the difficulties of this life, and fix them on him, that by beholding we may be changed into his likeness. We may behold Christ to good purpose. **We may safely look to him;** for he is all-wise. As we look to him and think of him, he will be formed within, the hope of glory. Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand."

8 Testimonies for the Church, p 265

"Christ came to teach human beings what God desires them to know. In the heavens above, in the earth, in the broad waters of the ocean, we see the handiwork of God. All created things testify to His power, His wisdom, His love. But not from the stars or the ocean or the cataract can we learn of **the personality of God as it is revealed in Christ. God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character.** He sent His Son into the world to reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God."

Ellen White, Signs of the Times 11 June, 894 p 6

"The origin of false commandments may be clearly discerned by the principles which underlie them. All that is not in accordance with the known and expressed will of God, is at enmity with God, and has its origin in the synagogue of Satan. The will of God is expressed in his law, and sin is the transgression of the law. Those who disregard the commandments of God, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men, are working in Satan's line, and are in harmony with the great leader of apostasy. When the Jews were claiming Abraham for their father, while not doing the works of Abraham, Jesus said to them: 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.' 'He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.'"

Signs of the Times, 23 April, 1896

"The inhabitants of worlds unfallen could view in this case the attributes of Satan and the character of God. The law of God is a transcript of his character. The rebel leader (Satan) was in opposition to the law of God, and revealed the fact that his principles were those that actuated one who is lawless, disobedient, unholy, an accuser, a liar, and a murderer. The true character of the ruler of the synagogue was laid bare, and it was made manifest that he was on the side of the great rebel, tho sanctimoniously professing to be very punctilious concerning the law of God. **He knew not the principle of love that underlies the commandments,** ...yet the ruler never forgave Christ for departing from the maxims,

customs, and commandments of men, with which the rabbis had burdened the law of God and obscured its spiritual significance.”

If things said to be commanded by the Lord (including Bible verses) don't line up with the words, teachings and life example of Christ, it isn't truth! If it doesn't line up with the 10 commandments, it isn't truth! If it doesn't line up with the principles of love, it isn't truth!

Isaiah 8:20

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

Christ is the law and testimony! Jesus was the Law of God Incarnate - the law of the 10 commandments - which includes "thou shalt not kill." And Jesus defined that law further - "Don't even think angry thoughts, not even about your enemies." After the close of probation, would Jesus command the 144,000 to take swords and destroy the babies of Satan-worshippers? To take virgins captive? To take their goods? Why not? The Satan-worshippers would be completely possessed by the devil since the spirit of God would be withdrawn from the earth (GC p 36). Their probation will be over. Their “cup of iniquity” would be full. If there was any time that it was righteous to kill heretics, surely it would be at the time that the wicked were completely possessed with the spirit of evil and beyond redemption.

These abhorrent, destructive actions are the same actions performed by the ancient Israelites against the Canaanites. Furthermore, the Israelites believed that such destruction was a direct command from their holy God. If this is the divine pattern, then the same ‘divine’ principle must apply in the case of the holy 144,000 at the close of probation. The principle that it is just and holy to murder heretics/pagans must also be applied in the destruction of the wicked at the end of probationary time – by the 144,000. Furthermore, such violent executions *would not be a violation of the sixth commandment*. Such is the outcome of the principle that ‘the end justifies the means’ – the principle that takes the place of God’s holy commandment of love.

The Father's character doesn't change! If it was law-abiding to murder pagans 3000 years ago, then it must still be law-abiding today! But the 144000 won't even have "guile in their mouths" let alone blood on their hands. The **Father's** character is in their foreheads.

John 17:3

“This is life eternal that they may KNOW Thee (**know the character of**) the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

How do we know the character of God? By looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

SPTED.206.001 (Ellen White)

“The religion of Jesus Christ never degrades the receiver, it never makes him coarse or rough, discourteous or self-important, passionate or hard-hearted. On the contrary, it refines the taste, sanctifies the judgment, and purifies and ennobles the thoughts, by bringing them into captivity to Jesus Christ. God's ideal for his children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. **The living God has given in his holy law a transcript of his character. The greatest teacher the world has ever known is Jesus Christ. And what is the standard he has given for all who believe in him to reach? - "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." As God is perfect in his high sphere of action, so man may be perfect in his human sphere. The ideal of**

Christian character is Christlikeness. There is opened before us a path of continual advancement. We have an object to reach, a standard to gain, which includes everything good and pure and noble and elevated. There should be continual striving and constant progress onward and upward toward perfection of character. (See 2 Tim. 3: 14-17; Rom. 15:4; Col. 2:8-10).”

What is the benefit of knowing that God is not a being whose physical form is either a trinity or a single being, if we still don't understand the true character of God? There is no point in knowing that the Creator is not a trinity, if we are still confused about God's character. There is no point in knowing the Creator is not a trinity, if we still believe the One True God has the “blended” character of the trinity god. It is by beholding we become changed. The character that we suppose belongs to our God, will be reproduced in us. We had better be sure we know just what God's character is like for that character will be our character as time progresses.

Who is drawn to an out of control, double-minded god! Such a god does not draw followers after him through infinite love as did Jesus!

John 12:32

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

The impostor, the “blended god,” doesn't draw adherents through love, but gains “worship” in two different ways; through:

- **fear – whereby compliance is secured through fear of punishment; and**
- **promises of power – rewards are offered to those who cooperate.**

Even a superficial study of communistic and dictatorial/tyrannical regimes reveals that the underlying principle of these structures is a spirit of dominance and control over others – not a spirit of drawing or attracting adherents through goodness and love. These regimes employ two strategies that attempt to secure “worship” or compliance. - Promises of power and fear. Refer to the following sources:

- Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, ***Tortured for Christ***, (1967), Hodder & Stoughton; (1998) The International Christian Association, Switzerland;
- Ted Kazmierski, ***Then Nothing Will Fail***, (1998), Verand Press, NSW, Australia.

Do Christians genuinely worship the One True God? Or do they envision Him to be a blended god; a god with a dark side; a mean side; a forceful and angry side to His character? From where do Christians find their concept of God originating? From the Bible. And this is correct.

The Bible truly contains the truth about God's character, but it must be studied in the light of Jesus Christ. The Son of God fulfilled the law of God and gave His life as a perfect testimony (Isaiah 8:20: 28:10).

Christ kept His Father's law (the 10 commandments perfectly). He came to "show us [the character of] the Father" (John 14:8-10) Christ told His Father that the world didn't know Him, nor His Son (John 17:25; 1 John 3:1). Christ told the disciples they didn't know “what spirit they were of” (Luke 9:35). Christ told the Jewish leaders that they didn't know His Father's character either and that they were of their father the devil (John 8:44, 54,55). Paul admitted he and the other early Christians didn't know the Father's character well enough either - only "seeing through a glass darkly." (2 Cor 3:17-4:6)

It is doubtful that sinful humanity possesses the capacity to comprehend the Father's character in any real depth at this stage, but it is prophesied that the 144,000 **WILL** know the Father's character and that HIS loving character will be internalised, for the Father's name will be written in their foreheads - His Son's perfect and loving character will be reflected in their characters (Rev 14:1). They will know their God (Daniel 11:32). They will know how to love their enemies (Matt 5:44) and they will do so because the love of God motivates them to think as He thinks (Rev 12:17).

2 Timothy 2:15

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Some Bible writers appeared to be badly effected by the paganism around them and to have transferred their knowledge of pagan gods' characters onto the character of the One True God. God HAS preserved the truth in the Bible, about His character, but we must dig for it "as for buried treasure." We need to search the Bible "with all our hearts" so that we can discover the true character of God.

John 17:3

"This is life eternal that they may know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.

Jeremiah 29:11-14

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. (12) Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. (13) And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (14) And I will be found of you, saith the LORD:"

We can "know our God" (Daniel 11:32) and have His name written in our foreheads (Revelation 14:1).

Appendix

Baal Worship Involved Cannibalism

Alexander Hyslop in the Two Babylons reveals that the worship of Baal was worship of a combination of the fire-god and the serpent-god, which necessitated the eating of the burnt sacrifice – which was the flesh of children. Hyslop writes:

*“In the mythology of the primitive world,” says Owen, “the serpent is universally the symbol of the sun.” In Egypt, one of the commonest symbols of the sun, or sun-god, is a disc with a serpent around it. The original reason of that identification seems just to have been that, as the sun was the great enlightener of the physical world, so the serpent was held to have been the great enlightener of the spiritual, by giving mankind the “knowledge of good and evil”.... It is not wonderful, then, **the fire-worship and serpent-worship** should be conjoined. **The serpent, also, as “renewing its youth” every year,** was plausibly represented to those who wished an excuse for idolatry as a meet emblem of **the sun, the great regenerator,** who every year regenerates and renews the face of nature, and who, when deified, was worshipped as the **grand Regenerator of the souls of men.***

*“In the chapter under consideration, the “great fiery serpent” is represented with all the emblems of royalty. All its heads are encircled with “crowns or diadems”; and **so in Egypt, the serpent of fire, or serpent of the sun,** in Greek was called the Basilisk, that is, the “royal serpent,” **to identify it with Moloch,** which name, **while it recalls the ideas both of fire and blood, properly signifies “the King.”** The Basilisk was always, among the Egyptians, and among many nations besides, regarded as “the very type of majesty and dominion.” **As such, its image was worn affixed to the head-dress of the Egyptian monarchs;** and it was not lawful for any one else to wear it. The sun identified with this serpent was called “P'ouro,” which signifies at one “the Fire” and “the King,” and from this very name the epithet “Purros,” the “Fiery,” is given to the “Great seven-crowned serpent” of our text.⁴⁰*

*Thus was the Sun, the Great Fire-god, identified with the Serpent. **But he had also a human representative, and that was Tammuz, for whom the daughters of Israel lamented, in other words Nimrod.** We have already seen the identity of Nimrod and Zoroaster. Now, Zoroaster was not only the head of the Chaldean Mysteries, but, as all admit, the head of the fire-worshippers. (see note below) The title given to Nimrod, as the first of the Babylonian kings, by Berosus, indicates the same thing. That title is Alorus, that is, “the god of fire.” As Nimrod, “the god of fire,” was Molk-Gheber, or, “the Mighty king,” inasmuch as he was the first who was called Moloch, or King, and the first who began to be “mighty” (Gheber) on the earth, we see at once how it was that the “passing through the fire to Moloch” originated, and how the god of fire among the Romans came to be called “Mulkiber.”^{41*}*

40 The word Purros in the text does not exclude the idea of “Red,” for the sun-god was painted red to identify him with Moloch, at once the god of fire and god of blood.-- (WILKINSON). The primary leading idea, however, is that of Fire.

41 Commonly spelled Mulciber (OVID, Art. Am.); but the Roman c was hard. From the epithet “Gheber,” the Parsees, or fire-worshippers of India, are still called “Guebres.”

It was only after his death, however, that he appears to have been deified. Then, retrospectively, he was worshipped as the child of the Sun, or the Sun incarnate. In his own life-time, however, he set up no higher pretensions than that of being Bol-Khan, or Priest of Baal, from which the other name of the Roman fire-god **Vulcan** is evidently derived. **Everything in the history of Vulcan exactly agrees with that of Nimrod...**⁴² ... Vulcan was the head and chief of the Cyclops, that is, "the kings of flame."⁴³

"Then the mode in which the rites of Tammuz or Adonis were celebrated in Syria was essentially the same as the rites of Osiris" (in Egypt).

"Nimrod was the head of the fire-worshippers. Vulcan was the forger of the thunderbolts by which such havoc was made among the enemies of the gods. Ninus, or Nimrod, in his wars with the king of Bactria, seems to have carried on the conflict in a similar way. From Arnobius we learn, that when the Assyrians under Ninus made war against the Bactrians, the warfare was waged not only by the sword and bodily strength, but by magic and by means derived from the secret instructions of the Chaldeans. When it is known that the historical Cyclops are, by the historian Castor, traced up to the very time of Saturn or Belus, the first king of Babylon, and when we learn that Jupiter (who was worshipped in the very same character as Ninus, "the child"), when fighting against the Titans, "received from the Cyclops aid" by means of "dazzling lightnings and thunders," we may have some pretty clear idea of the magic arts derived from the Chaldean Mysteries, which Ninus employed against the Bactrian king. There is evidence that, down to a late period, the priests of the Chaldean Mysteries knew the composition of the formidable Greek fire, which burned under water, and the secret of which has been lost; and there can be little doubt that Nimrod, in erecting his power, availed himself of such or similar scientific secrets, which he and his associates alone possessed."

"In these, and other respects yet to be noticed, there is an exact coincidence between Vulcan, the god of fire of the Romans, and Nimrod, the fire-god of Babylon. In the case of the classic Vulcan, it is only in his character of the fire-god as a physical agent that he is popularly represented. But it was in his spiritual aspects, in cleansing and regenerating the souls of men, that the fire-worship told most effectually on the world. The power, the popularity, and skill of Nimrod, as well as the seductive nature of the system itself, enabled him to spread the delusive doctrine far and wide, as he was represented under the well-known name of Phaethon, (see note below) as on the point of "setting the whole world on fire," or (without the poetical metaphor) of involving all mankind in the guilt of fire-worship."

42 Nimrod, as universal king, was Khuk-hold, "King of the world." As such, the emblem of his power was the bull's horns. Hence the origin of the Cuckhold's horns.

43 Kuclops, from Khuk, "king," and Lohb, "flame." The image of the great god was represented with three eyes--one in the forehead; hence the story of the Cyclops with the one eye in the forehead.

"There is reason to believe that the same practice obtained in our own land in the times of the Druids. We know that they offered human sacrifices to their bloody gods. We have evidence that they made **"their children pass through the fire to Moloch,"** and that makes it highly probable that they also offered them in sacrifice; for, from Jeremiah 32:35, compared with Jeremiah 19:5, we find that these two things were parts of one and the same system. The god whom the Druids worshipped was Baal, as the blazing Baal-fires show, and the last-cited passage proves that children were offered in sacrifice to Baal. When **"the fruit of the body"** was thus offered, it was **"for the sin of the soul."** And it was a principle of the Mosaic law, a principle no doubt derived from the patriarchal faith, that the priest must partake of whatever was offered as a sin-offering (Num 18:9,10). Hence, **the priests of Nimrod or Baal were necessarily required to eat of the human sacrifices;** and thus it has come to pass that **"Cahna-Bal,"**⁴⁴ the **"Priest of Baal,"** is the established word in our own tongue for a devourer of human flesh."⁴⁵

Now, if this worship of the sacred serpent of the Sun, the great fire-god, was so universal in Rome, what symbol could more graphically portray the idolatrous power of Pagan Imperial Rome than the "Great Fiery Serpent"? No doubt it was to set forth this very thing that the Imperial standard itself--the standard of the Pagan Emperor of Rome, as Pontifex Maximus, **Head of the great system of fire-worship and serpent-worship--was a serpent elevated on a lofty pole, and so coloured, as to exhibit it as a recognised symbol of fire-worship."**

"As Zoroaster was head of the fire-worshippers, so Tammuz was evidently the same. We have seen evidence already that sufficiently proves the identity of Tammuz and Nimrod; but a few words may still more decisively prove it, and cast further light on the primitive fire-worship. 1. In the first place, Tammuz and Adonis are proved to be the same divinity. Jerome, who lived in Palestine when the rites of Tammuz were observed, up to the very time when he wrote, expressly identifies Tammuz and Adonis, in his Commentary on Ezekiel, where the Jewish women are represented as weeping for Tammuz; and the testimony of Jerome on this subject is universally admitted. Then the mode in which the rites of Tammuz or Adonis were celebrated in Syria was essentially the same as the rites of Osiris. The statement of Lucian (*De Dea Syria*) strikingly shows this, and Bunsen distinctly admits it. The identity of Osiris and Nimrod has been largely proved in the body of this work. When, therefore, Tammuz or Adonis is identified with Osiris, the identification of Tammuz with Nimrod follows of course. And then this entirely agrees with the language of Bion, in his Lament for Adonis, where he represents Venus as going in a frenzy of grief, like a Bacchant, after the death of Adonis, through the woods and valleys, and "calling upon her Assyrian husband."

44 The word *Cahna* is the emphatic form of *Cahn*. *Cahn* is "a priest," *Cahna* is "the priest."

45 From the historian Castor (in Armenian translation of EUSEBIUS) we learn that it was under Bel, or Belus, that is Baal, that the Cyclops lived; and the Scholiast on Aeschylus states that these Cyclops were the brethren of Kronos, who was also Bel or Bal, as we have elsewhere seen. The eye in their forehead shows that originally this name was a name of the great god; for that eye in India and Greece is found the characteristic of the supreme divinity. The Cyclops, then, had been representatives of that God--in other words, priests, and priests of Bel or Bal. Now, we find that the Cyclops were well-known as cannibals, *Referre ritus Cyclopum*, "to bring back the rites of the Cyclops," meaning to revive the practice of eating human flesh. (OVID, *Metam.*)

*"It equally agrees with the statement of Maimonides, that when Tammuz was put to death, the grand scene of weeping for that death was in the temple of Babylon. 2. Now, if Tammuz was Nimrod, the examination of the meaning of the name ⁴⁶ confirms the connection of Nimrod with the first fire-worship. After what has already been advanced, there needs no argument to show that, as the Chaldeans were the first who introduced the name and power of kings (SYNCELLUS), and as Nimrod was unquestionably the first of these kings, and the first, consequently, that bore the title of Moloch, or king, so it was in honour of him that the **"children were made to pass through the fire to Moloch."** **But the intention of that passing through the fire was undoubtedly to purify. The name Tammuz has evidently reference to this, for it signifies "to perfect," that is, "to purify" * "by fire";** and if Nimrod was, as the Paschal Chronicle, and the general voice of antiquity, represent him to have been, the originator of fire-worship, this name very exactly expresses his character in that respect."*

"And this also, no doubt, reconciled the parents who actually sacrificed their children to Moloch, to the cruel sacrifice, the belief being cherished that the fire that consumed them also "perfected" them, and made them meet for eternal happiness. As both the passing through the fire, and the burning in the fire, were essential rites in the worship of Moloch or Nimrod, this is an argument that Nimrod was Tammuz. As the priest and representative of the perfecting or purifying fire, it was he that carried on the work of perfecting or purifying by fire, and so he was called by its name." (end quote A. Hyslop)
<http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/twobaby/twobaby.html>

Associate Professor of religious Studies at Arizona University, Jason David BeDuhn, notes in his article **Eucharist or Yasna? Antecedents of Manichaeon Food Ritual:**

*"This passage refers to the Zoroastrian ceremony known as **atas buzurg kardan** accompanied, as is usual by the **atas-zohr**. This rituals entails purifying a fire through a series of indirect kindlings. The **astas-zohr** is added as a ritual feeding and strengthening of the fire. The fire is fed with the fat of a sacrificed beneficent animal, known as the **gospand**. In addition, a small portion of the gospand roast flesh is ritually consumed by the priest. 'This portion of roast meat, and the roast meat in general, constitutes a **zohr** to the gods.' This basic procedure of making an offering to the gods through priestly consumption of the offerings, approximates the Manichean view."*
<http://www.nau.edu/human/religion/beduhn/Eucharist%20or%20Yasna.pdf>

46 From **tam**, "to perfect," and **muz**, "to burn."

Statements from Catholic Authorities

The Catholic Encyclopedia on CD-ROM, concerning the death penalty for heresy, relating to the Mosaic law, states:

"The Christian teachers of the first three centuries insisted, as was natural for them, on complete religious liberty; furthermore, they not only urged the principle that religion could not be forced on others -- a principle always adhered to by the Church in her dealings with the unbaptised -- but, when comparing the Mosaic Law and the Christian religion, they taught that the latter was content with a spiritual punishment of heretics (i.e. with excommunication), while Judaism necessarily proceeded against its dissidents with torture and death. (2) However, the imperial successors of Constantine soon began to see in themselves Divinely appointed "bishops of the exterior", i.e. masters of the temporal and material conditions of the Church. At the same time they retained the traditional authority of "Pontifex Maximus", and in this way the civil authority inclined, frequently in league with prelates of Arian tendencies, to persecute the orthodox bishops by imprisonment and exile. But the latter, particularly St. Hilary of Poitiers (Liber contra Auxentium, c. iv), protested vigorously against any use of force in the province of religion, whether for the spread of Christianity or for preservation of the Faith. They repeatedly urged that in this respect the severe decrees of the Old Testament were abrogated by the mild and gentle laws of Christ."
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08026a.htm>

Statements by Pope John Paul II on the Sept. 11 attacks and The Vatican Council and Papal statements on Islam.
http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/wlegitimate_defense.htm

*"Is there anything in **scripture** that indicates the authority of government includes punishing the guilty or protecting the innocent?"*

"Rom. 13:3-4 "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. " NRSV, see [NAB](#)

The following information from the Catholic Catechism (1994) comes from http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/wlegitimate_defense.htm

Legitimate defense against Terror - Catholic Teaching in light of the Terrorist attacks.

The analysis of the current situation, war as a result of the World Trade Center and Pentagon terrorist attacks, would perhaps benefit from keeping in mind several facts.

- a. A group of people committed mass murder on innocent civilians.*
- b. This group has done similar acts in the past and vows to continue.*
- c. The group has worked to elude capture and trial, moving across international borders.*
- d. The group is apparently aided by friendly countries who harbor, aid, finance, and guide them.*
- e. **Governments have a duty to protect their citizens, apprehend and punish criminals, and to stop ongoing conspiracies to harm innocent people.***
- f. Normally this would be accomplished through international cooperation of police agencies, but there is no cooperation from some governments. **The failure to cooperate allows the criminals to again attack innocent civilians.***
- g. Therefore, should not the **world's nations** whose people are the targets of terror, **take action to enforce the rule of law**, and to protect their people? **Would not military action of this type be just if the conduct of any such action conforms to the moral law?***

*"The war-like acts of last Tuesday [Sept. 11, 2001] were appalling attacks not only against our nation but against all humanity. **Our nation, in collaboration with others, has a moral right and a grave obligation to defend the common good against such terrorist attacks. Therefore, we support efforts by our nation and the global community to seek out and hold accountable, in accord with national and international law, those individuals, groups and governments which are responsible.** It is incumbent upon all citizens to recognize this common threat, and to be willing to make appropriate sacrifices in support of our nation's multi-faceted and long-term effort to respond in a morally responsible way. ... We pray that you will find just, wise and effective ways to respond with resolve and restraint to the long-term task of ending terrorism..." From a letter to President Bush by Most Reverend Joseph A. Fiorenza, President, USCCB [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops] [Full Text.](http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/wlegitimate_defense.htm) and [Statement of Oct. 9, 2001](http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/wlegitimate_defense.htm)*

The Current Catholic Catechism (1994)

"2321 The prohibition of murder does not abrogate the right to render an unjust aggressor unable to inflict harm. Legitimate defense is a grave duty for whoever is responsible for the lives of others or the common good"

"2297 Terrorism threatens, wounds, and kills indiscriminately; it is gravely against justice and charity." http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/wlegitimate_defense.htm

"2263 The legitimate defense of persons and societies is not an exception to the prohibition against the murder of the innocent that constitutes intentional killing. "The act of self-defense can have a double effect: the preservation of one's own life; and the killing of the aggressor.... The one is intended, the other is not." [St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 64, 7, corp. art.] (See the Aquinas link below.)

2264 Love toward oneself remains a fundamental principle of morality. Therefore it is legitimate to insist on respect for one's own right to life. Someone who defends his life is not guilty of murder even if he is forced to deal his aggressor a lethal blow:

If a man in self-defense uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful: whereas if he repels force with moderation, his defense will be lawful.... Nor is it necessary for salvation that a man omit the act of moderate self-defense to avoid killing the other man, since one is bound to take more care of one's own life than of another's.[St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 64, 7, corp. art.] (end quote from Catechism)

(Point to Ponder: Regarding point # 2264 above of the Catechism; Jesus trusted His personal safety to His Father's care. Jesus said we are to love each other as we love ourselves – not less than ourselves. Jesus said we are to love our enemies, not kill them - Matthew 5:44).

The Current Catholic Catechism (1994) continued)

2265 Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for someone responsible for another's life. Preserving the common good requires rendering the unjust aggressor unable to inflict harm. To this end, those holding legitimate authority have the right to repel by armed force aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their charge.[St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 64, 7, corp. art.]" See [respect for human life](#). [One should consider the meaning of "grave duty". See the discussion of "grave matter" in the [Catechism sections 1854-1862](#).]

"2310 Public authorities, in this case [of just war], have the right and duty to impose on citizens the obligations necessary for national defense.

2313 Non-combatants, wounded soldiers, and prisoners must be respected and treated humanely.

*Actions deliberately contrary to the law of nations and to its universal principles are crimes, as are the orders that command such actions. Blind obedience does not suffice to excuse those who carry them out. **Thus the extermination of a people, nation, or ethnic minority must be condemned as a mortal sin. One is morally bound to resist orders that command genocide.***

http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/wlegitimate_defense.htm

There is a definite change noted in the 1994 Catholic Catechism and the current statements by Catholic leaders. There appears to be a change toward supporting a death

penalty.

Wrath

The following article categories all texts in the Bible which contain words which are translated “wrath” in the King James Bible. (list unfinished at time of printing).

#639 (aph) – properly, the nose or nostril; hence, the face, and occasionally a person; also (from the rapid breathing in passion) ire:--anger(-gry), + before, countenance, face, + forebearing, forehead, + (long-)suffering, nose, nostril, snout, X worthy, wrath.

Genesis 39:19; Exodus 22:24; Exodus 32:10; Exodus 32:11; Exodus 32:12; Numbers 11:33; Deuteronomy 11:17; Deuteronomy 29:23 (x2); Deuteronomy 29:28 (x3); I Samuel 28:18; II Kings 23:26 (x4); II Chronicles 12:12; II Chronicles 28:11; II Chronicles 28:13; II Chronicles 29:10; II Chronicles 30:8; Ezra 8:22; Ezra 10:14; Job 14:13; Job 16:9; Job 19:11; Job 20:23; Job 20:28; Job 32:2; Job 32:3; Job 32:5; Job 36:13; Job 40:11; Job 42:7; Psalms 2:5; Psalms 2:12; Psalms 21:9; Psalms 37:8; Psalms 55:3;

#5678 (ebrah) – 1) **outpouring, overflow, excess**, fury, wrath, arrogance 1a) overflow, excess, outburst 1b) arrogance 1c) overflowing rage or fury outburst of passion

Genesis 49:7; Job 21:30;

#2740 (charown) – 1) anger, heat, burning (of anger) 1a) always used of God's anger, a burning of anger:--**sore displeasure**, fierce(-ness), fury, (fierce) wrath(-ful)

Exodus 15:7; Nehemiah 13:18; Psalms 58:9;

#7107 (qatsaph) 1) **to be displeased**, be angry, fret oneself, be wroth 1a) (Qal) to be wroth, to be full of wrath, to be furious 1b) (Hiphil) to provoke to wrath or anger 1c) (Hithpael) to put oneself in a rage, anger oneself

Leviticus 10:6; Deuteronomy 9:7; Deuteronomy 9:8; Deuteronomy 9:22;

#7110 (qetseph) 1) wrath, anger 1a) of God 1b) of man 2) splinter, twig, broken twig 2a) **meaning dubious**

Numbers 1:53; Numbers 16:46; Numbers 18:5; Deuteronomy 29:28 (x3); Joshua 9:20; Joshua 22:20; I Chronicles 27:24; II Chronicles 19:2; II Chronicles 19:10; II Chronicles 24:18; II Chronicles 29:8; II Chronicles 32:25; II Chronicles 32:26; Esther 1:18; Psalms 38:1; (hot displeasure)

#2534 (chemah) 1) heat, rage, hot displeasure, **indignation**, anger, wrath, poison, bottles 1a) heat 1a1) fever 1a2) venom, poison (fig.) 1b) burning anger, rage

Numbers 25:11; Deuteronomy 29:23; (x2); Deuteronomy 29:28 (x3); II Samuel 11:20; II Kings 22:13; II Kings 22:17; II Chronicles 12:7; II Chronicles 34:21; II Chronicles 34:25; II Chronicles 36:16; Esther 2:1; Esther 3:5; Esther 7:7; Esther 7:10; Job 19:29; Job 21:20; Job 36:18; Psalms 37:8 (anger); Psalms 38:1; Psalms 59:13;

#3708 (ka`ac) or (ka`as) from #3707 (**ka`ac**) (1) anger, vexation, **provocation, grief** 1a) vexation 1a1) of men 1a2) of God 1b) **vexation, grief, frustration**

Deuteronomy 32:27; II Kings 23:26 (x4); Job 5:2;

#2734 (charah) 1) to be hot, furious, burn, become angry, be kindled 1a) (Qal) to burn, kindle (anger) 1b) (Niphal) to be angry with, **be incensed** 1c) (Hiphil) to burn, kindle 1d) (Hithpael) to heat oneself in vexation

Commenting on Numbers 16:15, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol 1 p 877, states that the Hebrew word *charah* (#2734) which is translated as “very wrath” in the KJV – is translated “exceedingly sad” in the Septuagint (LXX).

II Kings 23:26 (x4)

#7264 (ragaz) to quiver (with any violent emotion, especially anger or fear):--be **afraid, stand in awe, disquiet**, fall out, fret, move, provoke, quake, rage, shake, tremble, trouble, be wroth.

7265r@gaz (Aramaic) regaz corresponding to <07264> 1) (Aphel) to rage, enrage

Ezra 5:12;

7109 qtsaph kets-af' (Aramaic) from 7108; rage:--wrath. see HEBREW for 07108

Ezra 7:23

#7108 q@tsaph (Aramaic) kets-af' corresponding to <07107>; ; v AV-furious 1; 1 1) (P'al) to be or become angry, be wroth

#2194 (angry) za`am zaw-am' a primitive root; ; v AV-indignation 4, defy 3, abhor 2, angry 2, abominable 1; 12 1) to denounce, express indignation, be indignant 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to have indignation, be indignant, be angrily indignant, be defiant 1a2) to be abhorrent 1a3) to express indignation in speech, denounce, curse 1b) (Niphal) to show indignation, show anger

Unfinished - Texts still to be classified:

Psalms 69:24; Psalms 76:10; Psalms 78:31; Psalms 78:38; Psalms 78:49; Psalms 79:6; Psalms 85:3; Psalms 88:7; Psalms 88:16; Psalms 89:46; Psalms 90:7; Psalms 90:9; Psalms 90:11; Psalms 95:11; Psalms 102:10; Psalms 106:23; Psalms 106:40; Psalms 110:5; Psalms 124:3; Psalms 138:7; Proverbs 11:4; Proverbs 11:23; Proverbs 12:16; Proverbs 14:29; Proverbs 14:35; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 15:18; Proverbs 16:14; Proverbs 19:12; Proverbs 19:19; Proverbs 21:14; Proverbs 21:24; Proverbs 24:18; Proverbs 27:3; Proverbs 27:4; Proverbs 29:8; Proverbs 30:33; Ecclesiastes 5:17; Isaiah 9:19; Isaiah 10:6; Isaiah 13:9; Isaiah 13:13; Isaiah 14:6; Isaiah 16:6; Isaiah 54:8; Isaiah 60:10; Jeremiah 7:29; Jeremiah 10:10; Jeremiah 18:20; Jeremiah 21:5; Jeremiah 32:37; Jeremiah 44:8; Jeremiah 48:30; Jeremiah 50:13; Lamentations 2:2; Lamentations 3:1; Ezekiel 7:12; Ezekiel 7:14; Ezekiel 7:19; Ezekiel 13:15; Ezekiel 21:31; Ezekiel 22:21; Ezekiel 22:31; Ezekiel 38:19; Hosea 5:10; Hosea 13:11; Amos 1:11; Nahum 1:2; Habakkuk 3:2; Habakkuk 3:8; Zephaniah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:18; Zechariah 7:12; Zechariah 8:14;

New Testament:

Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7; Luke 4:28; Luke 21:23; John 3:36; Acts 19:28; Romans 1:18; Romans 2:5; Romans 2:8; Romans 4:15; Romans 5:9; Romans 9:22; Romans 12:19; Romans 13:4; Romans 13:5; II Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20; Ephesians 2:3; Ephesians 4:26; Ephesians 4:31; Ephesians 5:6; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:6; Colossians 3:8; I Thessalonians 1:10; I Thessalonians 2:16; I Thessalonians 5:9; I Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 3:11; Hebrews 4:3; Hebrews 11:27; James 1:19; James 1:20; Revelation of John 6:16; Revelation of John 6:17; Revelation of John 11:18; Revelation of John 12:12; Revelation of John 14:8; Revelation of John 14:10; Revelation of John 14:19; Revelation of John 15:1; Revelation of John 15:7; Revelation of John 16:1; Revelation of John 16:19; Revelation of John 18:3; Revelation of John 19:15

Later updates will answer objections from the following passages:

Isa 24:1-6

Isa 13:6-13

Rom 11:22

Isa 24:3

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Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled

Mr Daniel Sims, refers to his role as "a missionary to the Jewish people." His organisation is called, The Hope of Israel Baptist Mission. Their mailing address is The Hope Of Israel Baptist Mission, P.O. Box 911, Powder Springs, GA 30127. The following information on the Messiah comes from their website. <http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/messiah.htm>

Fulfilled Prophecy	Tenakh/Hebrew Scripture	New Testament
His pre-existence	Micah 5:2	John 1:1, 14
Born of the seed of a woman	Genesis 3:15	Matthew 1:18
Of the seed of Abraham	Genesis 12:3	Matthew 1:1-16
All nations blessed by Abraham's seed	Genesis 12:3	Matthew 8:5, 10
God would provide Himself a Lamb as an offering	Genesis 22:8	John 1:29
From the tribe of Judah	Genesis 49:10	Matthew 1:1-3
Heir to the throne of David	Isaiah 9:6-7	Matthew 1:1
Called "The mighty God, The everlasting Father"	Isaiah 9:6	Matthew 1:23
Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18
His name called Immanuel, "God with us"	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
Declared to be the Son of God	Psalms 2:7	Matthew 3:17
His messenger before Him in spirit of Elijah	Malachi 4:5-6	Luke 1:17
Preceded by a messenger to prepare His way	Malachi 3:1	Matthew 11:7-11
Messenger crying "Prepare ye	Isaiah 40:3	Matthew 3:3

the way of the Lord"

Would be a Prophet of the children of Israel	Deuteronomy 18:15	Matthew 2:15
Called out of Egypt	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:15
Slaughter of the children	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:18
Would be a Nazarene	Judges 13:5; Amos 2:11; Lam. 4:7	Matthew 2:23
Brought light to Zabulon & Nephthalm, Galilee of the Gentiles	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 4:15
Presented with gifts	Psalms 72:10	Matthew 2:1, 11
Rejected by His own	Isaiah 53:3	Matthew 21:42; Mark 8:31, 12:10; Luke 9:22, 17:25
He is the stone which the builders rejected which became the headstone	Psalms 118:22-23; Isaiah 28:16	Matthew 21:42; I Peter 2:7
A stone of stumbling to Israel	Isaiah 8:14-15	I Peter 2:8
He entered Jerusalem as a king riding on an ass	Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:5
Betrayed by a friend	Psalms 41:9	John 13:21
Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15; Luke 22:5
The 30 pieces of silver given for the potter's field	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 27:9-10
The 30 pieces of silver thrown in the temple	Zechariah 11:13	Matthew 27:5
Forsaken by His disciples	Zechariah 13:7	Matthew 26:56

Accused by false witnesses	Psalms 35:11	Matthew 26:60
Silent to accusations	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 27:14
Heal blind/deaf/lame/dumb	Isaiah 35:5-6; Isaiah 29:18	Matthew 11:5
Preached to the poor/brokenhearted/captives	Isaiah 61:1	Matthew 11:5
Came to bring a sword, not peace	Micah 7:6	Matthew 10:34-35
He bore our sickness	Isaiah 53:4	Matthew 8:16-17
Spat upon, smitten and scourged	Isaiah 50:6, 53:5	Matthew 27:26, 30
Smitten on the cheek	Micah 5:1	Matthew 27:30
Hated without a cause	Psalms 35:19	Matthew 27:23
The sacrificial lamb	Isaiah 53:5	John 1:29
Given for a covenant	Isaiah 42:6; Jeremiah 31:31-34	Romans 11:27/Galatians 3:17, 4:24/Hebrews 8:6, 8, 10; 10:16, 29; 12:24; 13:20
Would not strive or cry	Isaiah 42:2-3	Mark 7:36
People would hear not and see not	Isaiah 6:9-10	Matthew 13:14-15
People trust in traditions of men	Isaiah 29:13	Matthew 15:9
People give God lip service	Isaiah 29:13	Matthew 15:8
God delights in Him	Isaiah 42:1	Matthew 3:17, 17:5
Wounded for our sins	Isaiah 53:5	John 6:51

He bore the sins of many	Isaiah 53:10-12	Mark 10:45
Messiah not killed for Himself	Daniel 9:26	Matthew 20:28
Gentiles flock to Him	Isaiah 55:5, 60:3, 65:1; Malachi 1:11; II Samuel 22:44- 45; Psalm 2:7-8	Matthew 8:10
Crucified with criminals	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:35
His body was pierced	Zechariah 12:10; Ps. 22:16	John 20:25, 27
Thirsty during execution	Psalm 22:16	John 19:28
Given vinegar and gall for thirst	Psalm 69:21	Matthew 27:34
Soldiers gambled for his garment	Psalm 22:18	Matthew 27:35
People mocked, "He trusted in God, let Him deliver him!"	Psalm 22:7-8	Matthew 27:43
People sat there looking at Him	Psalm 22:17	Matthew 27:36
Cried, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?"	Psalm 22:1	Matthew 27:46
Darkness over the land	Amos 8:9	Matthew 27:45
No bones broken	Psalm 34:20, Numbers 9:12	John 19:33-36
Side pierced	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34
Buried with the rich	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57, 60
Resurrected from the dead	Psalm 16:10-11; 49:15	Mark 16:6

Priest after the order of Melchizedek	Psalm 110:4	Hebrews 5:5-6; 6:20; 7:15-17
Ascended to right hand of God	Psalm 68:18	Luke 24:51
LORD said unto Him, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"	Psalm 110:1	Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36;, 16:19; Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; Hebrews 1:13
His coming glory	Malachi 3:2-3	Luke 3:17

Over 300 Messianic Prophecies

Gen. 3:15.....He will bruise Satan's head.....Heb. 2:14, 1 Jn. 3:18
Gen. 9:26,27...The God of Shem will be the Son of Shem...Lu. 3:36
Gen. 12:3...As Abraham's seed,will bless all nations...Acts. 3:25,26
Gen. 12:7...**The Promise made to Abraham's Seed**...Gal. 3:16
Gen. 14:18...A priest after Melchizedek...Heb. 6:20
Gen. 14:18.....A King also.....Heb. 7:2
Gen. 14:18...The Last Supper foreshadowed...Mt. 26:26-29
Gen. 17:19.....**The Seed of Isaac**.....Rom. 9:7
Gen. 22:8...The Lamb of God promised...Jn. 1:29
Gen. 22:18...As Isaac's seed, will bless all nations...Gal. 3:16
Gen.26:2-5..The Seed of Isaac promised as the Redeemer..Heb.11:18
Gen. 49:10...The time of His coming...Lu. 2:1-7; Gal. 4:4
Gen. 49:10.....**The Seed of Judah**.....Lu. 3:33
Gen. 49:10.....Called Shiloh or One Sent.....Jn. 17:3
Gen. 49:10...To come before Judah lost identity...Jn. 11:47-52
Gen. 49:10...To Him shall the obedience of the people be...Jn. 10:16
Ex. 3:13,14.....The Great "I Am".....Jn. 4:26
Ex. 12:5...A Lamb without blemish...1 Pet. 1:19
Ex. 12:13...The blood of the Lamb saves from wrath...Rom. 5:8
Ex. 12:21-27...Christ is our Passover...1 Cor. 5:7
Ex. 12:46...**Not a bone of the Lamb to be broken**...Jn. 19:31-36
Ex. 15:2...His exaltation predicted as Yeshua...Acts 7:55,56
Ex. 15:11...His Character-Holiness...Luke 1:35; Acts 4:27
Ex. 17:6...The Spiritual Rock of Israel...1 Cor. 10;4
Ex. 33:19...His Character-Merciful...Lu. 1:72
Lev.14:11..The leper cleansed-Sign to priesthood..Lu.5:12-14; Acts 6:7
Lev.16:15-17...Prefigures Christ's once-for-all death...Heb. 9:7-14
Lev.16:27...Suffering outside the Camp...Mt. 27:33; Heb. 13:11, 12
Lev.17:11...The Blood-the life of the flesh...Mt. 26;28; Mk. 10:45
Lev.17:11...**It is the blood that makes atonement**...1 Jn. 3:14-18
Lev.23:36-37...The Drink-offering: "If any man thirst." ..Jn. 19:31-36
Num. 9:12...**Not a bone of Him broken**...John 19:31-36
Num. 21:9...The serpent on a pole-Christ lifted up...Jn. 3:14-18
Num. 24:17...Time: "I shall see him, but not now."...Gal. 4:4
Deut. 18:15..."This is of a truth that prophet." ...Jn. 6:14
Deut. 18:15-16..."Had ye believed Moses, ye would believe me."...Jn. 5:45-47
Deut. 18:18...Sent by the Father to speak His word...Jn. 8:28, 29
Deut. 18:19...Whoever will not hear must bear his sin...Jn. 12:15,
Deut. 21:23...Cursed is he that hangs on a tree...Gal. 3:10-13
Ruth 4:4-9...Christ, our kinsman, has redeemed us...Eph. 1:3-7
1 Sam. 2:10...Shall be an anointed King to the Lord...Mt. 28:18; Jn. 12:15
2 Sam. 7:12...**David's Seed**...Mt. 1:1
2 Sam. 7:14a...The Son of God... Lu. 1:32

2 Sam. 7:16...David's house established forever...Lu. 3:31; Rev. 22:16
 2 Ki. 2:11...The bodily ascension to heaven illustrated...Lu. 24:51
 1 Chr. 17:11...David's Seed...Mt. 1:1; 9:27
 1 Chr. 17:12, 13a...To reign on David's throne forever...Lu. 1:32, 33
 1 Chr. 17:13a..."I will be His Father, He...my Son."...Heb. 1:5
 Job 19:23-27...The Resurrection predicted...Jn. 5:24-29
 Psa. 2:1-3...The enmity of kings foreordained...Acts 4:25-28
 Psa. 2:2...To own the title, Anointed (Christ)...Acts 2:36
 Ps. 2:6...His Character-Holiness...Jn. 8:46; Rev. 3:7
 Ps. 2:6...To own the title King...Mt. 2:2
 Ps. 2:7...**Declared the Beloved Son**...Mt. 3:17
 Psa. 2:7, 8...The Crucifixion and Resurrection intimated...Acts 13:29-33
 Psa. 2:12...Life comes through faith in Him...Jn. 20:31
 Psa. 8:2...The mouths of babes perfect His praise...Mt. 21:16
 Psa. 8:5, 6...His humiliation and exaltation...Lu. 24:50-53; 1 Cor. 15:27
 Psa. 16:10...**Was not to see corruption**...Acts 2:31
 Psa. 16:9-11...**Was to arise from the dead**...Jn. 20:9
 Psa. 17;15...The resurrection predicted...Lu. 24:6
 Psa. 22:1...**Forsaken because of sins of others**...2 Cor. 5:21
 Psa. 22:1...**Words spoken from Calvary, "My God..."** Mk. 15:34
 Psa. 22:2...**Darkness upon Calvary**...Mt. 27:45
 Psa. 22:7...**They shoot out the lip and shake the head**...Mt. 27:39
 Psa. 22:8...**"He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him"**...Mt. 27:43
 Psa. 22:9.....**Born the Saviour**.....Lu. 2:7
 Psa. 22:14...**Died of a broken (ruptured)heart**...Jn. 19:34
 Psa. 22:14,15...**Suffered agony on Calvary**...Mk. 15:34-37
 Psa. 22:15.....**He thirsted**.....Jn. 19:28
 Psa. 22:16...**They pierced His hands and His feet**....Jn. 19:34,37;20:27
 Psa. 22:17,18...**Stripped Him before the stares of men**...Lu. 23:34,35
 Psa. 22:18.....**They parted His garments**.....Jn. 19:23,24
 Psa. 22:20,21...**He committed Himself to God**...Lu.23:46
 Psa. 22:20,21...**Satanic power bruising the Redeemer's heel**..Heb. 2:14
 Psa. 22:22.....**His Resurrection declared**.....Jn. 20:17
 Psa. 22:27...**He shall be the governor of the nations**...Col 1:16
 Psa. 22:31.....**"It is finished"**.....Jn. 19:30
 Psa. 23:1...."I am the Good Shephard"....Jn. 10:11
 Psa. 24:3.....His exaltation predicted.....Acts 1:11; Phil. 2:9
 Psa. 30:3.....His resurrection predicted.....Acts 2:32
 Psa. 31:5...**"Into thy hands I commit my spirit"**...Lu. 23:46
 Psa. 31:11...His acquaintances fled from Him...Mk. 14:50
 Psa. 31:13...They took counsel to put Him to death...Jn. 11:53
 Psa. 31:14,15..." He trusted in God, let Him deliver him" ...Mt. 27:43
 Psa. 34:20.....Not a bone of Him broken.....Jn 19:31-36
 Psa. 35:11....False witnesses rose up against Him....Mt. 26:59
 Psa. 35:19...He was hated without a cause...Jn. 15:25

Psa. 38:11.....His friends stood afar off.....Lu. 23:49
 Psa. 40:2-5...The joy of His resurrection predicted...Jn. 20:20
 Psa. 40:6-8....His delight-the will of the Father....Jn. 4:34
 Psa. 40:9....He was to preach the Righteousness in Israel....Mt. 4:17
 Psa. 40:14...Confronted by adversaries in the Garden...Jn. 18:4-6
 Psa. 41:9.....Betrayed by a familiar friend.....Jn. 13:18
 Psa. 45:2...Words of Grace come from His lips...Lu. 4:22
 Psa. 45:6...To own the title, God or Elohim...Heb. 1:8
 Psa. 45:7...A special anointing by the Holy Spirit...Mt.3:16; Heb.1:9
 Psa. 45:7,8...Called the Christ (Messiah or Anointed)...Lu. 2:11
 Psa. 55:12-14...Betrayed by a friend, not an enemy...Jn. 13:18
 Psa. 55:15...Unrepentant death of the Betrayer...Mt. 27:3-5; Acts 1:16-19
 Psa. 68:18...To give gifts to men...Eph. 4:7-16
 Psa. 68:18...Ascended into Heaven...Lu. 24:51
 Psa. 69:4...Hated without a cause...Jn. 15:25
 Psa. 69:8...A stranger to own brethren...Lu. 8;20,21
 Psa. 69:9...Zealous for the Lord's House...Jn. 2:17
 Psa. 69:14-20...Messiah's anguish of soul before crucifixion...Mt. 26:36-45
 Psa. 69:20... "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." ...Mt. 26:38
 Psa. 69:21...Given vinegar in thirst...Mt. 27:34
 Psa. 69:26...The Saviour given and smitten by God...Jn. 17:4; 18:11
 Psa. 72:10,11...Great persons were to visit Him...Mt. 2:1-11
 Psa. 72:16...The corn of wheat to fall into the Ground...Jn. 12:24
 Psa. 72:17...His name, Yinon, will produce offspring...Jn. 1:12,13
 Psa. 72:17...All nations shall be blessed by Him...Acts 2:11,12,41
 Psa. 78:1.2...He would teach in parables...Mt. 13:34-35
 Psa. 78:2b...To speak the Wisdom of God with authority...Mt. 7:29
 Psa. 88:8...They stood afar off and watched...Lu. 23:49
 Psa. 89:27...Emmanuel to be higher than earthly kings...Lu. 1:32,33
 Psa. 89:35-37...David's Seed, throne, kingdom endure forever...Lu. 1:32,33
 Psa. 89:36-37...His character-Faithfulness...Rev. 1:5
 Psa. 90:2...He is from everlasting (Micah 5:2)...Jn. 1:1
 Psa. 91:11,12...Identified as Messianic; used to tempt Christ...Lu. 4;10,11
 Psa. 97:9...His exaltation predicted...Acts 1:11;Eph. 1:20
 Psa. 100:5...His character-Goodness...Mt. 19:16,17
 Psa. 102:1-11...The Suffering and Reproach of Calvary...Jn. 21:16-30
 Psa. 102:25-27...Messiah is the Preexistent Son...Heb. 1:10-12
 Psa. 109:25...Ridiculed...Mt. 27:39
 Psa. 110:1...Son of David...Mt. 22:43
 Psa. 110:1...To ascend to the right-hand of the Father...Mk.16:19
 Psa. 110:1...David's son called Lord...Mt. 22:44,45
 Psa. 110:4...A priest after Melchizedek's order...Heb. 6:20
 Psa. 112:4...His character-Compassionate, Gracious, et al... Mt. 9;36
 Psa. 118:17,18...Messiah's Resurrection assured...Lu. 24:5-7;1 Cor. 15:20
 Psa. 118:22,23...The rejected stone is Head of the corner...Mt. 21:42,43

Psa. 118:26a...The Blessed One presented to Israel...Mt. 21:9
 Psa. 118:26b...To come while Temple standing...Mt. 21;12-15
 Psa. 132:11...The Seed of David(the fruit of His Body)...Lu. 1:32
 Psa. 138:1-6...The supremacy of David's Seed amazes kings... Mt. 2:2-6
 Psa. 147:3,6...The earthly ministry of Christ described...Lu. 4:18
 Psa. 1:23...He will send the Spirit of God... Jn. 16;7
 Song. 5;16...The altogether lovely One...Jn. 1:17
 Isa. 6:1...When Isaiah saw His glory... Jn. 12:40-41
 Isa. 6:9-10...Parables fall on deaf ears...Mt. 13:13-15
 Isa. 6:9-12...Blinded to Christ and deaf to His words...Acts. 28:23-29
 Isa. 7:14...To be born of a virgin...Lu. 1:35
 Isa. 7:14...To be Emmanuel-God with us... Mt. 1:18-23
 Isa. 8:8...Called Emmanuel...Mt. 28:20
 Isa. 8:14...A stone of stumbling, a Rock of offense... 1 Pet. 2:8
 Isa. 9:1,2...His ministry to begin in Galilee...Mt. 4:12-17
 Isa. 9:6...A child born-Humanity...Lu. 1:31
 Isa. 9:6...A Son given-Deity...Lu. 1:32; Jn. 1;14; 1 Tim. 3:16
 Isa. 9:6...Declared to be the Son of God with power... Rom. 1:3,4
 Isa. 9:6...The Wonderful One, Peleh...Lu. 4:22
 Isa. 9:6...The Counsellor, Yaatz...Mt. 13:54
 Isa. 9:6...The Mighty God, El Gibor...Mt. 11:20
 Isa. 9:6...The Everlasting Father, Avi Adth...Jn. 8:58
 Isa. 9:6...The Prince of Peace, Sar Shalom...Jn . 16:33
 Isa. 9:7...To establish an everlasting kingdom...Lu. 1:32-33
 Isa. 9:7...His Character-Just...Jn. 5:30
 Isa. 9:7...No end to his Government, Throne, and Peace...Lu. 1:32-33
 Isa. 11:1...Called a Nazarene-the Branch, Netzer...Mt. 2:23
 Isa. 11:1...A rod out of Jesse-Son of Jesse...Lu. 3:23,32
 Isa. 11:2...The anointed One by the Spirit...Mt. 3;16,17
 Isa. 11:2...His Character-Wisdom, Understanding, et al.....Jn. 4:4-26
 Isa. 11:4...His Character-Truth...Jn. 14:6
 Isa. 11:10...The Gentiles seek Him...Jn. 12:18-21
 Isa. 12:2...Called Jesus-Yeshua...Mt. 1:21
 Isa. 25:8...The Resurrection predicted...I Cor. 15:54
 Isa. 26:19...His power of Resurrection predicted...Jn. 11:43,44
 Isa. 28:16...The Messiah is the precious corner stone...Acts 4:11,12
 Isa. 29:13...He indicated hypocritical obedience to His Word...Mt. 15:7-9
 Isa. 29:14...The wise are confounded by the Word...I Cor. 1:18-31
 Isa. 32:2...A Refuge-A man shall be a hiding place...Mt. 23:37
 Isa. 35:4...He will come and save you...Mt. 1:21
 Isa. 35:5...To have a ministry of miracles...Mt. 11:4-6
 Isa. 40:3,4...Preceded by forerunner...Jn. 1:23
 Isa. 40:9..."Behold your God."...Jn. 1:36;19:14
 Isa. 40:11...A shepherd-compassionatelife-giver...Jn. 10:10-18
 Isa. 42:1-4...The Servant-as a faithful, patient redeemer... Mt.12:18-21

Isa. 42:2...Meek and lowly... Mt. 11:28-30
 Isa. 42:3...He brings hope for the hopeless... Jn. 4
 Isa. 42:4...The nations shall wait on His teachings... Jn. 12:20-26
 Isa. 42:6...The Light (salvation) of the Gentiles...Lu. 2:32
 Isa. 42:1,6...His is a Worldwide compassion... Mt. 28:19,20
 Isa. 42:7...Blind eyes opened... Jn. 9:25-38
 Isa. 43:11...He is the only Saviour... Acts. 4:12
 Isa. 44:3...He will send the Spirit of God... Jn. 16:7,13
 Isa. 45:23...He will be the Judge... Jn. 5:22;Rom. 14:11
 Isa. 48:12...The First and the Last...Jn. 1:30;Rev. 1:8,17
 Isa. 48:17...He came as a Teacher...Jn. 3:2
 Isa. 49:1...Called from the womb-His humanity...Mt. 1:18
 Isa. 49:5...A Servant from the womb...Lu. 1:31;Phil. 2:7
 Isa. 49:6...He is Salvation for Israel...Lu. 2:29-32
 Isa. 49:6...He is the Light of the Gentiles...Acts 13:47
 Isa. 49:6...He is Salvation unto the ends of the earth... Acts 15:7-18
 Isa. 49:7...He is despised of the Nation... Jn. 8:48-49
 Isa. 50:3...Heaven is clothed in black at His humiliation... Lu. 23:44,45
 Isa. 50:4...He is a learned counsellor for the weary... Mt. 11:28,29
 Isa. 50:5...The Servant bound willingly to obedience... Mt. 26:39
 Isa. 50:6a..."I gave my back to the smiters."... Mt. 27:26
 Isa. 50:6b...He was smitten on the cheeks... Mt. 26:67
 Isa. 50:6c...He was spat upon... Mt. 27:30
 Isa. 52:7...To publish good tidings of peace... Lu. 4:14,15
 Isa. 52:13...The Servant exalted...Acts 1:8-11; Eph. 1:19-22
 Isa. 52:13...Behold, My Servant... Mt. 17:5; Phil. 2:5-8
 Isa. 52:14...The Servant shockingly abused... Lu. 18:31-34; Mt. 26:67,68
 Isa. 52:15...Nations startled by message of the Servant... Rom. 15:18-21
 Isa. 52:15...His blood shed to make atonement for all... Rev. 1:5
 Isa. 53:1...His people would not believe Him... Jn. 12:37-38
 Isa. 53:2a...He would grow up in a poor family... Lu. 2:7
 Isa. 53:2b...Appearance of an ordinary man... Phil. 2:7-8
 Isa. 53:3a...Despised... Lu. 4:28-29
 Isa. 53:3b...Rejected... Mt. 27:21-23
 Isa. 53:3c...Great sorrow and grief... Lu. 19:41-42
 Isa. 53:3d...Men hide from being associated with Him... Mk. 14:50-52
 Isa. 53:4a...He would have a healing ministry... Lu. 6:17-19
 Isa. 53:4b...He would bear the sins of the world... 1 Pet. 2:24
 Isa. 53:4c...Thought to be cursed by God... Mt. 27:41-43
 Isa. 53:5a...Bears penalty for mankind's transgressions... Lu. 23:33
 Isa. 53:5b...His sacrifice would provide peace between man and God... Col. 1:20
 Isa. 53:5c...His back would be whipped... Mt. 27:26
 Isa. 53:6a...He would be the sin-bearer for all mankind...Gal. 1:4
 Isa. 53:6b...God's will that He bear sin for all mankind... 1 Jn. 4:10

Isa. 53:7a...Oppressed and afflicted... Mt. 27:27-31
 Isa. 53:7b...Silent before his accusers... Mt. 27:12-14
 Isa. 53:7c...Sacrificial lamb... Jn. 1:29
 Isa. 53:8a...Confined and persecuted... Mt. 26:47-27:31
 Isa. 53:8b...He would be judged... Jn. 18:13-22
 Isa. 53:8c...Killed... Mt. 27:35
 Isa. 53:8d...Dies for the sins of the world... 1 Jn. 2:2
 Isa. 53:9a...Buried in a rich man's grave... Mt. 27:57
 Isa. 53:9b...Innocent and had done no violence... Mk. 15:3
 Isa. 53:9c...No deceit in his mouth... Jn. 18:38
 Isa. 53:10a...God's will that He die for mankind... Jn. 18:11
 Isa. 53:10b...An offering for sin... Mt. 20:28
 Isa. 53:10c...Resurrected and live forever... Mk. 16:16
 Isa. 53:10d...He would prosper... Jn. 17:1-5
 Isa. 53:11a...God fully satisfied with His suffering... Jn. 12:27
 Isa. 53:11b...God's servant... Rom. 5:18-19
 Isa. 53:11c...He would justify man before God... Rom. 5:8-9
 Isa. 53:11d...The sin-bearer for all mankind... Heb. 9:28
 Isa. 53:12a...Exalted by God because of his sacrifice... Mt. 28:18
 Isa. 53:12b...He would give up his life to save mankind... Lu. 23:46
 Isa. 53:12c...Grouped with criminals... Lu. 23:32
 Isa. 53:12d...Sin-bearer for all mankind... 2 Cor. 5:21
 Isa. 53:12e...Intercede to God in behalf of mankind... Lu. 23:34
 Isa. 55:3...Resurrected by God... Acts 13:34
 Isa. 55:4...A witness... Jn. 18:37
 Isa. 59:15-16a...He would come to provide salvation... Jn. 6:40
 Isa. 59:15-16b...Intercessor between man and God... Mt. 10:32
 Isa. 59:20...He would come to Zion as their Redeemer... Lu. 2:38
 Isa. 61:1-2a...The Spirit of God upon him... Mt. 3:16-17
 Isa. 61:1-2b...The Messiah would preach the good news... Lu. 4:17-21
 Isa. 61:1-2c...Provide freedom from the bondage of sin and death... Jn. 8:31-32
 Isa. 61:1-2...Proclaim a period of grace... Jn. 5:24
 Jer.23:5-6a...Descendant of David...Lu. 3:23-31
 Jer. 23:5-6b...The Messiah would be God... Jn. 13:13
 Jer. 23:5-6c...The Messiah would be both God and Man... 1 Tim. 3:16
 Jer. 31:22...Born of a virgin... Mt. 1:18-20
 Jer. 31:31...The Messiah would be the new covenant... Mt. 26:28
 Jer. 33:14-15...Descendant of David... Lu. 3:23-31
 Eze.17:22-24...Descendant of David... Lk. 3:23-31
 Eze.34:23-24...Descendant of David... Mt. 1:1
 Dan. 7:13-14a...He would ascend into heaven... Acts 1:9-11
 Dan. 7:13-14b...Highly exalted... Eph. 1:20-22
 Dan. 7:13-14c...His dominion would be everlasting... Lu. 1:31-33
 Dan. 9:24a...To make an end to sins... Gal. 1:3-5

Dan. 9:24b...He would be holy... Lu. 1:35
 Dan. 9:25...Announced to his people 483 years, to the exact day, after the
 decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem... Jn. 12:12-13
 Dan. 9:26a...Killed... Mt. 27:35
 Dan. 9:26b...Die for the sins of the world... Heb. 2:9
 Dan. 9:26c...Killed before the destruction of the temple... Mt. 27:50-51
 Dan. 10:5-6...Messiah in a glorified state... Rev. 1:13-16
 Hos. 13:14...He would defeat death... 1 Cor. 15:55-57
 Joel 2:32...Offer salvation to all mankind... Rom. 10:12-13
 Mic. 5:2a...Born in Bethlehem... Mt. 2:1-2
 Mic. 5:2b...God's servant... Jn. 15:10
 Mic. 5:2c...From everlasting... Jn. 8:58
 Hag. 2:6-9...He would visit the second Temple... Lu. 2:27-32
 Hag. 2:23...Descendant of Zerubbabel... Lu. 3:23-27
 Zech. 3:8...God's servant... Jn. 17:4
 Zech. 6:12-13...Priest and King... Heb. 8:1
 Zech. 9:9a...Greeted with rejoicing in Jerusalem... Mt. 21:8-10
 Zech. 9:9b...Beheld as King... Jn. 12:12-13
 Zech. 9:9c...The Messiah would be just... Jn. 5:30
 Zech. 9:9d...The Messiah would bring salvation... Luke 19:10
 Zech. 9:9e...The Messiah would be humble... Mt. 11:29
 Zech. 9:9f...Presented to Jerusalem riding on a donkey... Mt. 21:6-9
 Zech. 10:4...The cornerstone... Eph. 2:20
 Zech. 11:4-6a...At His coming, Israel to have unfit leaders... Mt. 23:1-4
 Zech. 11:4-6b...Rejection causes God to remove His protection.. Lu. 19:41-
 44
 Zech. 11:4-6c...Rejected in favor of another king... Jn. 19:13-15
 Zech. 11:7...Ministry to "poor," the believing remnant... Mt. 9:35-36
 Zech. 11:8a...Unbelief forces Messiah to reject them... Mt. 23:33
 Zech. 11:8b...Despised... Mt. 27:20
 Zech. 11:9...Stops ministering to the those who rejected Him... Mt. 13:10-
 11
 Zech. 11:10-11a...Rejection causes God to remove protection... Lu. 19:41-
 44
 Zech. 11:10-11b...The Messiah would be God... Jn. 14:7
 Zech. 11:12-13a...Betrayed for thirty pieces of silver... Mt. 26:14-15
 Zech. 11:12-13b...Rejected... Mt. 26:14-15
 Zech. 11:12-13c...Thirty pieces of silver thrown into the house of the
 Lord... Mt. 27:3-5
 Zech. 11:12-13d...The Messiah would be God... Jn. 12:45
 Zech. 12:10a...The Messiah's body would be pierced... Jn. 19:34-37
 Zech. 12:10b...The Messiah would be both God and man... Jn. 10:30
 Zech. 12:10c...The Messiah would be rejected... Jn. 1:11
 Zech. 13:7a...God's will He die for mankind... Jn. 18:11
 Zech. 13:7b...A violent death... Mt. 27:35

Zech. 13:7c...Both God and man.. Jn. 14:9

Zech. 13:7d...Israel scattered as a result of rejecting Him... Mt. 26:31-56

Mal. 3:1a...Messenger to prepare the way for Messiah... Mt. 11:10

Mal. 3:1b...Sudden appearance at the temple... Mk. 11:15-16

Mal. 3:1c...Messenger of the new covenant... Lu. 4:43

Mal. 4:5...Forerunner in the spirit of Elijah... Mt. 3:1-2

Mal. 4:6...Forerunner would turn many to righteousness... Lu. 1:16-17

To Meet the Bridegroom

Ellen White, Christ's Object Lessons, p 405- 421 (1900)

“Christ with His disciples is seated upon the Mount of Olives. The sun has set behind the mountains, and the heavens are curtained with the shades of evening. In full view is a dwelling house lighted up brilliantly as if for some festive scene. The light streams from the openings, and an expectant company wait around, indicating that a marriage procession is soon to appear. In many parts of the East, wedding festivities are held in the evening. The bridegroom goes forth to meet his bride and bring her to his home. By torchlight the bridal party proceed from her father's house to his own, where a feast is provided for the invited guests. In the scene upon which Christ looks, a company are awaiting the appearance of the bridal party, intending to join the procession. Lingerer near the bride's house are ten young women robed in white. Each carries a lighted lamp and a small flagon for oil. All are anxiously watching for the appearance of the bridegroom. But there is a delay. Hour after hour passes; the watchers become weary and fall asleep. At midnight the cry is heard, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." The sleepers, suddenly awaking, spring to their feet. They see the procession moving on, bright with torches and glad with music. They hear the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. The ten maidens seize their lamps and begin to trim them, in haste to go forth. But five have neglected to fill their flasks with oil. They did not anticipate so long a delay, and they have not prepared for the emergency. In distress they appeal to their wiser companions saying, 'Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out.' (Margin.) But the waiting five, with their freshly trimmed lamps, have emptied their flagons. They have no oil to spare, and they answer, 'Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.' (406) While they went to buy, the procession moved on, and left them behind. The five with lighted lamps joined the throng and entered the house with the bridal train, and the door was shut. When the foolish virgins reached the banqueting hall, they received an unexpected denial. The master of the feast declared, 'I know you not.' They were left standing without, in the empty street, in the blackness of the night. As Christ sat looking upon the party that waited for the bridegroom, He told His disciples the story of the ten virgins, by their experience illustrating the experience of the church that shall live just before His second coming. The two classes of watchers represent the two classes who profess to be waiting for their Lord. They are called virgins because they profess a pure faith. By the lamps is represented the word of God. The psalmist says, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' Ps. 119:105. The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Spirit is represented in the prophecy of Zechariah. 'The angel that talked with me came again,' he says, 'and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof; and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? . . . Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? . . . Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.' Zech. 4:1-14. (408) From the two olive trees the golden oil was emptied through the golden pipes into the bowl of the candlestick, and thence into the golden lamps that gave light to the sanctuary. So from the holy ones that stand in God's presence His Spirit is imparted to the human instrumentalities who are consecrated to His service. The mission of the two anointed ones is to communicate to God's people that heavenly grace which alone can make His word a lamp to the feet and a

light to the path. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Zech. 4:6. In the parable, all the ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. All had lamps and vessels for oil. **For a time there was seen no difference between them. So with the church that lives just before Christ's second coming. All have a knowledge of the Scriptures.** All have heard the message of Christ's near approach, and confidently expect His appearing. But as in the parable, so it is now. A time of waiting intervenes, faith is tried; and when the cry is heard, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him,' many are unready. They have no oil in their vessels with their lamps. They are destitute of the Holy Spirit. **Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan.** (411) **The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. This class are represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding. The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form.** 'They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.' Eze. 33:31. The apostle Paul points out that this will be the special characteristic of those who live just before Christ's second coming. He says, 'In the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of their own selves; . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' 2 Tim. 3:1-5. This is the class that in time of peril are found crying, Peace and safety. They lull their hearts into security, and dream not of danger. When startled from their lethargy, they discern their destitution, and entreat others to supply their lack; but in spiritual things no man can make up another's deficiency. The grace of God has been freely offered to every soul. The message of the gospel has been heralded, 'Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Rev. 22:17. But character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit's working. 'Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it [the land], as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. Eze. 14:20. (412) It is in a crisis that character is revealed. When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,' and the sleeping virgins were roused from their slumbers, it was seen who had made preparation for the event. Both parties were taken unawares; but one was prepared for the emergency, and the other was found without preparation. So now, a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God. It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul's need to be supplied. The ten virgins are watching in the evening of this earth's history. All claim to be Christians. All have a call, a name, a lamp,

and all profess to be doing God's service. All apparently wait for Christ's appearing. But five are unready. Five will be found surprised, dismayed, outside the banquet hall. At the final day, many will claim admission to Christ's kingdom, saying, 'We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets.' 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?' But the answer is, 'I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me.' Luke 13:26, 27; Matt. 7:22. In this life they have not entered into fellowship with Christ; therefore they know not the language of heaven, they are strangers to its joy. 'What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' I Cor. 2:11. (413) Saddest of all words that ever fell on mortal ear are those words of doom, 'I know you not.' The fellowship of the Spirit, which you have slighted, could alone make you one with the joyous throng at the marriage feast. In that scene you cannot participate. Its light would fall on blinded eyes, its melody upon deaf ears. Its love and joy could awake no chord of gladness in the world-benumbed heart. You are shut out from heaven by your own unfitness for its companionship. We cannot be ready to meet the Lord by waking when the cry is heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom!" and then gathering up our empty lamps to have them replenished. We cannot keep Christ apart from our lives here, and yet be fitted for His companionship in heaven. (414) In the parable the wise virgins had oil in their vessels with their lamps. Their light burned with undimmed flame through the night of watching. It helped to swell the illumination for the bridegroom's honor. Shining out in the darkness, it helped to illuminate the way to the home of the bridegroom, to the marriage feast. So the followers of Christ are to shed light into the darkness of the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God's word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory--His character--is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God, to lighten the path to the Bridegroom's home, to the city of God, to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The coming of the bridegroom was at midnight--the darkest hour. So the coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth's history. The days of Noah and Lot pictured the condition of the world just before the coming of the Son of man. The Scriptures pointing forward to this time declare that Satan will work with all power and 'with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.' 2 Thess. 2:9, 10. His working is plainly revealed by the rapidly increasing darkness, the multitudinous errors, heresies, and delusions of these last days. Not only is Satan leading the world captive, but his deceptions are leavening the professed churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. The great apostasy will develop into darkness deep as midnight, impenetrable as sackcloth of hair. To God's people it will be a night of trial, a night of weeping, a night of persecution for the truth's sake. But out of that night of darkness God's light will shine. (415) He causes 'the light to shine out of darkness.' 2 Cor. 4:6. When 'the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep,' 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.' Gen. 1:2,3. So in the night of spiritual darkness, God's word goes forth, 'Let there be light.' To His people He says, 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.' Isa. 60:1. 'Behold,' says the Scripture, 'the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.' Isa. 60:2. 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. This is

the work outlined by the prophet Isaiah in the words, 'O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.' Isa. 40:9,10. Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, 'Behold your God.' **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.** (416) The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works--in words of truth and deeds of holiness. Christ, the outshining of the Father's glory, came to the world as its light. He came to represent God to men, and of Him it is written that He was anointed "with the Holy Ghost and with power," and "went about doing good." Acts 10:38. In the synagogue at Nazareth He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18, 19. This was the work He commissioned His disciples to do. 'Ye are the light of the world,' He said. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matt. 5:14, 16. (417) This is the work which the prophet Isaiah describes when he says, 'Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.' Isa. 58:7, 8. Thus in the night of spiritual darkness God's glory is to shine forth through His church in lifting up the bowed down and comforting those that mourn. All around us are heard the wails of a world's sorrow. On every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life's hardships and misery. Practical work will have far more effect than mere sermonizing. We are to give food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and shelter to the homeless. And we are called to do more than this. The wants of the soul, only the love of Christ can satisfy. If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy. The sealed fountains of earnest, Christlike love will be unsealed. (418) God calls not only for our gifts for the needy, but for our cheerful countenance, our hopeful words, our kindly handclasp. When Christ healed the sick, He laid His hands upon them. So should we come in close touch with those whom we seek to benefit. There are many from whom hope has departed. Bring back the sunshine to them. Many have lost their courage. Speak to them words of cheer. Pray for them. There are those who need the bread of life. Read to them from the word of God. Upon many is a soul sickness which no earthly balm can reach nor physician heal. Pray for these souls, bring them to Jesus. Tell them that there is a balm in Gilead and a Physician there. Light is a blessing, a universal blessing, pouring forth its treasures on a world unthankful, unholy, demoralized. So it is with the light of the Sun of Righteousness. The whole earth, wrapped as it is in the darkness of sin, and sorrow, and pain, is to be lighted with the knowledge of God's love. From no sect, rank, or class of people is the light shining from heaven's throne to be excluded. The message of hope and mercy is to be carried to the ends of the earth. Whosoever will, may reach forth and take hold of God's strength and make peace with Him, and he shall make peace. No longer are the heathen to be wrapped in midnight darkness. The gloom is to disappear before the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. The power of hell has been overcome. But no man can impart that which he himself has not received. In the work of God, humanity can originate nothing. No man can by his own effort make himself a light bearer for God. It was the golden oil emptied by the heavenly messengers into the golden tubes, to be conducted from the golden bowl

into the lamps of the sanctuary, that produced a continuous bright and shining light. It is the love of God continually transferred to man that enables him to impart light. Into the hearts of all who are united to God by faith the golden oil of love flows freely, to shine out again in good works, in real, heartfelt service for God. (419) In the great and measureless gift of the Holy Spirit are contained all of heaven's resources. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If all were willing to receive, all would become filled with His Spirit. It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love. All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts. Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Emmanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives. The indwelling of the Spirit will be shown by the outflowing of heavenly love. The divine fullness will flow through the consecrated human agent, to be given forth to others. The Sun of Righteousness has 'healing in His wings.' Mal. 4:2. So from every true disciple is to be diffused an influence for life, courage, helpfulness, and true healing. The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour. (420) Christ does not bid His followers strive to shine. He says, Let your light shine. If you have received the grace of God, the light is in you. Remove the obstructions, and the Lord's glory will be revealed. The light will shine forth to penetrate and dispel the darkness. You cannot help shining within the range of your influence. The revelation of His own glory in the form of humanity will bring heaven so near to men that the beauty adorning the inner temple will be seen in every soul in whom the Saviour dwells. Men will be captivated by the glory of an abiding Christ. And in currents of praise and thanksgiving from the many souls thus won to God, glory will flow back to the great Giver. 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.' Isa. 60:1. To those who go out to meet the Bridegroom is this message given. Christ is coming with power and great glory. He is coming with His own glory and with the glory of the Father. He is coming with all the holy angels with Him. While all the world is plunged in darkness, there will be light in every dwelling of the saints. They will catch the first light of His second appearing. The unsullied light will shine from His splendor, and Christ the Redeemer will be admired by all who have served Him. While the wicked flee from His presence, Christ's followers will rejoice. The patriarch Job, looking down to the time of Christ's second advent, said, 'Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not a stranger.' Job 19:27, margin. To His faithful followers Christ has been a daily companion and familiar friend. They have lived in close contact, in constant communion with God. Upon them the glory of the Lord has risen. In them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has been reflected. Now they rejoice in the undimmed rays of the brightness and glory of the King in His majesty. They are prepared for the communion of heaven; for they have heaven in their hearts. (421.001) With uplifted heads, with the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness shining upon them, with rejoicing that their redemption draweth nigh, they go forth to meet the Bridegroom, saying, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us.'

Isa. 25:9. 'And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. . . . And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' 'He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.' Rev. 19:6-9; 17:14.

Questions for Objectors

1. What was Satan's number one accusation against God? That the law of God could not be kept by sinful humanity. That the law was unjust. That the Law-giver was at fault for having such a faulty law.

Signs of the Times, 16 January, 1896

“Satan declared that it was impossible for the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God, and thus charged upon God a lack of wisdom and love. If they could not keep the law, then there was fault with the Lawgiver. Men who are under the control of Satan repeat these accusations against God, in asserting that men can not keep the law of God.”

Signs of the Times, 22 December, 1914

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

Ellen White, Signs of the Times, 5 February, 1894

*“At the time when sin had become a science, when the hostility of man was most violent against heaven, when rebellion struck its roots deep into the human heart, when vice was consecrated as a part of religion, when **Satan exulted in the idea that he had led men to such a state of evil that God would destroy the world, Jesus was sent into the world, not to condemn it, but, amazing grace! to save the world.** The unfallen worlds watched with intense interest to see Jehovah arise and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth, and Satan boasted that if God did do this, he would complete his plans and secure for himself the allegiance of unfallen worlds. He had arguments ready by which to cast blame upon God, and to spread his rebellion to the world's above; but at this crisis, instead of destroying the world, God sent his Son to save it. The apostle caught a glimpse of the plan, and he kindled into inspiration upon the great theme. Language cannot express his conception, but ever falls below the reality. John exclaims: 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; **therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.**' Before the coming of Christ to the world evidences abundant had been given that God loved the human race. But in the gift of Christ to a race so undeserving was demonstrated the love of God beyond all dispute. **This gift outweighed all else, showed that his love could not be measured.** The only-begotten Son of God accepts all the liabilities that fall upon the transgressor of the law, vindicates its unchangeable and holy character. The death of Christ removes every argument that Satan could bring against the precepts of Jehovah. Satan has declared that men could not enter the kingdom of heaven unless the law was abolished and a way devised by which transgressors could be reinstated into the favor of God, and made heirs of heaven. He made the claim that the law must be changed, that the reins of government must be slackened in heaven, that sin must be tolerated, and sinners pitied and saved in their sins. But every such plea was cast aside when Christ died as a*

*substitute for the sinner. **He who was made equal with God** bore the sin of the transgressor, and thereby made a channel whereby the love of God could be communicated to a fallen world, and his grace and power imparted to those who came to Christ in penitence for their sin."*

If the worst possible time did not provoke God to destroy the world, is there ever a time which is evil enough to require that God put aside the principles of His holy law? According to Ellen White, at the worst possible time of rebellion and confusion, when everyone including the inhabitants of unfallen worlds expected God to destroy everyone on the earth, God responded in love by saving the world, and not by destroying it.

2. **Are you willing to destroy faith in the Father's love and in the love of Jesus Christ for sinners, by retaining the belief that the Old Testament commands to kill heretics, were inspired by God?** It is not my intention to destroy faith in any of the words which have proceeded from the mouth of God. However, I do need to be sure just which words have actually originated with God and make a distinction between those words and those which have only been SAID to have originated with God. Jesus Himself demonstrated this problem. Should we deny His testimony in favour of the Old Testament sayings which contradict Christ's sayings and personal testimony? Does your faith in the claim that ALL the Old Testament writings are the word of God, exceed your faith that Jesus Himself is the "word of God made audible? Revelation 19:13 "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God." Christ is the spirit / character of God. Ellen White states in the Desire of Ages, p 19 "By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,--God's thought made audible." This cannot be said for Moses, Joshua, Elijah, David or any of the prophets and certainly not ALL the writings in the Bible which were repeatedly edited over the centuries. Only the Son of God is the Word of God according to the Bible and to Ellen White. He alone is God's thought made audible. By retaining the idea that all writings in the Old Testament, which have been assumed to have been inspired by God, are in fact inspired, on the basis of that traditional belief - is to place tradition over the example of Jesus Christ. The standard given us to differentiate that which is divine from that which is not divine, is clear. It is the 10 commandments which embody the character of God Himself. Anything that does not harmonise with the law of God – the character of God – does not have its origin with God – but with His enemy Satan or Satan's agents. What is preventing God's people from examining all the writings which are claimed to be 'sacred' in order to ascertain which align with the sacred standard; the law of God and which fall short of that perfect standard and are simply the traditions of men – as Isaiah 8:20 advises? The standard given us to differentiate that which is divine from that which is not divine, is clear. It is the 10 commandments which embody the character of God Himself. Anything that does not harmonise with the law of God – the character of God – does not have its origin with God – but with His enemy Satan or Satan's agents. The Christian's faith is supposed to be placed in Jesus – not in a book. Does not a God of love draw all men unto Him?

3. Who shall we believe – Jesus or the words attributed to Moses?

Jesus said to the Jews that they **had heard it said** that they should perform retributive violence –eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound and stripe for stripe" (Exodus 21:24-25) but that **He** told them to love their enemies, to pray for them, to forgive them (Matt 5). Where had the people 'heard' the instructions of retributive violence? From the Mosaic law. (Christ did not state that Moses actually wrote those words, but that the people had heard those words which were incidentally recorded in the Mosaic record as

being divinely spoken and given to Moses). Whose advice should a Christian follow? Christ's instructions – which are spirit and life - or the Old Testament instruction? Obviously one set of instructions are in harmony with the moral standard of God – the 10 commandments – and the other instructions are not in harmony with the 10 commandments. Christ's words harmonise with the great moral standard which reflects and embodies His character. The OT instructions follow a familiar, pagan standard which was also practiced by heathen countries eg Islamic Law (Sharia) under the Taliban regime. The law of retaliation (lex talionis) is carried over to Islam. The Qur'an (Koran), *Suram (chapter) 5:45 states: "And We ordained therein for them: Life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth and wounds equal for equal. But if anyone remits the retaliation by way of charity, it shall be for him an expiation. And whosoever does not judge by that which Allah has revealed, such are the Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers...)"*
http://www.americanthinker.com/articles_print.php?article_id=4671

4. On what basis do the Jews claim that the present day passages of retaliatory laws were given to Moses by God? On what evidence can they sustain that claim? Tradition – and nothing but tradition. Those retaliatory laws do not harmonise with the 10 commandments. If we are to accept that somehow those laws of violent retaliation DO harmonise with the 10 commandments and exhibit the love of Christ and demonstrate His instructions in the New Testament to love one's neighbour and enemies, then we must consider the suggestion that Mohammad was also inspired by the One True God and His Son Jesus. But is this correct? Obviously not, for it is the spirit of antichrist which would purposely injure and maim one of God's children – or His enemies. I must therefore, apply the advice of Jesus Christ to my life. What do I do with the Mosaic instruction to 'fight fire with fire?' Since it is so out of harmony with the law of love, of which Jesus said, "Hang ALL the law and the prophets," I am left with no other conclusion that to consider it as being non-genuine. I imagine such evil instruction was added to God's words – a situation about which Ellen White speaks. It seems likely that this was done for political gain by the Jewish leaders. If the Roman Catholics thought it a clever strategy to add 1 John 5:7,8 to the New Testament to support their doctrine of the trinity, isn't it conceivable that the Jewish leaders saw political value in adding to the true words of the prophets in their day? This was a problem in Isaiah's day and he instructed the people how to tell whether the prophets were actually speaking the words of God or whether they were just making a false claim of being in reception of a divine message (Isaiah 8). The same deceptive strategy (of pretending one is a prophet of God) was utilised many times in 'theocracies' eg. the Egyptian reign of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut - she ruled for 15 years by claiming that the gods made a special divine rule to permit a female to hold the office of pharaoh. In the OT, many times God was given the credit for authorising heinous crimes – which just happened to be the sinful behaviour that the Israelites wished to perform anyway. (See section in Objections re: the Amalekites).
5. Did the life of Jesus demonstrate perfectly to humanity, the completeness of the Father's character? – Yes. John 14:9-11 "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, Show us the Father? (10) Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. (11) Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else **believe me for the very works' sake**." (In other words, Jesus might have been saying, "if you can't see that I'm the divine Son of God by my character, then at least believe it because of the good works you see me doing. Those works reflect the Father's character.")

6. Did the life of Jesus show humanity how to live – perfectly – in every sphere of interaction with our neighbours – or was Christ's example somehow faulty?
7. Should humanity follow exactly in Jesus' ways? Ellen White states that 'when the character of Christ is reproduced perfectly in His people, then He will come.'
8. Didn't Jesus say that **His** words are "spirit and they are life?" Jesus is referring to "eternal life" (John 6:63). If some of the words **attributed** to Moses contradict those spoken by Jesus, which words are most likely to be at fault?
9. Was there ever a time when God says it is legal for any being in the entire universe to break even one of the precepts of His law? Did Jesus mention any exceptions? James certainly didn't. James 2:10 "“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”"
10. Is there any occasion where perhaps we might apply the same elasticity as is applied to the 6th commandment, to the 4th commandment or the 7th commandment? Is it legal, on a special occasion - 'when God commands it' - to keep Sunday holy instead of the 7th day which is expressly stated in the 10 commandments? Or is there an occasion – when God commands it – for us to commit adultery in defiance of the prohibition placed upon such immorality in the 10 commandments? Such a suggestion is outrageous. We KNOW that God will not change His law on the Sabbath for it is everlasting. We KNOW that God will not permit adultery – ever. But aren't all 10 commandments permanently binding upon all humanity? Why do Christians suppose that God's law is weak in one area and that even non-trinitarians and SDAs can accept that God is flexible regarding the 6th commandment and condones the condemnation and killing of those He came to save – even of the babies?
11. It is common for so-called theocracies to employ the death penalty to “solve” a “heretic problem” and to commit genocide. eg. Hitler claimed that god was instructing him also in his programme to rid the world of Jews. The Muslims claim that Allah told them through the holy prophet Mohammed, and it is written down in their holy book – every word which is inspired – to kill heretics for the glory of god. Was the Israelite 'theocracy' any different to Islamic theocracies operating today? Both annihilated heretics, committed genocide and employed the death penalty even on their own society's members. Is one system 'godly' and the other satanic? How can that be? Jesus said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” The fruit of both theocracies condone genocide. In contrast, the fruit of the spirit of God is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance – against such there is no law. But there is a law against genocide and torture. It is the 6th commandment of the moral law of God.
12. If God 'legalised murder,' by condoning killing in some special circumstances, then it would appear that He has watered down His immutable law to permit in certain cases, the very act He has outlawed. Did God mean, “You will not murder anyone in anger, but if you are not angry and you think it is necessary, you can end this person's probation and kill him as long as you yourself are not angry?”
13. It is impossible to murder someone without killing them. But is it possible to **deliberately** kill someone without murdering them? We are told by the legal profession that murder is intentional and often has (selfish) anger attached to it. Can a person intentionally, with pre-meditation - kill a heretic and their children – and it not be considered murder?
14. Jesus stated in Matt 5 that to even be angry with a person is to break the 6th commandment in the mind/heart. The Israelites were supposedly instructed by Moses, via God, that they were to kill heretics and their children, without mercy (Deut 7:2; 13:8). Can a sinful, human being or a saint perform a pre-meditated killing of a heretic - or a baby - without any trace of anger, unkindness, without thoughts of self-righteousness, without also any thoughts of mercy or regret? Can a

saint who carries out such an action remain sinless – with a clear conscience? Would such an act bring joy and richness in their spiritual relationship with God? Or would they wonder how a god of love could command something so horrifying as the murder of a baby?

15. If it is accepted that in the OT, God is saying that we must not accidentally kill someone, but we can do it intentionally if we decide it is absolutely necessary, then why can't this rule apply to the 144000 in the last days when the wicked will be demon-possessed? I suggest that this doctrine of 'necessary murders' reveal tremendous lack of faith in God's power to reform sinners and to protect His children against the wicked. The Israelites suffered from lack of faith, but the 144000 will not falter in faith and Christ will reproduce the Father's character in their lives. The Father's name/law/character will be in the forehead of the redeemed. They will be saved by faith in the loving character of the Father and will keep the loving laws of His government.
16. Is Jesus our perfect example? If so, where did Jesus give an example of legalised killing in His ministry? Even though serious threats were made to take Christ's life (and the crucifixion would have been considered an extreme threat), Christ Himself did not consider it an act of love or of righteousness to protect Himself. He refused to perform a 'necessary murder' of His enemies. He would not authorise the use of physical violence even if self-defence. The Messianic prophecy assured us that there was no violence in Him (Isaiah 53:9).
17. Christ told Peter not to consider physical violence (Matt 26:52). "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." Was Christ's prophecy incorrect? Are there exceptions to Christ's prediction that all who take the sword will perish with the sword?
18. In Luke's gospel, when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, the disciples even asked Him, if they should use the sword against their enemies in self defence? (Luke 22:49) Christ answered, "Suffer ye thus far." Put up even with this. Do not retaliate even though it has come to violence on their part. Was Christ's example consistent?
19. Christ had the perfect opportunity to advocate self-defence and to set humanity an example by physically attacking his enemies – by praying for His Father to send down fire to consume them. His enemies' probation was over - at least Judas Iscariot's was over – and Jesus could have put Judas "out of his misery" and killed him quickly IF such actions were in harmony with the divine manner of dealing with unrepentant sinners. However, the example Christ set was not "to fight fire with fire" or to retaliate with violence or even to act in self-defence. In all situations of personal danger, Christ submitted to His Father's will and trusted that the Father would protect Him. He instructed the disciples that He could ask His Father to send angels to hide Him or to make a way through the middle of the mob – just as His Father had done many times before to ensure the safety of His Son. Was this an example of love or stupidity? Of faith or faithlessness?
20. Can law-**breaking** somehow become legalised law-**keeping**? Or in the same manner, can **legal** actions be **illegal** or considered to be law-**breaking**?
21. If God's law commands, "Thou shalt NOT kill" are there exceptions whereby this law can be annulled? (eg. For the special situation concerning heretics?)
22. If the law is a transcript of **God's** character, then whose character does law-breaking demonstrate? If not committing adultery and not committing murder honour God, who is honoured when sinners commit fornication and murder?
23. Jesus predicted there would be a time when supposed "Christians" would kill God's real people, (whom they supposed were heretics) thinking they were honouring God. But they did these things because they didn't KNOW the Father, nor His Son. John 16:2, 3 "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that

whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. (3) And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.” Romans 8:9 states that, “if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” What is the spirit of Christ? (Gal 5:22, 23) “The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law.” Does Christ's spirit ever change? Does He ever bring forth the works of the flesh?

24. What does Paul say are the fruit of the spirit of Satan? Gal.5.19-21 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (20) Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (21) Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Shouldn't there be a section inserted in Paul's statement that reassures us that SOME evil doers will be in heaven? Perhaps Paul is required to say, “Those who do these evil works can, under certain circumstances, enter heaven, but on the condition that they they only sin and break God's law when it is 'necessary” - for example, the ancient Israelites who murdered men, women, children and infants; kidnapped women; raped them; and pillaged 'under God's express command'?”
25. Does the spirit of Jesus does change? Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”
26. Can any evil gift come from God? James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”
27. Can God, the Author of Goodness bring forth the works of the flesh? Matthew 7:18 “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” Luke 6:43 “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” James 3:12 “Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”
28. Does God only think good thoughts toward humanity? Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”
29. Is God is of one loving mind and spirit or does He have a 'bad, evil' side to His character?
30. Did Jesus only demonstrate the 'good, nice, kind, merciful' side of God's character? If so, He didn't really give humanity a true representation of His Father and He lied when He told Philip that He had shown him and us, the Father (John 14:8-10).
31. Does God participate in evil? If the violent aspects which are attributed to God in the Old Testament were valid and accurate descriptions of His character, then those same traits would have to have been demonstrated in Christ's life, because He came to show us the Father. Violent traits simply are not evidence in the life of Jesus Christ for according to the Messianic prophecy “there was no violence in Him” (Isaiah 53:9).
32. Were the perceptions of the prophets always correct? eg In the book of Jeremiah It is written many times” Thus saith Lord I will bring evil upon you.” Does God bring evil upon us? Or is it just **human** to blame God when things go wrong? (as did Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden). Isn't our reality exactly perceived, the way we believe it?
33. Jewish mentality, beliefs and perceptions of God, as recorded in the OT, have caused millions of people throughout history to reject God on this very subject point – that God commands some people to kill other people, including babies. Yet like the OT Jews, Christianity today refuses to see that you cannot harmonise the old with the new. You must be born again and understand that the Son came to show us the

Father. Why? Because the OT scribes and editors who put the oral laws to print, and formed the OT, gave a distorted view of God's character. If they already had given a perfect portrayal of God's character, why did Jesus tell these men who could recite the Torah, that they didn't know His Father nor Him? (John 8:19).

34. If you thought God told you to stone someone to death today for breaking the Sabbath etc, would you stone the person? If your answer is 'no', why not? A true Christian would base their response on, not the OT death penalty law, but on the example and teachings of Jesus because He upheld the principles of love in the 10 commandments. The only person who we have authority to kill, is the old self. If anyone should be stoned, it is self. Jesus taught us, "Judge not, pull the log out of your own eye, he who has never sinned can cast the first stone" (Matt 7:1-5; John 8:7). The words of Jesus Christ are the audible words of God. Rev.19.13 "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God."
35. It is obvious that Jesus disapproved or refused to sanction the Old Testament record in 2 Kings chapter 1, when Elijah supposedly called down fire from heaven to consume Ahab's soldiers. When the disciples wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume those who insulted Jesus by refusing Him hospitality. They referred to this OT story. Jesus refused to comment on the story, but rebuked the disciples, telling them, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:53). The way the events were recorded were not reflective or in harmony with the character life and teachings of Jesus, but of pagan gods and their attributes. Which person demonstrated that God's spirit motivated them – the violent spirit attributed to Elijah or the peaceful spirit of Jesus?
36. The wicked have and will be destroyed but not the way the majority perceive. Would God kill or destroy those for whom He was willing to die? John 10:15; Luke 9:56 "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."
37. Jesus said that it was lawful to do good, but evil to destroy. Luke 6:9 'Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?' Who is the destroyer? It is Apollyon – which is Satan - Rev 9:11. Who was a murderer from the beginning? John 8:44 Satan. Who is endeavouring to force people to break God's law? Satan. Why would Christians assist Satan by saying that sometimes, God's law can be set aside, in exceptional circumstances when it is necessary that heretics and pagans be exterminated?
38. Ellen White said that God burnt Israelite babies/children when they were sacrificed as burnt offerings. Was Ellen White correctly portraying God's character in this instance? ⁴⁷

3 Spiritual Gifts p 303

"God was a wise and compassionate lawgiver, judging all cases righteously, and without partiality. While the Israelites were in Egyptian bondage, they were surrounded with idolatry. The Egyptians had received traditions in regard to sacrificing. They did not acknowledge the existence of the God of Heaven. They sacrificed to their idol gods. With great pomp and ceremony they performed their idol worship. They erected altars to the

47 *While recognising that Ellen White was given the gift of prophecy and accepting her position as God's messenger, it is obvious that in keeping with her statement that "God has not given any one person all the light", we must consider her comments in 3SG p 303 to have been made with a true heart, but without special revelation from God on this matter. Ellen White does not claim that she "was shown" the information in vision or in special revelation, so perhaps this statement was simply her human opinion.*

*honor of their gods, and they required even their own children to pass through the fire. After they had erected their altars they required their children to leap over the altars through the fire. If they could do this without their being burned, the idol priests and people received it as an evidence that their god accepted their offerings, and favored especially the person who passed through the fiery ordeal. He was loaded with benefits, and was ever afterward greatly esteemed by all the people. He was never allowed to be punished, however aggravating might be his crimes. If another person who leaped through the fire was so unfortunate as to be burned, then his fate was fixed; for they thought that their gods were angry, and would be appeased with nothing short of the unhappy victim's life, and he was offered up as a sacrifice upon their idol altars. Even some of the children of Israel had so far degraded themselves as to practice these abominations, and **God caused the fire to kindle upon their children, whom they made to pass through the fire. They did not go to all the lengths of the heathen nations; but God deprived them of their children by causing the fire to consume them in the act of passing through it.**"*

Are we to understand that according to Ellen White, that the pagan Egyptian god more merciful and **less bloodthirsty** than the God of the Israelites? At least the god of the Egyptians permits **some** children to escape the flames. However, it appears that Ellen White believed that the One True God CAUSED the Israelites' children – ALL the Israelite children who were “passed through the fire” - to burn to death.

If Ellen White's statement is correct, (that God ensured that the Israelite's children burn to death on the pagan altars), then it inadvertently makes a dreadful attack on the character of God.

If Ellen White's statement is correct, then logic requires answers to the following questions:

- Didn't the One True God have the option of extinguishing the fire on the altar? (Yes. The same God refused to permit Satan to ignite fire on Baal's altar during Elijah's ceremony on Mt Carmel).
- Why then, did God not only permit the fire to burn all the children, but to CAUSE the fire to burn all the Israelites' children? (Answer: Jesus said that hurting children is wicked. God is not a serial child-murderer, but Satan has a record of child murder e.g. Infants in Egypt, infants in Bethlehem, child sacrifice etc.).
- Why didn't God extinguish the fire? (Answer: The parents, not God, burnt the children. God forbade child sacrifice, but when the parents disobeyed His direction, God being rejected, was not authorised to intervene to prevent their children's deaths).
- Would the One True God burn children on an altar to a pagan god?
- Would the One True God make an offering to another god? To a pagan god? It is absurd and offensive to make such accusations against the pure, holy Creator.

For all these questions, we can find the answers in Jesus' life. Jesus was not a child-murderer. Jesus would not even condone the stoning of a full-grown, sinful woman taken in adultery. It is ludicrous to believe that He would condone the burning of babies and children or in fact, that He would CAUSE the burning of children on the altar of pagan gods.

Perhaps Ellen White's words have another meaning, or if not, she clearly did not intend to speak against the One True God, whom she loved. It might be however, that her words, unknowingly implicated the Father's character as a murderer of little children.

Appendix I of *ROME AND THE BIBLE: Tracing the History of the Roman Catholic Church and Its Persecution of the Bible and of Bible Believers* by David Cloud. This excellent 184 page resource can be obtained from Way of Life Literature, Bible Baptist Church, Oak Harbor, WA at 360-675-8311. Click [here](#) to go to the Literature Catalog for Way of Life.

Directory for the Inquisitors

The following is from the *Directorium Inquisitorum*, published in Rome, October 1584, by the command of the Cardinals Inquisitors General; dedicated to Pope Gregory XIII; translation by J.P. Callender, *Illustrations of Popery*, New York, 1838. Numbers have been added for index referencing.

1. "All believers in Christ, by the necessity of salvation, are subject to the Roman Pontiff, who carries the two swords, and judges all, but he is judged by no man. We declare, say, define, and pronounce, that subjection to the Roman Pontiff is necessary to salvation" (pp, 34,35).
2. **"He is a heretic who does not believe what the Roman Hierarchy teaches. A heretic merits the pains of fire. By the Gospel, the canons, civil law, and custom, heretics must be burned"** (pp. 148,169).
3. **"He is a heretic who deviates from any article of faith"** (p. 143).
4. **"Confessors must not absolve those who keep books which are condemned.. He who writes books of heresy shall be adjudged a heretic. He who retains prohibited books shall be deemed a favourer of heretics"** (pp. 92,93).
5. "They who bury persons knowing them to be excommunicated, or their receivers, defenders, or favourers, shall not be absolved unless they dig up the corpse; and the place shall be deprived of the usual immunities of sepulture" (p. 104).
6. "A heretic may be accused and condemned after death" (p. 146).
7. **"The property of heretics after their death shall be seized"** (p. 151).
8. "For the suspicion alone of heresy, purgation is demanded" (p. 156).
9. "Magistrates who refuse to take the oath for defence of the faith, shall be suspected of heresy. It must be required of temporal lords to expel heretics. **The church may demand the aid of the secular power against both things and persons"** (p. 159,176).
10. **"Wars may be commenced by the authority of the church. Indulgences for the remission of all sin belong to those who are signed with the cross for the persecution of heretics"** (p. 160).
11. "The Pope can enact new articles of faith. The definitions of Popes and Councils are to be received as infallible" (p. 168).
12. **"Every individual may kill a heretic"** (p. 175).
13. **"All persons may attack any rebels to the church, and despoil them of their wealth; and slay them, and bum their houses and cities"** (pp. 176,177).
14. **"Persons who betray heretics shall be rewarded. But Priests who give the sacrament or burial to heretics shall be excommunicated"** (p. 178).

15. "They who favour their relatives who are heretics, shall not receive for that cause any milder punishment" (p. 180). "The penalty of perpetual incarceration may be mitigated by the Inquisitors" (p. 181).
16. "Those who are subject to a master or governor, or prince, who has become a heretic, are released from their fidelity. A wife may separate herself from her excommunicated or heretical husband. **Children of heretics are discharged from parental authority**" (p. 182).
17. "Heretics may be forced to profess the Roman faith" (p. 193),
18. "The crime of heresy is not extinguished by death" (p. 196).
19. "The testimony of a heretic is admitted on behalf of a Papist, but not against him" (p.198).
20. **"A whole city must be burnt on account of the heretics who live in it. Whoever pleases may seize and kill any heretics"** (p. 199).
21. "Witnesses in a cause of heresy may be forced to bear testimony, and they sin mortally if they abscond" (p. 204).
22. **"A heretic, as he sins in all places, may everywhere be judged"** (p. 207).
23. "A person contracting marriage with a heretic shall be punished, because it is favouring a heretic" (p. 210).
24. **"Heretics must be sought after, and be corrected or exterminated. Heretics enjoy no privileges in law or equity"** (p. 212).
25. "The goods of heretics are to be considered as confiscated from the perpetration of the crime. All alienations of property by heretics before their condemnation are invalid. Inquisitors are not bound to restore the price of the property which is seized in the hands of those who purchased from heretics" (p. 213).
26. **"Prelates or Inquisitors may torture witnesses to obtain the truth"** (p. 218).
27. This listing can be found in Appendix I of "Rome and the Bible," by David Cloud, Way of Life Literature, Oak Harbor, WA. 98277.
28. **"The Pope has power over infidels. The church may make war with infidels"** (p. 352).
29. "Monks and Priests who contract matrimony shall be suspected of heresy" (p. 367).
30. "Those who are strongly suspected are to be reputed as heretics" (p. 376). "He who does not inform against heretics shall be deemed as suspected" (p. 383).
31. "He who marries a person unbaptized, and deserts her to marry a baptized woman, is not guilty of bigamy" (p. 383).
32. "Inquisitors are not bound to give a reason to Prelates concerning things appertaining to their office" (p. 542).
33. "An Inquisitor and his associate may mutually absolve each other from excommunication" (p. 553).
34. "An Inquisitor may force the governors of cities to swear that they will defend the church against heretics" (p. 560).

35. "An Inquisitor may proceed against temporal lords who deny the assistance required by him, or who do not obey him as they ought" (p. 562).
36. "Inquisitors, to seize heretics or their favourers, may demand the aid of the civil authority" (p. 585).
37. "Inquisitors may have a prison for the guilty, and for those who are accused to them, there to be detained or punished" (p. 585).
38. **"Prelates and Inquisitors may put any persons to the question by torture" (P. 591).**
39. "It is laudable to torture those of every class who are guilty of heresy. Common fame and one witness are sufficient to justify the torture. Common fame alone, or one witness alone, authorizes the torture" (pp. 594-599).
40. "Inquisitors may coerce witnesses to swear that they will testify to the truth, and should frequently examine them" (p. 600).
41. "Inquisitors may lawfully admit perjured persons to testify and act in cases concerning the faith" (p. 605).
42. "Inquisitors may lawfully receive infamous persons, and criminals, or servants against their masters, both to act and give evidence in causes respecting the faith" (p. 606).
43. "Inquisitors may allow heretics to witness against heretics, but not for them" (p. 612).
44. "Inquisitors may torture witnesses to obtain the truth; and punish them if they have given false evidence" (p. 622).
45. "Inquisitors may cite and coerce the attendance of witnesses, and also persons charged with heretical pravity in different dioceses" (p. 626).
46. "Inquisitors must not publish the names of informers, witnesses, and accusers" (p. 627).
47. "Prelates and Inquisitors are bound to force those who are suspected to abjure the heresy imputed to them" (p. 637).
48. "Penitent heretics may be condemned to perpetual imprisonment" (p. 641).
49. "Inquisitors may provide for their own expenditures, and the salaries of their officers, from the property of heretics" (p. 652).
50. **"Prelates or Inquisitors may confiscate the property of all impenitent heretics, or of persons relapsed" (p. 662).**
51. "Prelates and Inquisitors must deprive heretics, and all who believe, receive, defend, and favour them, and their sons to the second generation of every ecclesiastical benefice and public office" (p. 669).
52. "All persons, who are bound by any debt of homage or fidelity, or any other covenant, or contract, however strongly made, to any person who has manifestly fallen into heresy, are not held to fulfil it, but are totally absolved from it" (p. 675).
53. **"Inquisitors enjoy the benefits of a plenary indulgence at all times in life, and in death" (p. 679).**