

# The Basic Controversy in the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan

PART ONE OF THREE

*A warfare has been fought between Christ and Satan for over six thousand years. We call it the "great controversy." It is urgent that we understand the BASIC ISSUE in that age-long argument, so that we can place ourselves on God's side of the matter. It is only by a correct understanding of the underlying issue, that we will be able to resolutely step forward and boldly defend God's side in the controversy.*

We are not here referring to the book, *Great Controversy*, although it has the same name. **This is about the major debated issue—fought between heavenly powers and demons—in the life of every person who is born into this world.**

Here is a statement discussing the importance of this:

"The student should learn to view the Word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme—of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. **He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for the supremacy,** and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how **this controversy enters into every phase of human experience;** how **in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives;** and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found."—*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, 462.

The five large volumes of the *Conflict of the Ages Series* outline the history of that great controversy. In fact, that is why those books are called the *Conflict of the Ages Series*; they explain the conflict, or controversy, between Christ and Satan. The phrase, "the conflict of the ages," is a synonym for "the great controversy."

Let us turn to the first of these five books: *Patriarchs and Prophets*. The book opens with a descrip-

tion of the character of God and Christ. Then on the second page of the first chapter of the book, we are told this:

"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—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and **to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.**"—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34.

In the *Conflict Series*, basic principles are discussed. **Because they are God's principles, they have been in effect throughout eternity—and they are in effect today.**

**Those divine principles were not abolished—or even temporarily set aside—when Christ died on Calvary.** The plan of redemption is keyed to these principles.

"**From the opening of the great controversy it has been Satan's purpose to misrepresent God's character and to excite rebellion against His law,** and this work appears to be crowned with success. The multitudes give ear to Satan's deceptions and set themselves against God. But amid the working of evil, God's purposes move steadily forward to their accomplishment; to all created intelligences He is making manifest His justice and benevolence.

"**Through Satan's temptations the whole human race have become transgressors of God's law, but by the sacrifice of His Son a way is opened whereby they may return to God. Through the grace of Christ they may be enabled to render obedience to the Father's law.** Thus in every age, from the midst of apostasy and rebellion, God gathers out a people that are true to Him—a people 'in whose heart is His law.'" Isaiah 51:7.

"It was by deception that Satan seduced angels; thus he has in all ages carried forward his work among men, and he will continue this policy to the last. **Should he openly profess to be warring against God and His law, men would beware; but he disguises himself, and mixes truth with error.** The most dangerous falsehoods are those that are mingled with truth. It is thus that errors are re-

This improved and enlarged tract set replaces WM-1173-1174, which was shorter and defectively printed.

ceived that captivate and ruin the soul. By this means Satan carries the world with him. But a day is coming when his triumph will be forever ended.

**“God’s dealings with rebellion will result in fully unmasking the work that has so long been carried on under cover. The results of Satan’s rule, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, will be laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The law of God will stand fully vindicated.** It will be seen that all the dealings of God have been conducted with reference to the eternal good of His people, and the good of all the worlds that He has created. **Satan himself, in the presence of the witnessing universe, will confess the justice of God’s government and the righteousness of His law.”**—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 338-339.

**But, just now, we are still in the midst of the controversy; and God asks that we obey His laws.** We cannot be happy unless we do this. Those around us cannot be happy unless we do it. Because Adam sinned, his descendants have a fallen nature. But, because of the example of Christ’s earthly life, His sacrificial death on the cross, and His mediation in the heavenly sanctuary, we can, by His grace, be enabled to render that voluntary obedience. Yet, in order to do it, we must live in moment-by-moment surrender to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master.

**In heaven, Satan declared that created beings need not or could not obey God.** Those angels who accepted Satan’s lie were expelled with him. On earth, that controversy has continued. **For thousands of years, men and women have been told that they need not do what God has said.** They do not have to obey His moral law, His physical laws, or His health laws.

**Satan states this lie in one of six ways,** according to the temperament and background of the person he is trying to deceive:

**1 - There is no God, so we need not obey Him.**

*Example:* There is no God to be obeyed: Western modernist and scientific culture.

**2 - We do not need to obey what God has commanded.**

*Examples:* There is nothing that needs to be obeyed, except tribal superstitions and the sayings of local witch doctors: hinduism, American Indian culture, South-of-Sahara African cultures, etc. / We are saved by grace and it would be wrong to try to obey God’s laws; for they have been “done away with”: Modern Protestantism.

**3 - We cannot obey what God had has told us to do.**

*Examples:* No one can obey except those who are the “elect” and predestined to be saved. No one has ever actually obeyed, except a hundred or so “saints” (according to Roman Catholicism).

**4 - We can obey God’s laws in our own strength;**

but, in the process, we will invent more rules to be obeyed—which we consider more important.

*Examples:* Judaism, Roman Catholicism, etc. / Speaking in tongues: Pentecostalism.

**5 - We can improve on God’s laws, so we will change them.**

*Examples:* Sundaykeeping in Roman Catholicism and modern Protestantism.

**6 - We ourselves are god or equal to Him; so we are above all law.**

*Examples:* Satan’s temptation of Eve in the Garden, in Genesis 3 / Papal claims: Roman Catholicism.

A chapter which closely parallels the first chapter of *Patriarchs and Prophets* is chapter 29 of *Great Controversy*, entitled the *Origin of Evil* (pages 492-504). Reading through that chapter, we discovered that **the basic techniques and errors used by Satan to confuse and capture the angels in heaven—are the very same devices he presents today in our world.** Rebellion against God and His holy Ten Commandment law seems to be in the very air we breathe.

**This rebellion has even entered our own denomination through the New Theology** (a mixture of modern Protestant errors which our Bible teachers learn in the universities and Protestant seminaries where they obtain their doctorates).

**But God and His principles do not change; neither does His law, nor our responsibility to obey it.**

Let us examine several additional statements from the *Origin of Evil* chapter, which surveys the working out of the great controversy.

**“The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles** of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.

“But there was one that chose to pervert this freedom. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven.”—*Great Controversy*, 493.

It is only in obedience to His laws that we can be happy and in harmony with our heavenly Father. **When Lucifer first became discontented, self-exalted, and jealous of Christ, the eternal, unchanging nature of the law was explained to him.**

“A note of discord now marred the celestial harmonies. The service and exaltation of self, contrary to the Creator’s plan, awakened forebodings of evil in minds to whom God’s glory was supreme. The heavenly councils pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the good-

ness, and the justice of the Creator, **and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law.** God Himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker, and bring ruin upon himself.”—*Great Controversy*, 494-495.

**By setting aside His law, men are still bringing ruin upon themselves.**

The next reference to God’s law in this chapter is startling in its application to modern apostate Protestantism and the New Theology advocates in our own ranks:

“**Working with mysterious secrecy,** and for a time concealing his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God, **he endeavored to excite dissatisfaction concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that they imposed an unnecessary restraint.** Since their natures were holy, he urged that the angels should obey the dictates of their own will.”—*Great Controversy*, 495.

Lucifer’s real purpose was self-exaltation. **Men today want to be able to continue indulging their cherished sins while calling the process “Christianity.”** According to modern apostate teachings, the death of Christ abolished the need for mankind to obey God’s law. **It is brazenly taught that men can obey the dictates of their own will—and still be saved. According to the new vocabulary, to obey God is “legalism”; to do as you please is “grace.”**

We are told that **none of the created beings in the universe understood the terrible things which would result from setting aside the law of God.**

“Until fully developed, sin would not appear the evil thing it was. Heretofore it had had no place in the universe of God, and holy beings had no conception of its nature and malignity. They could not discern the terrible consequences that would result from setting aside the divine law.”—*Great Controversy*, 497.

**Many professed Christians today do not discern it either. They imagine they can sin with impunity; for “Calvary covers it all.”** But, ere long, they will find they have made a great mistake.

**These half-converted Christians want an excuse for their sins, by devising comforting theories that they will go to heaven while indulging their appetites and passions.** The excuse they offer is similar to the one which Lucifer presented in heaven:

“When he urged that changes be made in the order and laws of God’s government, it was under the pretense that these were necessary in order to preserve harmony in heaven.”—*Great Controversy*, 498.

**Even the loyal angels, who loved to serve and obey God, had no inkling of the horrors which would result from disobedience to God’s law.**

“Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan’s existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve.”—*Desire of Ages*, 761.

“At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God’s goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe.”—*Desire of Ages*, 764.

**But when the controversy will reach its end, all will understand.**

“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.”—*Desire of Ages*, 764.

Two self-evident facts are these: God created our world and all the creatures within it. We should serve and obey our Creator. No truths can be more obvious.

Unfortunately, **these self-styled “theologians” dare to claim that the law of God is faulty and cannot be kept; and that God Himself is at fault if He requires His creatures to keep such a law.** The implication is that God is deceptive; for He requires obedience from His creatures—while from the beginning knowing that it cannot be kept. It is claimed that God never provided a means by which fallen humanity could obey the law. Lastly, God’s Word is said to be at fault; for it declares that He saves men from sin—while actually saving men in sin.

Please keep this in mind, for it is important. **When we accept the error that we need not or cannot implicitly obey God’s Word, we declare that God is unreliable, His Word untrustworthy, and His law faulty!**

But, in truth, the fault is not with God’s law, but with sin-loving people who prefer sin-accommodating teachings to the plain truths of Scripture. **Because men enjoy sin, they invent doctrinal errors, so they can continue sinning.**

“In His dealing with sin, God could employ only righteousness and truth. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. **He had sought to falsify the Word of God and had misrepresented**

**His plan of government** before the angels, **claiming that God was not just in laying laws and rules** upon the inhabitants of heaven; that in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, He was seeking merely the exaltation of Himself. Therefore **it must be demonstrated before the inhabitants of heaven, as well as of all the worlds, that God's government was just, His law perfect.**—*Great Controversy, 498.*

**We live in a world in rebellion against God. The problem is with men's heart, not with God's character or His law.** In order to excuse their sins, men are even willing to slander God and the rules He has made to govern His creatures.

**By their false teachings, they imply that God would do wrong in requiring obedience to any laws.** Their theories suggest that God is unfair in His dealings with men, that He is unjust to impose such laws, that He is well-aware that the laws He has commanded cannot possibly be kept, and that He plans to burn in hellfire all who try to keep them.

“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 that 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.”—*Review, May 28, 1901.*

**In reality, the rebellion by Christian apostates in our own time is only part of the age-long warfare of Satan against God's law.**

“Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. **He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts.** The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences.”—*Desire of Ages, 24.*

**SIN is a thousand variations on the theme of selfishness, and always results in self-destruction.** But God's LAW is holy, just, and good—and obedience to it, through the enabling grace of Christ, is our only safety and means of happiness.

**All false religions are founded on Satan's basic charge, that it is all right to sin. The devil turns everything around; he calls right “wrong” and wrong “right”!** He tries to point the signpost to heaven

in the opposite direction, so that mankind will take the wrong pathway and go to perdition. He is determined to eradicate God's law from the minds of created beings.

“In the beginning, God gave His law to mankind as a means of attaining happiness and eternal life. **Satan's only hope of thwarting the purpose of God is to lead men and women to disobey this law, and his constant effort has been to misrepresent its teachings and belittle its importance.** His master stroke has been an attempt to change the law itself, so as to lead men to violate its precepts while professing to obey it.

“**One writer has likened the attempt to change the law of God to an ancient mischievous practice of turning in a wrong direction a signpost erected at an important junction** where two roads met. The perplexity and hardship which this practice often caused was great.

“A signpost was erected by God for those journeying through this world. **One arm of this signpost pointed out willing obedience to the Creator as the road to felicity and life,** while the other arm indicated disobedience as the path to misery and death. The way to happiness was as clearly defined as was the way to the city of refuge under the Jewish dispensation. But in an evil hour for our race, the great enemy of all good turned the signpost around, and multitudes have mistaken the way.”—*Prophets and Kings, 178-179.*

**From the very beginning, the great controversy has been fought over whether God's creatures need to obey Him.**

“To the very close of the controversy in heaven the great usurper continued to justify himself. When it was announced that with all his sympathizers he must be expelled from the abodes of bliss, then the rebel leader boldly avowed his contempt for the Creator's law. **He reiterated his claim that angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right. He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law;** that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence.”—*Great Controversy, 499.*

“**In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed,** that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. **When men broke**

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**the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed;** man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner."—*Desire of Ages*, 761.

"From the beginning, it has been the special doctrine of the adversary of God and man, that the law of God was faulty and objectionable. He has ever represented the royal law of liberty as oppressive and unendurable. He has denoted it 'a yoke of bondage.' He has declared that it was impossible for man to keep the precepts of Jehovah. This has been, and still is, the work of Satan."—*Review*, July 31, 1888.

**Satan carried the great controversy over God's law down to our own planet.** Cast down to the earth, Satan instilled in the hearts of men his stubborn rebellion against the principles of heaven.

"With one accord, Satan and his host threw the blame of their rebellion wholly upon Christ, declaring that if they had not been reproved, they would never have rebelled. Thus **stubborn and defiant in their disloyalty, seeking vainly to overthrow the government of God**, yet blasphemously claiming to be themselves the innocent victims of oppressive power, the archrebel and all his sympathizers were at last banished from heaven.

"The same spirit that prompted rebellion in heaven still inspires rebellion on earth. Satan has continued with men the same policy which he pursued with the angels. **His spirit now reigns in the children of disobedience. Like him they seek to break down the restraints of the law of God and promise men liberty through transgression of its precepts.** Reproof of sin still arouses the spirit of hatred and resistance. When God's messages of warning are brought home to the conscience, **Satan leads men to justify themselves and to seek the sympathy of others in their course of sin.** Instead of correcting their errors, they excite indignation against the reprover, as if he were the sole cause of difficulty. From the days of righteous Abel to our own time such is the spirit which has been displayed toward those who dare to condemn sin.

"By the same misrepresentation of the character of God as he had practiced in heaven, causing Him

to be regarded as severe and tyrannical, Satan induced man to sin. And having succeeded thus far, **he declared that God's unjust restrictions had led to man's fall**, as they had led to his own rebellion."—*Great Controversy*, 499-500.

To excuse their ongoing wickedness and win the sympathy of others, **Satan and his followers declare that God, His law, and His inspired Word (which contains His commands) are unreliable or not obeyable.**

**God's plan is to justify the sinner and take sin away from his life; Satan's plan is to justify sin and give humanity clever reasons why they should continue indulging it.**

"**The discord which his own course had caused in heaven, Satan charged upon the law and government of God.** All evil he declared to be the result of the divine administration. He claimed that it was his own object to improve upon the statutes of Jehovah. Therefore it was necessary that he should demonstrate the nature of his claims, and show the working out of his proposed changes in the divine law. His own work must condemn him. Satan had claimed from the first that he was not in rebellion. The whole universe must see the deceiver unmasked."—*Great Controversy*, 498.

**It was necessary for Satan to be given time; so that everyone could clearly see the devastating fruit of his strange, new theology.**

"For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages Satan must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, **that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might forever be placed beyond all question.**"—*Great Controversy*, 499.

**His rebellion would be a perpetual lesson to the universe throughout all future eternity.**

"Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. **The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority.** It would testify that **with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made.** Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgres-

sion, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments.”—*Great Controversy*, 499.

**Satan was determined to wrest our world from the hand of God.** In order to accomplish that objective he resorted to the same lie he had used to overcome legions of angels in heaven. But the Father and the Son were determined to save man.

**“On this earth Satan sought to carry forward the work that he began in heaven. He declared that man could not obey the law of God . . . The Son of God, heaven’s glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. He entered into a covenant with God to save man, and to vindicate His Father’s character as expressed in the law. He came to the earth in the form of man to refute Satan’s lie, that God had given a law which man could not keep.”**—*Signs*, July 23, 1902.

Satan hoped to yet prove to the universe that his lies about God’s laws were true.

**“Satan declared that he would prove to the worlds which God has created, and to the heavenly intelligences, that it was an impossibility to keep the law of God.”**—*Review*, September 3, 1901.

Satan’s plan of action was simple enough. He told men that they could not obey God’s requirements. **Whatever the excuse is that men may offer, by accepting his lie and yielding to sin—they agree with the devil and take their stand on his side.**

Then Satan taunts angels and God with the sins of men, declaring he is right after all. *Remember that, the next time you are tempted to sin.*

“The plan of Satan was by lying philosophies to widen the breach that existed between God and man. **He argued that man could not keep the law of God.**”—*Signs*, March 7, 1895.

“Satan was urging upon men the belief that there was no reward for the righteous or punishment for the wicked, and **that it was impossible for men to obey the divine statutes.**”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 88.

**The more men sinned, the more Satan gloated.** Their disloyalty to Heaven he used as ammunition in his campaign to prove that God was unjust and cruel.

“Satan had represented Him [God] to man as arbitrary, stern, and unforgiving. All the misery and suffering he had brought upon man, he charged to God. **He declared that man could not keep the law, and that God was arbitrary and cruel in demanding of him something that he could not do.**”—*Youth’s Instructor*, February 22, 1900.

When Adam sinned, Satan rejoiced.

**“Satan, the fallen angel, had declared that no man could keep God’s law,** and he pointed to the disobedience of Adam as proving the declaration true.”—*Signs*, April 10, 1893.

“Satan had pointed to Adam’s sin as **proof that God’s law was unjust, and could not be obeyed.**”—

*Desire of Ages*, 117.

Whose side are you on? **If you do not choose God’s side of obedience, you belong to Satan by default.**

**“Declaring that no human-being can keep the law of God’s kingdom, he [Satan] claims all men as his subjects.”**—*Signs*, June 10, 1903.

**Satan had planned to separate the human race from God.**

**“The very first effort of Satan to overthrow God’s law—undertaken among the sinless inhabitants of heaven—seemed for a time to be crowned with success.** A vast number of the angels were seduced; but Satan’s apparent triumph resulted in defeat and loss, separation from God, and banishment from heaven.

**“When the conflict was renewed upon the earth, Satan again won a seeming advantage. By transgression, man became his captive, and man’s kingdom also was betrayed into the hands of the archrebel.** Now the way seemed open for Satan to establish an independent kingdom, and to defy the authority of God and His Son. **But the plan of salvation made it possible for man again to be brought into harmony with God, and to render obedience to His law,** and for both man and the earth to be finally redeemed from the power of the wicked one.

“Again Satan was defeated, and again he resorted to deception, in the hope of converting his defeat into a victory. **To stir up rebellion in the fallen race, he now represented God as unjust in having permitted man to transgress His law.** ‘Why,’ said the artful tempter, ‘when God knew what would be the result, did He permit man to be placed on trial, to sin, and bring in misery and death?’ And the children of Adam, forgetful of the long-suffering mercy that had granted man another trial, regardless of the amazing, the awful sacrifice which his rebellion had cost the King of heaven, gave ear to the tempter, and murmured against the only Being who could save them from the destructive power of Satan.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 331.

**The life of Cain** witnessed to the terrible evils which would result from standing on Satan’s side of the great controversy.

“In sparing the life of the first murderer, God presented before the whole universe a lesson bearing upon the great controversy. The dark history of Cain and his descendants was an illustration of what would have been the result of permitting the sinner to live on forever, to carry out his rebellion against God. The forbearance of God only rendered the wicked more bold and defiant in their iniquity.

“Fifteen centuries after the sentence pronounced upon Cain, the universe witnessed the fruition of his influence and example, in the crime and pollution that flooded the earth. **It was made manifest that the sentence of death pronounced upon the**

**fallen race for the transgression of God's law was both just and merciful.**

**"The longer men lived in sin, the more abandoned they became.** The divine sentence cutting short a career of unbridled iniquity, and freeing the world from the influence of those who had become hardened in rebellion, was a blessing rather than a curse."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 78.

But the life of Abel testified to the truth that God had provided a means whereby men could obey His law. **By his conduct, Abel honored God. Will you and I covenant with God to honor Him also?**

**"The holy life of Abel testified against Satan's claim that it is impossible for man to keep God's law.** When Cain, moved by the spirit of the wicked one, saw that he could not control Abel, he was so enraged that he destroyed his life. And **wherever there are any who will stand in vindication of the righteousness of the law of God, the same spirit will be manifested against them.** It is the spirit that through all the ages has set up the stake and kindled the burning pile for the disciples of Christ. But the cruelties heaped upon the follower of Jesus are instigated by Satan and his hosts because they cannot force him to submit to their control. It is the rage of a vanquished foe. Every martyr of Jesus has died a conqueror."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 77.

**Enoch was another outstanding example that, through the grace of Christ, men could obey all the requirements of Heaven.**

**"Now God would demonstrate to the universe the falsity of Satan's charge that men could not keep God's law.** He would demonstrate that, though man had sinned, he could so relate himself to God that he would have the mind and spirit of God. This holy man [Enoch] was selected to denounce the wickedness of the world, and **to give evidence that man can keep the law.**"—*Review*, April 15, 1909.

**Job's experience is yet another example of a man who was willing to stand on God's side of the great controversy—even though it might bring great personal suffering.**

"Very early in the history of the world is given the life-record of one over whom this controversy of Satan's was waged. Of Job, the patriarch of Uz, the testimony of the Searcher of hearts was, 'There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.'"—*Education*, 155.

**In the centuries which followed, nearly every one chose a few, brief years enjoying the toys Satan dangled before their eyes instead of eternal life with God.**

**God's plan was that mankind would be free to choose to obey. Yet, after Adam's time, almost the whole world went into apostasy.**

"There are thousands today echoing the same rebellious complaint against God. They do not see

that to deprive man of the freedom of choice would be to rob him of his prerogative as an intelligent being, and make him a mere automaton. **It is not God's purpose to coerce the will.** Man was created a free moral agent. Like the inhabitants of all other worlds, he must be subjected to the test of obedience; but he is never brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity. **No temptation or trial is permitted to come to him which he is unable to resist.** God made such ample provision that man need never have been defeated in the conflict with Satan.

**"As men increased upon the earth, almost the whole world joined the ranks of rebellion.** Once more Satan seemed to have gained the victory. But omnipotent power again cut short the working of iniquity, and **the earth was cleansed by the Flood from its moral pollution.**"—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 331-332.

**Following the miraculous deliverance from Egypt, God brought His people to Sinai; so He could give them His holy law in written form.**

**"During the bondage in Egypt many of the Israelites had, to a great extent, lost the knowledge of God's law,** and had mingled its precepts with heathen customs and traditions. **God brought them to Sinai, and there with His own voice declared His law.**

"Satan and evil angels were on the ground. **Even while God was proclaiming His law to His people, Satan was plotting to tempt them to sin.** This people whom God had chosen, he would wrench away, in the very face of Heaven."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 334.

The daring plan of Satan was astounding.

**"At the very foot of Sinai, Satan began to execute his plans for overthrowing the law of God, thus carrying forward the same work he had begun in heaven.** During the forty days while Moses was in the mount with God, Satan was busy exciting doubt, apostasy, and rebellion."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 335.

**"By leading Israel to this daring insult and blasphemy to Jehovah, Satan had planned to cause their ruin.** Since they had proved themselves to be so utterly degraded, so lost to all sense of the privileges and blessings that God had offered them, and to their own solemn and repeated pledges of loyalty, the Lord would, he believed, divorce them from Himself and devote them to destruction. Thus would be secured the extinction of the seed of Abraham, that seed of promise that was to preserve the knowledge of the living God, and through whom He was to come—the true Seed, that was to conquer Satan."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 335.

**Because of what happened at Sinai, the entire universe better understood the purposes of Satan.**

"The whole universe had been witness to the scenes at Sinai. **In the working out of the two ad-**

ministrations was seen the contrast between the government of God and that of Satan. Again the sinless inhabitants of other worlds beheld the results of Satan's apostasy, and the kind of government he would have established in heaven had he been permitted to bear sway."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 335-336.

Then the Sanctuary was given to mankind. The Sanctuary service was given to explain the principles of the great controversy to the people.

"In patriarchal times the sacrificial offerings connected with divine worship constituted a perpetual reminder of the coming of a Saviour, and thus it was with the entire ritual of the sanctuary services throughout Israel's history. In the ministration of the tabernacle, and of the temple that afterward took its place, the people were taught each day, by means of types and shadows, the great truths relative to the advent of Christ as Redeemer, Priest, and King; and once each year **their minds were carried forward to the closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan**, the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners."—*Prophets and Kings*, 684-685.

Unfortunately, Israel's willingness to indulge in sin was another triumph for the devil. **Satan declared that even God's own called-out people could not keep the law which had been entrusted to them to reveal to the world.**

**But what a lesson is this for our denomination today!** Increasingly, our people are buying the lie that they cannot and need not obey God's holy law. But **the fault lies, not with God's rules, but with our own stubborn wills. In the lives of far too many, by their actions they declare that they will not obey!**

"He [Satan] hoped to establish the claim put forth when he rebelled in heaven,—that the requirements of God were unjust, and could not be obeyed. **Even Israel, he declared, did not keep the law.**"—*Desire of Ages* 29.

The devil proudly declared that he would bring the entire world under his control.

But then God sent His Son.

"Satan had made the boast that he would gather the world under his banner of rebellion. **He declared that man could not keep the law of God. Christ came to prove this assertion false.**"—*Signs*, August 9, 1905.

The life and death of Christ forever established the unselfishness of God and the immutability of His sacred precepts. **Christ's life, death, and mediation prove that the law cannot be set aside; but that, instead, God Himself would make the supreme sac-**

**rifice to enable mankind to keep the law** which Adam broke in Eden.

"In His divine plan of salvation, God gave His only begotten Son, **that every voice may be silent upon the point that it is not possible for humanity to keep the law of God.** In Christ, divinity and humanity bore every test of temptation; in Him, humanity is exalted and honored. In Christ, man is privileged to become a partaker of the divine nature."—*Review*, November 29, 1898.

Christ showed that Satan's accusations were false.

"[Christ said:] Satan has declared that man cannot keep the law. **I will show that his statement is false, that man can keep the law.**"—*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 18, 133.

"[Christ] came to this world to live the law in humanity, that Satan's charge that man cannot keep the law might be demonstrated as false."—*Signs*, April 7, 1898.

By His life, death, and ministry in heaven's Sanctuary, Christ made it possible for all the sons and daughters of Adam to obey God's holy precepts.

**"Satan declared that human beings could not keep the law. Christ has proved this statement false."**—*Review*, September 24, 1901.

**"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 cannot 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."—*Signs*, January 16, 1896.

Christ vindicated the character of God and the veracity of His law.

"By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and **that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted.** God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love."—*Desire of Ages*, 762.

**Throughout His life, Christ obeyed the law and showed that, by faith in Him, we can obey it also.**

"Christ came to vindicate the sacred claims of the law. He came to live a life of obedience to its requirements and **thus prove the falsity of the charge made by Satan** that it is impossible for man to keep the law of God."—*8 Testimonies*, 207-208.

**At Calvary, the entire universe saw what Satan's**



# The Basic Controversy in the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan

**PART THREE  
OF THREE**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

**proposed “changes in the government” would result in.**

“Now the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. He had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he ruled the children of men, who were under his power, he would have manifested had he been permitted to control the inhabitants of heaven. **He had claimed that the transgression of God’s law would bring liberty and exaltation; but it was seen to result in bondage and degradation.**

“**Satan’s lying charges against the divine character and government appeared in their true light.** He had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, and had declared that, while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice. Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make; for ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.’ 2 Corinthians 5:19. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled Himself and become obedient unto death.

“God had manifested His abhorrence of the principles of rebellion. All heaven saw His justice revealed, both in the condemnation of Satan and in the redemption of man. **Lucifer had declared that if the law of God was changeless,** and its penalty could not be remitted, every transgressor must be forever debarred from the Creator’s favor. He had claimed that the sinful race were placed beyond redemption and were therefore his rightful prey.

“But the death of Christ was an argument in man’s behalf that could not be overthrown. **The penalty of the law fell upon Him who was equal with God,** and man was free to accept the righteousness of Christ and by a life of penitence and humiliation to triumph, as the Son of God had triumphed, over the power of Satan. Thus God is just and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.”—*Great Controversy*, 502-503.

**Christ’s perfect obedience fully vindicated His Father’s law and demonstrated that, trusting to His strength, man can also keep it.**

“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.**—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, 314.

**Christ came to give us moral power to obey a perfect, unchanging, unchangable law.**

“Christ came to give moral power to man; to elevate, ennoble, and strengthen him. **He came to prove the falsity of Satan’s charge that God had made a law which man could not keep.** While possessing man’s nature, Christ kept the Ten Commandments. Thus **He proved to the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds and to human beings that it is possible for man perfectly to obey the law. He vindicated God’s justice in demanding obedience to His law.** Those who accept Christ as their Saviour, becoming partakers of the divine nature, are enabled to follow His example of obedience to every divine precept.”—*Signs*, May 14, 1902.

**It was necessary that Christ take our fallen nature,** so that He could be tempted in every point on which we are tempted—yet without sinning;—to enable us to overcome, in His strength, just as He had done, relying on His Father for strength. Christ took our nature and overcame—**to give us power to overcome sin and obey the law in the same nature.**

There are literally hundreds of passages which confirm this. Here are three of them:

“**It was necessary that Christ should take upon Him our nature, in order to prove the falsity of Satan’s statements. The apostate cast contempt upon the law of God,** and declared that it was impossible for men to keep God’s commandment, which had been preordained in the counsels of heaven.”—*Signs*, June 18, 1894.

“**Satan had pointed to Adam’s sin as proof that God’s law was unjust, and could not be obeyed. In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam’s failure.** But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. **For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him**

**the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man** from the lowest depths of his degradation.

“Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been placed in Adam’s position; He could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain. If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But **our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation.** We have nothing to bear which He has not endured.”—*Desire of Ages*, 117.

“It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.”—*Desire of Ages*, 49.

**The life of Christ proved that fallen humanity can obey the law of God.**

“We are ever to be thankful that **Jesus has proved to us by actual facts that man can keep the commandments of God, giving contradiction to Satan’s falsehood that man cannot keep them.**”—3 *Selected Messages*, 139.

“**The universe is looking upon the controversy that is going on upon the earth.** At an infinite cost, God has provided for every man an opportunity to know that which will make him wise unto salvation. How eagerly do angels look to see who will avail himself of this opportunity!”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 119.

**The issue is clear; on which side will every man stand? On which side will you stand?** Will each of us, through Christ’s enabling merits, seek to vindicate God and His rules for our lives? Or **will we cravenly unite with the servants of Satan in declaring that Christ’s death was inadequate, His atonement useless, and His law defective?**

“**Satan declared that human beings were proved to be incapable of keeping the law of God . . . Christ came to unmask the deceiver.**”—1 *Selected Messages*, 252.

“**Those who live the life of a Christian are battling against the devil’s lie, that man cannot keep God’s law.** Can we doubt the results of this conflict?”—*Signs*, July 10, 1901.

Think about the meaning of these words:

“**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.”—*Desire of Ages*, 309.

We are now living in the very last days of the great controversy, before Christ returns for His people. **Will you and I be found with the faithful who, loyal to the God of heaven, are, in Christ’s enabling strength, putting away their sins?**

“**Satan has cast his shadow athwart the pathway of every human being, in order that he may misrepresent God to the world. He has clothed the character of God with attributes that are satanic,** and wholly at variance with the truth. He has pictured Him as a being full of revenge, **as a law-giver whose law is beyond the power of man to keep,** and he has implanted enmity in the heart of the sinner, so that man unregenerated is in rebellion against God. This is the impression that Satan has made upon the human mind.”—*Review*, February 10, 1891.

Will we, by continuing in sin, accept Satan’s horrible lie that it is impossible for us to overcome sin? Satan well-knows that all who live by that falsehood will fail of reaching heaven.

“If those who hide and excuse their faults could see how Satan exults over them, how he taunts Christ and holy angels with their course, they would haste to confess their sins and to put them away. **Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control of the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed.** Therefore **he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome.**”—*Great Controversy*, 489.

It is dangerous to set aside the divine requirements; yet **so many professed Christians are emboldened by this false teaching, that, contrary to Scripture, they dare to claim that God does not intend to help them stop sinning.**

Relying on errors such as Original Sin, men today are repeating the lie of Lucifer. Basing their claims on the theories of Augustine and Calvin, they declare that it is impossible for fallen man to keep God’s law—with or without the aid of Christ. They teach that man is hopelessly bound in sin until the Second Advent of Christ.

**But to voice such sentiments is to declare that the plan of redemption is inferior and Christ’s sacrifice is inadequate.** Yet such a thought is blasphemy. **In order to serve their sins, men are willing to cast disrepute on the character and work of God!**

“Lucifer had declared that if the law of God was changeless, and its penalty could not be remitted, every transgressor must be forever debarred from the Creator’s favor. **He had claimed that the sinful race were placed beyond redemption, and were therefore his rightful prey.** But the death of Christ was an argument in man’s behalf that could not be overthrown. The penalty of the law fell upon Him who was equal with God, and man was free to ac-

cept the righteousness of Christ and by a life of penitence and humiliation to triumph, as the Son of God triumphed over the power of Satan. Thus God is just and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.”—*Great Controversy*, 502-503.

The truth is that **Christ died on the cross because the law could not be abolished or set aside—even temporarily.**

“But it was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to the earth to suffer and to die. He came to ‘magnify the law’ and to ‘make it honorable.’ Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God’s law is unchangeable. **Could its claims have been set aside, then the Son of God need not have yielded up His life to atone for its transgression. The death of Christ proves it immutable.** And the sacrifice to which infinite love impelled the father and the Son, that sinners might be redeemed, demonstrates to all the universe—what nothing less than this plan of atonement could have sufficed to do—that justice and mercy are the foundation of the law and government of God.”—*Great Controversy*, 503.

**All around us we see Christians and worldlings celebrating their excuses for setting aside God’s laws. They even call it a “celebration”!** They celebrate the idea that they are saved while they keep sinning.

They rejoice that they can sin with apparent impunity. **But the clock of probationary time is ticking away. The day is coming when there will be a terrible awakening.**

“It is Satan’s constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. **His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law and gives men license to sin.**”—*Great Controversy*, 569.

“**The great controversy between truth and error, between Christ and Satan, is to increase in intensity to the close of this world’s history.**”—*Great Controversy*, 144.

The controversy is being fought over the law of God. **On which side will you and I be in the conflict? Who deserves our loyalty? Who will receive it?**

“**Satan’s enmity against God’s law had impelled him to war against every precept of the Decalogue.**”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 337.

**The controversy is really being fought over the character of God.** It is also being fought over whether it is all right to sin, to break God’s law. The two are one, for God’s law is a transcript of His character.

Sin always brings terrible results. **Through the immense price paid at Calvary, God has proved for all time to come that sin need not be indulged**

**and that the law can be obeyed.**

“**In the final execution of the judgment it will be seen that no cause for sin exists.** When the Judge of all the earth shall demand of Satan, ‘Why has thou rebelled against Me, and robbed Me of the subjects of My kingdom?’ the originator of evil can render no excuse. Every mouth will be stopped, and all the hosts of rebellion will be speechless.

“**The cross of Calvary, while it declares the law immutable, proclaims to the universe that the wages of sin is death.**”—*Great Controversy*, 503.

**The day will come when all the subterfuge and veils of deception will finally be swept aside—and the Executive Judgment will sit;** the books will be opened. At that time, **standing before the great white throne, men will discover that they spent their lives trying to destroy the foundation stones of God’s government. They will then learn that those stones—the Ten Commandments—constitute the statute book of the Judgment.**

**The foolish will, too late, acknowledge the truth just before the fire falls.** The wise acknowledge it now—and, in cooperation with Christ’s empowering grace, are carefully studying God’s inspired Word and obeying it.

“**The great controversy will wax stronger and stronger, and will become more and more determined.** Mind will be arrayed against mind, plans against plans, principles of heavenly origin against principles of Satan. **Truth in its varied phrases will be in conflict with error in its ever-varying, increasing forms,** and which, if possible, will deceive the very elect.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 407.

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

“In seeking to cast contempt upon the divine statutes, Satan has perverted the doctrines of the Bible, and errors have thus become incorporated into the faith of thousands who profess to believe the Scriptures. **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering**—a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition.”—*Great Controversy*, 582.

Ponder that point well; for we are supposed to be the called-out people—in fulfillment of Revelation 12:17 and 14:12—who have been entrusted with sharing God’s law to all the world in these last days.

**There is much discussion about which group, which church, which people constitute “the remnant.”** The phrase is used flippantly by some. Liberals among us declare that all denominations, everywhere, are part of the remnant. They define “the remnant” as the final portion of all Christendom living on earth in the last days.

**But it is only because of its usage in Revelation 12:17, that we use the phrase.**

It is true that the Greek word, *loipoi*, means “the ones that remain [at the end].” But Revelation 12:17 defines the word far more narrowly:

“And 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.”—*Revelation 12:17*.

**The remnant church at the end of time consists of those individuals who, in Christ’s strength, keep the commandments of God and speak of the power of Jesus Christ in their lives.**

What is the Biblical definition of the remnant? Are you, by your actions, daily including yourself in the remnant? **The end-time definition of the “remnant” is only found in Revelation 12:17 and 14:12.** It is, by definition, a group of individuals. We would hope that everyone in our denomination is in it; but that is determined by actions. Being in the remnant is more than going to church on Sabbath and enjoying cherished sin throughout the week.

**At His Second Advent, Christ will return to vindicate His law.**

“**The Son of God . . . shall appear in the glory of His Father, surrounded by all the heavenly host, to execute judgment upon the transgressors of His law and the rejecters of His atonement.**”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 340.

**In the executive judgment, after the millennium, the wicked will finally admit the truth and yield the controversy.** Then Satan and his followers—the workers of iniquity who loved sin more than they loved God and His principles—will be obliterated from the universe.

“**The whole universe will have become witness 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 the 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: ‘Afflic-

tion shall not rise up the second time.’ Nahum 1:9. **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.”—*Great Controversy*, 504.

**The end of the age-long experiment in sin will finally have arrived and the controversy will forever be finished.** It will indeed be a happy time.

**Those who by their obedience, through faith in Christ, have placed themselves on God’s side of the great controversy will live forever in a paradise of peace.** Jesus looks upon them with satisfaction; for He sees that, for them, He did not die in vain. **They believed that God meant what He said.**

**He gave them His law; and He gave them empowerment through Christ to obey it. They obeyed the one by faith in the other.** By the faith that works by love, they became truly clothed in His righteousness. In their lives, they genuinely fulfilled the specifications of the Third Angel’s Message:

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and [by] the faith of Jesus.”—*Revelation 14:12*.

**And now, in heaven, they receive the reward of their loyalty to their Creator’s government. The great controversy over the law of God is ended.**

“**And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ.** As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. **The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character.** As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise.

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, **Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.**’ Revelation 5:13.

“**The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean.** One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation . . . From the minutest atom to the greatest world, **all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.**”—*Great Controversy*, 678.