

The Counterfeit Character of God Movement

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Introduction

In one of the most popular Seventh-day Adventist denominational books, author Francis Nichol wrote in his preface:

It is much more delightful to revel in the fragrance and beauty of the flowers in a garden than to busy oneself removing cutworms from the plants. Few of us even wish to discuss such unpleasant things, much less deal with them. Why talk of them when we may talk of flowers? But unless we remove the cutworms we shall not long be able to enjoy the flowers. *Answers to Objections*, p. 25.

Answers to Objections was written to meet false doctrine and thus to help ensure that the flowers of truth may continue to bloom. This article deals with unpleasant spiritual cutworms, and it is unfortunate that such articles have to be written. But we know from the pen of Ellen White that, as we near the end of time, false theories will be introduced within the Seventh-day Adventist Church—theories that will lead to the loss of many souls. It was for the purpose of warning my fellow Adventists of a subtle but deadly heresy that this article was written.

“False theories will be mingled with every phase of experience, and advocated with Satanic earnestness in order to captivate the mind of every soul who is not rooted and grounded in a full knowledge of the sacred principles of the Word. In the very midst of us will arise false teachers, giving heed to seducing spirits whose doctrines are of Satanic origin. These teachers will draw away disciples after themselves. Creeping in unawares, they will use flattering words, and make skillful misrepresentations with seductive tact.” *Special Testimonies*, August 27, 1903.

We are told that certain last day false teachings will be similar in nature to spiritualism—not the type of spiritualism that most people are familiar with, but a new form of spiritualism where faith is professed in the Bible and where the central theme is the love of God. The following Ellen White quotes tie this new form of spiritualism to last day false theories regarding the character of God:

“It is true that spiritualism is now changing its form and, veiling some of its more objectionable features, is assuming a Christian guise...While it formerly denounced Christ and the Bible, it now professes to accept both. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. Love is dwelt

upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight.” *The Great Controversy*, pp. 557-558.

“The spiritualistic theories regarding the personality [and character] of God, followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy...They make of no effect the truth of heavenly origin, and rob the people of God of their past experience, giving them instead a false science.” *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 203.

Note that there will be **“spiritualistic theories regarding the personality [and character] of God.”** It isn't just New Age theology that is teaching spiritualistic theories regarding the character of God. There is a movement within Adventism claiming to be preaching the truth about God's character, but we will see in this article that within this movement **“Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil.”**

It is true that the whole world, including many Seventh-day Adventists, needs a greater understanding of the true character of God:

“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...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.” *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415.

The true character of God is being made known to the world through an increased understanding of the Bible, through the writings of Ellen White, and through the lives of unselfish servants of God and mankind. During the Loud Cry, even more truth will be revealed about God's marvelous character. We may be certain, however, that because of the importance of this subject, Satan has introduced a counterfeit character message—one that contains elements of both truth and error. Mrs. White wrote that **“The people of God must be able to distinguish between the genuine and the spurious.”** *Evangelism*, p. 596. The genuine does not contradict inspiration. In this article, the theories of false teachers will be compared to what inspiration teaches; and the reader will note the many blatant contradictions between what is being heralded as truth and the clear words of inspiration.

The information presented here will be disturbing to many Seventh-day Adventists; but be of good courage, for soon the false teachers exposed in this article will soon be shaken out of the church. Remain steadfast in your love for God's people, and remain in the church unless your situation becomes impossible. The Lord needs faithful

members who will stand for truth and speak out against error. This article will focus on the inherent falsehoods found in the counterfeit character of God movement; but in order to leave the reader with a positive message regarding the wonderful character of God, at the end of this article a link will be provided to a series of sermons centering on the righteousness character of Christ as presented in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White.

Do Not Debate, But Do Resist False Teachings

We are counseled to never enter into debate with those who have already been taken in the snare of false doctrines.

“I have been shown that we are not to enter into controversy over these spiritualistic theories, because such controversy will only confuse minds. These things are not to be brought into our meetings...If our ministers and teachers give themselves to the study of these erroneous theories, some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.” *Evangelism*, 624.

This counsel was given as a warning to our churches to not allow the controversial and spiritualistic theories of Dr. J. H. Kellogg to be **"brought into our meetings."** This same counsel would apply to the modern spiritualistic theories that we will examine in this article. Unfortunately, these theories *are* being brought into our meetings. Those promoting these false theories are being invited to Adventist churches, campuses, and camp meetings across America to spread their strange doctrines; and they are doing so almost totally unopposed.

While we are not to debate with false teachers, we must not remain silent while others are in danger of being caught in the snare.

“When men standing in the position of leaders and teachers work under the power of spiritualistic ideas and sophistries, shall we keep silent, for fear of injuring their influence, while souls are being beguiled? Satan will use every advantage that he can obtain to cause souls to become clouded and perplexed in regard to the work of the church, in regard to the word of God, and in regard to the words of warning which He has given through the testimonies of His Spirit, to guard His little flock from the subtleties of the enemy.” *Manuscript 72*, 1904, p. 6.

Modern False Character of God Doctrines Tied to “Models” of Salvation

Over recent decades, various “models” of salvation have been introduced within the church that supposedly offer a more enlightened way of explaining the various aspects of salvation. These theories go by a variety of names, such as “the moral influence theory” and the “healing model.” The moral influence view of the atonement is a doctrine related to the meaning and effect of the death of Christ and, while originating in the Middle Ages, has been largely taught in liberal Christian circles. Drawing primarily from the works of Pierre Abélard (a Twelfth Century Catholic monk), the moral

influence theory teaches that Christ's death on the cross was mostly a great demonstration of God's love and Christ's obedience. In this theory, the idea that Christ was sacrificed for our sins, or that Jesus in any way paid our penalty for sin, is rejected. Rather, the cross generates in us an affection that will melt our hearts and cause us to freely embrace God. Portions of the theory do sound plausible and some degree of truth may be found there; but when examined in its totality, the theory opposes established doctrines taught by Seventh-day Adventists.

Another popular theory of salvation is the "healing model" which may best be summed up by a former Seventh-day Adventist General Conference leader who has actively promoted that theory for many years:

As God said to His people of old, "I am the Lord who heals you." (Exodus 15:26). This is His salvation—healing all the wounds of sin, curing the sickness of evil, and restoring us once more into full spiritual health: remade into His glorious image. This is His salvation, so fully and freely demonstrated in Jesus and made available to all who will. This is His salvation: brought to us by God himself, as he hung there on the cross. Salvation is healing. (Jonathan Gallagher, article titled "Salvation as Healing.")

Just as with the moral influence theory, this short overview of the healing model sounds innocent on the surface, but underneath lies a subtle and sinister opposition to the established understanding of salvation held by Seventh-day Adventists. Certainly there is some truth to be found in both of these theories, for the track of error always lies close to the track of truth.

HeavenlySanctuary Organization Promotes a False Character of God Message

A group calling themselves HeavenlySanctuary.com has been actively promoting their particular views of God's character for years. They operate an Internet forum where issues relating to God's character are debated. Speakers sponsored by HeavenlySanctuary.com have been holding "Good News Tours" at Adventist churches, campuses, and camp meetings throughout America. Here is a sample of what they are teaching as revealed in the words of one of their staff members:

God has allowed His people to believe Him to be a destroyer for 1000s of years...It seems to me that the Christian Church has used fear tactics long enough to drive people to submission. I don't care if those that hate God and hate the "love" principle of His kingdom believe that He is going to destroy them, but what I hate is what this idea does to those that have struggled all of their lives to please God, but have never entered His rest knowing how kind, loving, and gentle He is. To enter the Sabbath rest is to know God through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus' finished work was revealing the character of the Father to humanity. Moses taught us to murder prostitutes and Sabbath breakers, but Jesus taught us to love them enough to give up our lives for them. Moses taught an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but Jesus taught us to love our enemies and do good to those that use us and hate us. Moses taught

that God was going to rush down and destroy His enemies, but Jesus allowed His enemies to bind Him and take Him to the cross. Moses taught us to live in fear of our powerful God, but Jesus taught us that God wanted nothing more than for us to trust Him as a friend and desire to live in His presence. (Posted November 21, 2005.)

The statement that "God has allowed His people to believe Him to be a destroyer for 1000s of years" should be brought into question. It is true that for thousands of years God's character has been misunderstood and maligned; but some would have us believe that the central issue in the misunderstanding of God's character is whether or not God is a destroyer of the wicked. This theme is also a central issue to New Age spiritualism which teaches that God has always been seen as a destroyer, but now in this enlightened age is to be seen only as one who never takes life. Both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy portray the reality of God's character. He is a Savior of those who are loyal to God and led by His Spirit, *but* a destroyer of those who cling to evil without repentance.

The fundamental error that some make is not realizing (or admitting) that the Jesus of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old Testament—they are one and the same divine Being. To justify their position that the Jesus of the Old Testament is somehow different from the Old Testament God, they misuse an Ellen White quote to make us think that all we can ever know about God was revealed in the New Testament in the life of Jesus; but the character of Jesus is revealed all throughout the Old Testament, as well; for Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Both the Old and New Testaments reveal a God that is consistently righteous and loving. God seeks to heal, uplift, and save; and even when He sends destruction, it is out of love to the universe and in mercy to those whom He destroys. In their refusal to acknowledge a God who will destroy His enemies, people end up creating a god in their own image—one that suits their concepts of what a God of love should be like.

Here is the Ellen White quote used to defend their opinion that Jesus is different in character from the destroying God of the Old Testament: **"All that man needs to know and can know of God has been revealed in the life and character of His Son, the Great Teacher."** *Medical Ministry*, p. 95. False teachers apply this statement only to what is revealed in the New Testament about Christ; but where does this statement restrict what **"has been revealed in the life and character of His Son"** to the New Testament only? Christ pre-existed as the "Word" of God (John 1:1). When the Lord spoke to mankind in Old Testament days, it was Christ speaking—the One who was later to be born into the human race as both Son of God and Son of man. We must take what the Bible in its entirety reveals about "the life and character" of God's Son if we are to properly understand the true character of God. Let's see how the above quote Ellen White quote reads when taken in its proper context:

"Human talents and human conjecture have tried by searching to find out God. Many have trodden this pathway. The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out, in conjectures regarding God, but the effort will be

fruitless, and the fact will remain that man by searching cannot find out God. This problem has not been given us to solve. All that man needs to know and can know of God has been revealed in the life and character of His Son, the Great Teacher. As we learn more and more of what man is, of what we ourselves are, in God's sight, we shall fear and tremble before Him." *Medical Ministry*, p. 95.

People who focus only upon the character of Christ as revealed in the New Testament are the very ones who through "**human conjecture**" believe that they can rightly explain God. They offer theory after theory to explain away the fact that God did destroy the enemies of His people in Old Testament days. If they would take into account the character of Christ as revealed in both Old and New Testaments, they would "**fear and tremble before Him.**"

"The history of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, as that of the Son of God, cannot be fully demonstrated without the evidence contained in the Old Testament. Christ is revealed in the Old Testament as clearly as in the New. The one testifies of a Saviour to come, while the other testifies of a Saviour that *has* come in the manner predicted by the prophets. In order to appreciate the plan of redemption, the Scripture of the Old Testament must be thoroughly understood." *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume 3, p. 211.

"The Old and New Testaments are linked together by the golden clasp of God. We need to become familiar with the Old-Testament Scriptures. The unchangeableness of God should be clearly seen; the similarity of his dealings with his people of the past dispensation and of the present, should be studied." *The Review & Herald*, March 2, 1886.

One of the most subtle errors of the counterfeit character of God movement is the idea that all we can know about God is contained in what we read in the New Testament about Christ. Using that falsehood as a springboard, totally absurd theories regarding the Old Testament are conjured up. They make the God of the Old Testament and His prophets out to be blood-thirsty tyrants, but the Jesus of the New Testament is presented as a sweet and gentle Being who would never think of destroying the wicked. The truth is that "**Christ is revealed in the Old Testament as clearly as in the New.**" In order to fully understand what "**has been revealed in the life and character of His Son,**" we must examine His character in light of the entire Bible.

The people in the God-does-not-kill movement wrongly teach that Jesus only spoke sweet, gentle, and kind words, but do not be fooled by that falsehood. The Old Testament prophetically explained the mission of Jesus:

" The One thus anointed was 'to preach good tidings unto the meek; . . . to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable

year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 224.

In the New Testament, it was Christ who revealed to the apostle John that the wicked **"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."** Revelation 14:10. To the wicked, those are not kind, gentle words.

Ellen White shed much light about God as revealed in the character of Jesus:

"Turning to the multitude, the Saviour said, 'Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' These startling calamities were designed to lead them to humble their hearts, and to repent of their sins. The storm of vengeance was gathering, which was soon to burst upon all who had not found a refuge in Christ." *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 213.

"I was taken off in vision to the most holy place, where I saw Jesus still interceding for Israel. On the bottom of His garment was a bell and a pomegranate. Then I saw that Jesus would not leave the most holy place until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction, and that the wrath of God could not come until Jesus had finished His work in the most holy place, laid off His priestly attire, and clothed Himself with the garments of vengeance." *Early Writings*, p. 36.

"Under God the angels are all-powerful. On one occasion, *in obedience to the command of Christ*, they slew of the Assyrian army in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand men...He who could have doomed His enemies to death bore with their cruelty. His love for His Father, and His pledge, made from the foundation of the world, to become the Sin Bearer, led Him to endure uncomplainingly the coarse treatment of those He came to save." *Desire of Ages*, p. 700.

In the last quote shown above we get a glimpse of why Jesus did not destroy the enemies of God when He walked this earth in human flesh. First we should note that this quote is proof that Christ ordered the destruction of one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the enemies of Israel in Old Testament days; but when He came to this earth as the Redeemer, He had pledged to become the Sin Bearer. To do this, in His humanity He had to bear the abuse heaped upon Him by those who wanted to take His life. The same Christ who had in olden days ordered His holy angels to destroy His

enemies is the same Christ who kept His peace when provoked at the mock trial at the hands of those who sought His destruction.

Away with this notion, as conjectured by the HeavenlySanctuary.com staff member quoted above, that Jesus only "taught us that God wanted nothing more than for us to trust Him as a friend and desire to live in His presence." The New Testament Jesus also came to proclaim the vengeance of God upon those who continue to live in rebellion against God and His law; and it is *Jesus Himself* that will be clothed "**with the garments of vengeance.**" Also, away with the idea that all we can ever know about God was in the life of Christ as revealed *only* in the New Testament. As seen in one of the quotes above, "**The history of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, as that of the Son of God, cannot be fully demonstrated without the evidence contained in the Old Testament.**"

The god of some people's imagination *never* allows for any anger towards evil men or destruction of life; therefore they must avoid or explain away all of the experiences in the Old Testament where God destroyed, or ordered the destruction of the wicked. Notice how the staff member quoted above attempts to drive a wedge between Moses and Jesus. Moses is made out to be a bad guy because he "taught us to murder prostitutes and Sabbath breakers." Jesus, on the other hand, is so kind and gentle that He just couldn't be involved in the death of anyone. In reality, Moses received the law requiring the killing of Sabbath-breakers from the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and Jesus claimed to be that same God. The truth that many will not admit is that it was Jesus, in His pre-advent form, who communicated with mankind. Jesus instituted and ordained the system of animal sacrifices, a truth that the HeavenlySanctuary.com crowd adamantly denies. Satan has tried to make the God of the Old Testament appear as revengeful and as a tyrant because to some human minds God's ways tended to be harsh at times. But never did God destroy or order destruction of the wicked out of anything other than love for His people. Yes, throughout the centuries God has been made to appear as a vindictive judge just waiting to smash any who step out of line; but the modern God-does-not-kill movement has swung the pendulum to the opposite extreme. Somewhere in the middle lies the truth on the subject of God's character. God hates to destroy, but when He has to, He does it out of love. There are those who would scoff at such an idea; but they need to stop speculating, lay aside their preconceived opinions, and accept at face value what inspiration teaches on this subject.

The devil is a master when it comes to swinging human opinion from one extreme to the other. At one time in the United States, there was an extreme, fanatical hatred for communism, and several lives were ruined by overzealous anti-communists like Joseph R. McCarthy. His extremism and the harm he was doing to American society were finally realized and the witch hunt ended. Today, the attitude towards communists in our society and in our government has swung to the opposite extreme; so much so that no one seems to care if any citizen or government leader is a communist. If anyone even slightly insinuates that a person may be a communist, the one who brings the accusation is made to appear to be a fanatic or extremist. The same has happened

in the spiritual world. Yes, throughout the centuries, and even in modern times, some ministers and priests have kept the people in fear of a tyrannical God who is just waiting to lower the boom on any who did not conform; but today we are witnessing the opposite extreme. God is made to appear so gentle and nice that He would not lift a hand against the wicked to save even His own people; and if anyone dares to bring up Old Testament incidents where God brought destruction upon the wicked, someone will stand up and say, "I don't believe in a God like that. Do you?" So in some Adventist circles today it's okay to dwell on God's love, but woe to any who would dare to suggest that God destroys evil men—and that out of mercy and love.

It is understandable that some Adventists are appalled at the way God's character has been wrongly portrayed by overbearing, legalistic Christians, but the human tendency to swing the pendulum to the opposite side has resulted in portraying a god who is just as false as the one on the other extreme. Recall that Mrs. White predicted that a new form of spiritualism would come into the church in the very last days and would ensnare many souls. In those false theories, **"Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism."** A few professed Adventists, through human speculation, are attempting to supersede the light shed by the Bible and Ellen White regarding the character of God; and God is being presented as one who is just too nice and sweet to ever devise something as bloody as animal sacrifices or to order the destruction of nations that were bent on the destruction of His people..

More Blatant Rejection of Inspiration

Several staff members at HeavenlySanctuary.com are adamant in their refusal to believe that God instituted the system of animal sacrifices found in the Old Testament. One of their staff members posted this on their forum: "I don't believe that God instituted animal sacrifice!" (posted March 3, 2007). Another wrote, "I don't believe that God created the sacrificial system at all. No way - not one iota. What I believe is that people were already sacrificing and God used the religious methods of the day to reach people with bold and uplifting cosmological enlightenments about His character." (posted Oct 5, 2007).

Yet the Bible and Ellen White make it clear that God both instituted and ordained the system of animal sacrifices.

"And the LORD said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the people of Israel: "You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your SHEEP and your OXEN.'" Exodus 20:22-24.

"The sacrificial offerings, and the priesthood of the Jewish system, were instituted of God to represent the death and mediatorial work of Christ. All those ceremonies had no meaning, and no virtue, only as they related to

Christ, who was himself the foundation and existence of the entire system. The Lord had made known to Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the ancient worthies, especially Moses, that the ceremonial system of sacrifices and priesthood, of themselves, were not sufficient to secure the salvation of one soul. The system of sacrificial offerings pointed to Christ...Through these the ancient worthies saw Christ, and believed in him. These were ordained of God to keep before the people the fearful separation which sin had made between God and man, requiring a mediating ministry." *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume Two (1877), page 10,11.

"The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death. To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate. And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 67.

"The sacrificial offerings were instituted to be a standing pledge to man of God's pardon through the great offering to be made, typified by the blood of beasts. Through this ceremony man signified repentance, obedience, and faith in a Redeemer to come. That which made Cain's offering offensive to God was his lack of submission and obedience to the ordinance of His appointment. He thought that his own plan, in offering to God merely the fruit of the ground, was nobler, and not as humiliating as the offering of the blood of beasts, which showed dependence upon another, thus expressing his own weakness and sinfulness. Cain slighted the blood of the atonement." *Conflict and Courage*, p. 23.

Mrs. White, again referring to Cain and Abel, wrote that **"they were to show their faith in the blood of Christ as the promised atonement by offering the firstlings of the flock in sacrifice."** *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 71.

The denial of God's requirement for an **"offering of the blood of beasts"** was Cain's sin.

"Cain came before God with murmuring and infidelity in his heart in regard to the promised sacrifice and the *necessity of the sacrificial*

offerings...He would *not* bring the lamb, and mingle its blood with his offering, but would present *his* fruits, the products of *his* labor...Cain obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice, but he rendered only a partial obedience.” *Conflict and Courage*, p. 25.

What were the results of Cain’s refusal to comply with God’s command to sacrifice a lamb? **“And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.”** Genesis 4:16. **“Cain obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice, but he rendered only a partial obedience.”** Those who today deny that God instituted blood sacrifice may keep the Sabbath and obey other requirements of God, but like Cain, they render only “partial obedience.” And like Cain, someday, those who deny that God instituted animal sacrifice will go out from among God’s people, and some will turn back in anger against those who comply strictly with God’s requirements and seek their destruction.

Yes, the ancient Israelites lost sight of the true reason for the system of sacrifices and soon began to believe, like the pagans, that their sacrifices appeased an angry God; but this was never why this system was established. They were established as a way for those in ancient times **“to show their faith in the blood of Christ as the promised atonement...”** To *deny* that God instituted that system of sacrifices is just as foolish as to believe that they were commanded by the Lord to appease His anger.

According to the false teachers in the counterfeit character movement, Ellen White only gave her *opinion* that it was the Lord who set up the system of animal sacrifices. She is presented as one of the unenlightened who held to the "penal" model that she learned as a Methodist; but the egos of some people have led them to think of themselves as more enlightened than Ellen White, and thus it is part of their mission to declare that God had nothing to do with instituting the system of animal sacrifices.

Reinterpreting the Doctrine of Hell

Several Good News Tours (sponsored by HeavenlySanctuary.com) have been held at Adventist facilities throughout America. One of their evangelists is promoting the idea that the lake of fire that destroys the wicked is not literal fire. If his theories on the destruction of the wicked are true, then the writers of the Bible and Ellen White were all terribly deceived. In a video sermon published on the Internet, this evangelist puts down the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine that the wicked are burned to ashes by a literal fire. The title of the sermon is **“I’m Going to Hell and Looking Forward to It.”** In the sermon, this evangelist proclaims that the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the doctrine of hell is just a more acceptable lie than the doctrine of an eternally burning hell, but a lie nonetheless. He teaches that hell is nothing more or less than the glory of God. To the wicked, that glory is death, but to the righteous, that glory (hell) is eternal salvation; thus the title of the sermon: “I’m Going to Hell and Looking Forward to It.”

The following statement about hell was posted on a HeavenlySanctuary.com website:

According to traditional Christianity, the place reserved for sinners is Hell, but

Isaiah makes it quite clear who lives in the eternal flames! It's the righteous! Those that trust God, and love His character will dwell in the everlasting burnings. Is it possible that hell and heaven are the same place depending on who you are? If you are afraid of God, and don't know Him, His very presence will consume you. But this same fire, which is destruction to the wicked, is life giving to God's friends. We should hope the fire never goes out since we are going to live in it! (Posted March 5, 2004.)

Is this what inspiration teaches—that hell is a place to be desired by the righteous? If that is correct, then why did Ellen White write that there is **"a heaven to win and a hell to shun"**? (*The Adventist Home*, p. 178.) Please do not believe men who come attempting to reinterpret the Bible doctrine of hell with cleverly designed fables. False teachers use the following Ellen White quote taken out of context to promote the fable that hell is nothing but the glory of God: **"While God is to the wicked a consuming fire, He is to His people both a sun and a shield."** *The Great Controversy*, p. 673. The theory might have some credibility if this were the only statement Ellen White made on the subject; but there is a far greater weight of evidence presented in both the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy that hell is a literal fire. In the very next sentence where Mrs. White stated that **"God is to the wicked a consuming fire,"** she wrote: **"The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept away."** (p. 674) Hell to our inspired prophet meant a literal, burning fire. She taught that the same **"fire that consumes the wicked"** encompasses the entire earth, purifying the earth of the remnants of the evil civilization that once existed on this planet.

There are multiple theories within the false character of God movement about what hell actually is. They argue and debate the issue amongst themselves, but all of it is mere human speculation and opinion. What does inspiration teach that hell is?

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts, that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings...You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this, says the LORD of hosts." Malachi 4:1-3.

"They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." Revelation 20:9.

"In the bowels of the earth God has in reserve the weapons that He will use to destroy the sinful race. Since the Flood, God has used, to destroy wicked cities, both the water and the fire that are concealed in the earth. In the final conflagration God will in His wrath send lightning from heaven that will unite with the fire in the earth. The mountains will burn like a

furnace, and pour forth streams of lava.” *Volume 7 Bible Commentary, 946-947.*

“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Matthew 3:12.

“The LORD watches over all who love Him, but all the wicked he will destroy.” Psalms 145:20.

“Upon the wicked He shall rain quick burning coals, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.’ Isaiah 9:5; 34:2; Psalm 11:6, margin. **Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10. The earth's surface seems one molten mass—a vast, seething lake of fire. It is the time of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men—the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion ”** Isaiah 34:8.

“The wicked receive their recompense in the earth.’ Proverbs 11:31. **They ‘shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts.’** Malachi 4:1. **Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished ‘according to their deeds.’** The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, **declare the righteousness of Jehovah.”** *The Great Controversy*, pages 672,673.

The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy teach that hell is a literal fire, and that the lake of fire is the place where the wicked will experience the second death. Nowhere in Scripture is to be found the idea that hell is where the righteous will reside. False teachers today brush aside the words of inspiration by coming up with uninspired theories of how the writers of the Old Testament wrote with preconceived, and *wrong*, ideas about the character of God. These people are essentially claiming that they are more enlightened than the men who authored the Holy Scriptures. Ellen White was clear as to what hell will be; and her description of hell was either inspired (as revealed to her in vision), or she was terribly deceived. As Seventh-day Adventists, let's stand

firm on the words of inspiration, and give no heed to the modern theories spoken by professed Adventists declaring that they have come to enlighten us with the truth about hell.

The real danger in groups like HeavenlySanctuary.com is that they begin their indoctrination with the truth that it is the love and goodness of God that changes hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. But once people jump onto their bandwagon, they are imperceptibly led off into doctrinal error. If you would like to understand the truth about God's loving character, turn to Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. Read books such as *Ministry of Healing*. If you would like to know how the wicked are destroyed, read *The Great Controversy*. Be extremely cautious about listening to uninspired men expound on what the true character of God is like; for you will be exposed to a series of opinions that make of no effect the words of inspiration. Central to the counterfeit character of God message are the opinions of men who feel that their wisdom and interpretation of Scripture is above that which God has given to His people through inspiration.

Casting Doubt on the Spirit of Prophecy

Those leading out in the false character of God movement, in order to foster false theories that directly contradict the writings of Ellen White, seek to cast doubt on her while at the same time professing a deep respect for her writings. The evangelist mentioned earlier wrote:

The final problem is that of making a claim that someone's writings are the 'Spirit of Prophecy'...It becomes egotistical to claim that one person holds that title for themselves. In actuality the claim that Ellen White's writings are the Spirit of Prophecy is a self fulfilling prophecy that is based upon a misreading of Bible verses.

If one studies the historical use of the term *Spirit of Prophecy* within our denomination, they will learn that it has been generally accepted to use this term in relation to Mrs. White's writings. In his early experience in the church, there were times when Elder A. G. Daniells was not sure if he should always take the counsel of Mrs. White seriously; but after much pleading with God for light on the subject, he had a new experience that "marked the beginning of an important era of wholehearted acceptance of the Spirit of Prophecy." (From Elder Daniell's book *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, p. 366.)

Even Ellen White used the term *Spirit of Prophecy* to refer to her writings.

“When I send you a testimony of warning and reproof, many of you declare it to be merely the opinion of Sister White. You have thereby insulted the Spirit of God. You know how the Lord has manifested Himself through the Spirit of prophecy [a metonym for the writings of Ellen White]”
Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 27.

Many of the staff members of HeavenlySanctuary.com forum have made it clear that in

their minds, the things that Mrs. White wrote about God as a destroyer of the wicked were simply her own opinion. In her day, Mrs. White had to constantly deal with Adventists of that attitude; and here is what she had to say about them:

“I have my work to do, to meet the misconceptions of those who suppose themselves able to say what is testimony from God and what is human production. If those who have done this work continue in this course, satanic agencies will choose for them...It is discouraging to me to have them pick out portions in the testimonies that please them which they construe to justify their own course of action and give the impression that that portion they accept as the voice of God, and then when other testimonies come that bring rebuke upon their course, when words are spoken that do not coincide with their opinions and judgment, they dishonor God’s work by saying, ‘Oh, this we do not accept—it is only Sister White’s opinion, and it is no better than my opinion or that of anyone else.’” *Selected Messages*, Book 3, pages 70,81.

“Some who wish to strengthen their own position will bring forward from the Testimonies statements which they think will support their views, and will put the strongest possible construction upon them; but that which questions their course of action, or which does not coincide with their views, they pronounce Sister White’s opinion, denying its heavenly origin and placing it on a level with their own judgment.” 5T 687.

The fact that Ellen White was shown in vision how the wicked are destroyed in the second death is of no consequence to false teachers. They would rather cling to preconceived opinions and believe in a god conjured up in their own imagination than to accept at face value the words of God’s special messenger.

Satan would have us believe that each of us is to be our own authority in matters of doctrine. One member of HeavenlySanctuary.com posted on the forum this amazing statement: "I don't take Ellen White as 'objective authority'...We don't believe God kills because *our hearts tell us that*, not because some authority tells us that." (Posted March 12, 2006.) Too many Adventists are underestimating the authority that Mrs. White held as God's messenger. In placing what our heart tells us above the clear words of God's messenger, we create a god in our own image. Some Adventists need to realize that it will not be through forums where human opinions are cherished above inspiration, nor through Good News Tours which concentrate only on the "love" attributes of God that the world will come to understand the true character of God. God's character will be understood when the world sees in God's people the works of benevolence that were seen in the life of Christ. His true character will be seen when it is properly balanced between love and justice.

Does God Ever Punish the Wicked with Death?

It is a popular belief within the false character movement that God never brings death upon the wicked as punishment for their sins. This sentiment is expressed by Bob

Rigsby in an article he wrote for HeavenlySanctuary.com. He began his article by writing: "I'm privileged to belong to a growing fellowship of believers who have been asking very pointed questions about the legitimacy and logic of the traditional Christian interpretations of the cross and the atonement..." Bob is correct that this movement is "growing" within the church; and this is the reason for writing this article—to warn Seventh-day Adventists so that they will not fall victim to the false teachings of this movement. Here is what Rigsby wrote concerning punishment by God: "Death as punishment is a savage and senseless act...; for it serves no purpose to the one killed." (Article titled "The Case of the Unfounded Premise" by Bob Rigsby.)

The Spirit of Prophecy does not agree with Bob's human reasoning.

"Herod was acquainted with the law of God, which says, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me' (Exodus 20:3); and he knew that in accepting the worship of the people he had filled up the measure of his iniquity and brought upon himself the just wrath of Jehovah. The same angel who had come from the royal courts to rescue Peter, had been the messenger of wrath and judgment to Herod. The angel smote Peter to arouse him from slumber; it was with a different stroke that he smote the wicked king, laying low his pride and bringing upon him the punishment of the Almighty. Herod died in great agony of mind and body, under the retributive judgment of God." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 151.

"The Amalekites had been the first to make war upon Israel in the wilderness; and for this sin, together with their defiance of God and their debasing idolatry, the Lord, through Moses, had pronounced sentence upon them. . . . For four hundred years the execution of this sentence had been deferred; but the Amalekites had not turned from their sins. The Lord knew that this wicked people would, if it were possible, blot out His people and His worship from the earth. Now the time had come for the sentence, so long delayed, to be executed. The forbearance that God has exercised toward the wicked, emboldens men in transgression; but their punishment will be none the less certain and terrible for being long delayed. . . . While He does not delight in vengeance, He will execute judgment upon the transgressors of His law. He is forced to do this, to preserve the inhabitants of the earth from utter depravity and ruin. In order to save some He must cut off those who become hardened in sin...And the very fact of His reluctance to execute justice testifies to the enormity of the sins that call forth His judgments and to the severity of the retribution awaiting the transgressor." *Conflict and Courage*, p. 155.

"Then I saw thrones, and Jesus and the redeemed saints sat upon them; and the saints reigned as kings and priests unto God. Christ, in union with His people, judged the wicked dead, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Word of God, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then they meted out to the wicked the portion which

they must suffer, according to their works; and it was written against their names in the book of death. Satan also and his angels were judged by Jesus and the saints. Satan's *punishment* was to be far greater than that of those whom he had deceived. His suffering would so far exceed theirs as to bear no comparison with it. After all those whom he had deceived had perished, Satan was still to live and suffer on much longer.” *Early Writings*, p. 290.

Inspiration teaches that God *does* punish the wicked with death. Bob Rigsby's theory that "Death as punishment is a savage and senseless act...; for it serves no purpose to the one killed" does nothing but cast doubt on the above words of inspiration. It is the kind of false logic that led the angels in heaven to doubt the goodness of God.

Dr. Graham Maxwell Promotes False Theories about God's Character

One of the leading proponents within the Seventh-day Adventist Church of theories proclaiming to be the truth about God's character is Dr. Graham Maxwell, emeritus professor of Biblical Studies at Loma Linda University. For over forty years, Dr. Maxwell exposed countless thousands of Seventh-day Adventists to his unique theories regarding the plan of salvation and the character of God. Dr. Maxwell is known and loved by many Seventh-day Adventists, and we take no pleasure in exposing some of his theories as falsehoods. Dr. Maxwell is sincere in his beliefs and has made many beneficial contributions to the denomination over the years; but somehow the enemy has led him away from established doctrine in matters of utmost importance to God's people.

Dr. Maxwell places great emphasis on the belief that God just wants to be our friend. His theories downplay any Christian teaching that he thinks may negatively impact that central theme of his teachings. For example, he wrote: "One of the characteristics of the servant view of sin and salvation is the frequent use of terms and phrases that friends might consider 'dark speech.' Such terms as 'justification,' 'sanctification,' 'expiation,' and, of course, 'propitiation.'" (*Servants Or Friends? Another Look at God*, 1992, chapter titled "How Servants and Friends Look at Sin and Salvation.") In another place, Dr. Maxwell adds other treasured Christian expressions to his list of dark speech, such as "washed in the blood," "there is power in the blood," "covered by His righteousness," "accepted in the Beloved, and "saved by the blood of the Lamb."

Dr. Maxwell doesn't think that Adventists should use these terms, even though the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and Christians in general use them frequently. It should disturb Seventh-day Adventists to hear Dr. Maxwell classify the term justification as "dark speech," for it is God's will that His people should grapple to more fully understand this most important concept. One of the main reasons for the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to teach the doctrine of justification by faith to the world. As a people, we are to give the third angel's message to the world, and according to Ellen White, the subject of justification by faith is the very essence of the third angel's message. **"Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the**

third angel's message in verity." *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890. With one wave of the hand, Dr. Maxwell would brush aside as "dark speech" the third angel's message, which is a proper understanding of justification.

Dr. Graham would have us believe that it goes against the concept of being friends with God to think that we may also be His servants. His theory is based upon these words spoken by Jesus: **"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."** John 15:15.

After quoting this text, Dr. Maxwell begins to drive a wedge between being God's servant and being His friend.

Notice the distinction Jesus drew between being a servant and being a friend. It's not the privilege of the servant to understand his master's business. It's just for him to do what he's told. No questions. No reasons. Just "Very good, sir. If you say so, sir." (*Servants Or Friends? Another Look at God*, 1992, chapter titled "I'd Rather You Be My Friends.")

Is this the concept found in inspiration of being a servant of God—that servants grovel before the Lord? What does inspiration say about being a servant of God?

"And the LORD appeared unto him [Isaac] the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake." Gen. 26:24

"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel ." Josh. 1:2.

"Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?" 2 Sam. 7:5.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" Job 2:3.

"And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia." Isaiah 20:3.

"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH." Zech. 3:8.

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto

the gospel of God.” Romans 1:1.

“But the self-sacrificing servant of God labors for them in word and doctrine; he carries the heavy burden of the work on his soul; he patiently shows from the word of God the dangerous errors which are hurtful to the soul; he enforces the necessity of immediately tearing up the weeds which choke the good seed sown; he brings out of the storehouse of God’s word things new and old to feed the flock of God.” *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 2, p. 236.

Abraham was not only God’s friend, but His servant as well. God called Moses, David, Job, and Isaiah His servants. Paul considered himself to be a servant of Christ. Even the BRANCH, the prophesied Redeemer, is called by the Lord “my servant.” There are dozens of other texts and quotes that confirm that being a servant of God is a desirable thing. Dr. Maxwell tries to make it appear as though a servant of God is one who merely grovels by saying, “Very good, sir. If you say so, sir.” Do not allow any theologian to drive a wedge between being God’s friend and being His servant.

It is a worthy desire to be friends with God, but there is also the danger of presumption if this desire is not placed in its proper context. Again, here is the Bible text that Dr. Maxwell uses so frequently: **“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends.”** But in the verse preceding that one, Jesus explained that **“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”** John 15:14. Why doesn’t Dr. Maxwell start with that verse? Because someone might ask: “What does Jesus command us?” Then he would have to deal with the requirements of God’s law. But he doesn’t want to do that, because somehow in his mind, Graham Maxwell thinks that God telling us what to do pours cold water on his theory that God only wants to be friends with us. Dr. Maxwell is promoting a righteousness-by-friendship model of salvation that places the Decalogue as of secondary importance.

A Subtle Attack on the Law

In an interview published on the Internet titled “Why Did Jesus Have to Die?” Graham Maxwell said, “You see, with so many, what’s gone wrong is that we have broken the rules and we’re in legal trouble.” Is that all the Ten Commandments are—a set of rules? The Ten Commandments are a written transcript of God’s character. Anyone who professes to be defending God’s character that does not give the moral law its proper place in the plan of salvation is teaching a counterfeit message.

Take the idea that the moral law is simply a set of rules and carry it further. It reduces the *results* of breaking God’s law. Breaking a few rules can’t be all that important; and therefore the transgression of the law has little to do with the death of Christ on the cross. Trivialize the law and you trivialize sin and the cross.

“The sinner must be made to feel that he is a transgressor. Christ dying

upon the cross of Calvary is drawing his attention. Why did Christ die? Because it was the only means for man to be saved.” *Our High Calling*, p. 141.

Notice that the sinner must be made to feel that he has transgressed the holy law, and that the only way for him to be saved was by the death of Christ. In one brief expression—that the law and its transgression is merely breaking a set of rules—Maxwell degrades the Ten Commandment law, the Biblical concept of sin (which is the transgression of the law), and the death of Christ on the cross.

If you are not convinced that Dr. Maxwell's theories undermine the Ten Commandments, the following statement he made should be more convincing. Here he summarizes what he thinks that God said to the ancient Israelites:

At first when I brought you out of Egypt I didn't give you all those things [the Ceremonial Law and the Decalogue]. I just said let me be your God, and you be my people. But you were so stubborn I had to use these other measures. I had you build the Tabernacle, and I had you build the sacred box, but someday when you have pastors who will give you the truth (Jeremiah 3), you won't remember the box, you'll never make another one, it'll never come to mind, because you'll really know me then, and I'll have written my Law in your hearts and in your minds, and I'll be your God and you'll be my people. (Maxwell interview titled "Why Did Jesus Have to Die?")

Dr. Maxwell insinuates that God would have never given His people the Ten Commandments if they had only gone along with His request that they be His people and that He be their God—in other words, let's strike up a friendship. The theory is that it was only their stubbornness that led God to give the people His law in the first place. Dr. Maxwell then puts forth the idea that if we only had the right pastors we would have no need for that old box containing the Ten Commandment law—indeed “it'll never come to mind.” The ark containing the Ten Commandments will never come to mind? The ark of the covenant will always exist, for in heaven resides the original ark of which the earthly ark was but a copy. **“I warn you, Do not place your influence against God's commandments. That law is just as Jehovah wrote it in the temple of heaven. Man may trample upon its copy here below, but the original is kept in the ark of God in heaven.”** 1BC, 1109.

Dr. Maxwell's theory also includes the proposition that somehow right pastors could magically place the law directly into our hearts without us having to first admit that we are helpless sinners who have violated the law, and that we are dismal failures in our efforts to keep the law. This is a subtle lie of modern spiritualism:

“And to complete his work [of destroying souls], he [Satan] declares, through *the spirits* that “true knowledge places man above all law.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 555.

Dr. Maxwell's theory is nothing but a subtle attack on the law spoken at Sinai. The theory put forth here is that right pastors are more effective in converting the soul than the law. That idea is foreign to Scripture, for inspiration teaches that **"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."** Psalms 19:7.

"That the law which was spoken by God's own voice is faulty, that some specification has been set aside, is the claim which Satan now puts forward. It is the last great deception that he will bring upon the world."
The Desire of Ages, p. 763.

The False Character Message Has a Similarity to New Age Spiritualistic "Theology"

Over the past few decades there has arisen a new form of spiritualism that is quickly being accepted by even those who profess to be Christians. This more appealing form of spiritualism is best represented by a book that has gained rapid popularity over the past 40 years. The book is titled *A Course in Miracles*, and was written by a former atheist who claimed that Jesus channeled the contents of the book through her. Endorsements by celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey have catapulted this book to best seller status, especially in America. In this article we will be drawing parallels between theories found in books like *A Course in Miracles* and the teachings found in the church that we hope to expose.

As we examine the words of Dr. Maxwell and others, be aware of the fact that they do not have to be out there reading tea leaves in order to be promoting spiritualistic ideas; for spiritualism has changed its form. Once again, we offer the following quote that describes the new form of spiritualism that will deceive both the world and many Seventh-day Adventists:

"It is true that spiritualism is now changing its form and, veiling some of its more objectionable features, is assuming a Christian guise...While it formerly denounced Christ and the Bible, it now professes to accept both. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight." *The Great Controversy*, pp. 557-558.

False Ideas of the Atonement

The theories on the atonement being taught by both New Age theology and Dr. Graham Maxwell bear a striking similarity. In an interview with Dr. Maxwell, he stated that "This idea of atonement as payment of penalty is a modern perversion of the original idea, and I'm interested that so many forensic folk will say that this is a lot of nonsense, this business of 'at-one-ment'."

First of all, who in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has ever stated that the concept

of 'at-one-ment' is nonsense? The atonement certainly does involve returning fallen man to oneness with God. The danger lies in focusing only upon this concept of at-one-ment to the exclusion of a broader definition of the word *atonement*. Secondly, note Dr. Maxwell's statement that "This idea of atonement as payment of penalty is a modern perversion of the original idea." Go search the Spirit of Prophecy on the subject of the atonement and discover that the "idea of atonement as payment of penalty" is found there—in abundance and in clear, precise words! Just a few quotes (with emphasis supplied) should establish this point.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son to go through humiliation, suffering, and death to pay the debt of man's sin." *The Signs of the Times*, 7-11-1895.

"Christ bore the penalty that would have fallen upon the transgressor; and through faith the helpless, hopeless sinner becomes a partaker of the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust." *Review and Herald*, 5-23-1899.

"It was only through the suffering and death of Christ that he [man] could be restored to the favor of God. For our sakes, He who knew no sin was made an offering for sin. He was afflicted, insulted, oppressed. Arraigned as a criminal, he suffered shame, insult, mockery, and pain." *The Signs of the Times*, 4-3-1884.

"While we dwell upon the paternal character of God, and His love expressed for man in the gift of His only begotten Son, we must tell people why such a costly sacrifice was necessary. It was because of sin. What is sin? The transgression of the law. Only the Son of God could pay the penalty, and that by His own humiliation and death." *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 781.

"Christ died because there was no other hope for the transgressor. He might try to keep God's law in the future; but the debt which he had incurred in the past remained, and the law must condemn him to death. Christ came to pay that debt for the sinner which it was impossible for him to pay for himself. Thus, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, sinful man was granted another trial." *Faith and Works*, p. 20.

"By dying in our behalf, He gave an equivalent for our debt. Thus He removed from God all charge of lessening the guilt of sin. By virtue of My oneness with the Father, He says, My suffering and death enable Me to pay the penalty of sin." *That I May Know Him*, p. 69.

These quotes represent what Seventh-day Adventists teach about the atonement. We could offer several pages of quotes that totally contradict Maxwell's assertion that "the idea of atonement as payment of penalty is a modern perversion of the original idea."

The idea that atonement is solely to be understood in terms of at-one-ment is the same theme presented in modern day spiritualism.

Healing means to make whole. Healing leads to unification and enlightenment and implies atonement, which in this context should be read as "at-one-ment."
(From a New Age website called ZAADZbeta.)

Maxwell's Theory That There Is No Power in the Blood of Christ

In the same interview with Dr. Maxwell that we have already quoted from is a statement that should make any Christian cringe. Here is a portion of that interview dealing with the subject of Christ's blood:

[The interviewer asks...]

So what about the blood in the making of the atonement which is so often spoken of in that audio-visual system, as you describe it? What role does the "blood of Christ" play in this atoning?

[Maxwell answers...]

The emphasis on blood itself—if only we could rediscover what it meant to them in the beginning...I saw an advertisement for a book this week—I was tempted to get it—it's a whole history of blood atonement in paganism, and other religions as well as Christianity. Blood has been used all through history, "in many and various ways." The Bible refers to the blood; I just want the truth about it. What is the meaning of his shedding of his blood? It really means he died. He died. So we want to talk about his death. It's interesting that if we talk and talk and talk about the significance of his death and don't use the word "blood," some say you don't believe in a "blood atonement." That's extraordinary to me. It's as if there really was "power in the blood," which is haematolatriy.

The word *haematolatriy* is not to be found in the English language, but we may deduce what Dr. Maxwell means by that term. *Haematology* is the branch of medicine that deals with diseases of the blood. Maxwell's made up word *haematolatriy* is made up from the two words *haema* + *idolatriy*, which would mean "blood idolatriy." In other words, any who believe that there is power in the blood of Jesus worships blood. There are many Seventh-day Adventists who would strongly disagree with Dr. Maxwell in his views regarding the blood of Christ—that there is no power in His blood and that those who place their faith in His shed blood are blood-worshipers (much like the heathen are). Here are a few words of inspiration that positively indicate that there is power in the blood of Christ:

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Rev. 1:5.

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of His grace.” Eph. 1:7.

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7.

“The promise is, ‘Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.’ *There is power in the blood of Christ to remove sin.* Poor, trembling sinner, today you are the prisoner of hope. Jesus lives, and because He lives you may live also.” *The Signs of the Times*, August 6, 1885.

“I saw four angels who had a work to do on the earth, and were on their way to accomplish it. Jesus was clothed with Priestly garments. He gazed in pity on the remnant, then raised His hands upward, and with a voice of deep pity cried, ‘My Blood, Father, My Blood, My Blood, My Blood’...Jesus gazed on the remnant that were not all sealed, then he raised His hands to the Father and plead with Him that he had spilled His blood for them.” *The Present Truth*, 8-1-1849.

“As the sin-bearer and priest and representative of man before God, He [Christ] entered into the life of humanity, bearing our flesh and blood. The life is in the living, vital current of blood, which blood was given for the life of the world. Christ made a full atonement, giving His life as a ransom for us.” *Manuscript Release*, Volume 10, p. 173.

“It is Satan's plan to flatter the pride of our natures, and we are in danger of shutting out Christ, His blood, His righteousness, and placing man where Jesus Christ should be...He has brought divine *power* within our reach through the merits of his blood.” *The Signs of the Times*, 9-9-1989.

“You must feel your need of a physician and of the one only remedy for sin, the blood of Christ...The blood of Christ will avail for none but those who feel their need of its *cleansing power*.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, pages 218,219.

In the same interview, the interviewer asks: “So the shedding of blood is not a precondition for God in terms of his forgiveness?” Dr. Maxwell’s answer was: “No.” Do you accept that? People who denigrate the blood of Christ as something not necessary for the salvation of mankind should take heed to this Bible text: “**He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?**” Hebrews 10:28,29. The denial that the blood of Christ was essential for God to forgive mankind is the same as calling His blood "an unholy thing."

Take this challenge: go look up what the Spirit of Prophecy says and compare it to Dr. Maxwell's answer. Here is one quote to get you started:

“Many have expressed wonder that God demanded so many slain victims in the sacrificial offerings of the Jewish people; but it was to rivet in their minds the great truth that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. A lesson was embodied in every sacrifice, impressed in every ceremony, solemnly preached by the priest in his holy office, and inculcated by God Himself,—that through the blood of Christ alone is there forgiveness of sins. How little we as a people feel the force of this great truth!” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 9-21-1896.

Did you catch that? Dr. Maxwell claims that "the shedding of blood is not a precondition for God in terms of his forgiveness," but inspiration teaches that it is "**through the blood of Christ alone is there forgiveness of sins.**"

Dr. Maxwell asks, “What is the meaning of His shedding of His blood?” His answer is that “It really means He died. He died.” Was that it? The blood that flowed from Christ’s side was only to let people know that He had died? Maxwell’s not-so-subtle attack on the power of Christ’s blood belittles and denigrates the blood of our Savior. His theory on the subject of Christ’s blood sheds light on why he also teaches that “the idea of atonement as payment of penalty is a modern perversion of the original idea.” He would remove any connection of the efficacy of Christ’s blood from the atonement.

The downplaying of Christ’s shed blood in the atonement is another theme to be found in modern day spiritualism.

Those who represent the lamb [of God] as blood-stained, an all too widespread conceptual error, do not understand the meaning of the symbol. (*A Course in Miracles*, article titled “Atonement without Sacrifice.”)

Both Dr. Maxwell and New Age theology emphasize that the cross, as related to the atonement, was merely a great demonstration of the love of God. The atonement certainly was a demonstration, but it was far more than that. As we have already seen, the problem is the rejection of any notion of the atonement as the payment of penalty. One may compile page after page of Ellen White quotations proving that the atonement involved Christ paying the penalty for our sins; and yet Dr. Maxwell denies those clear statements.

The counterfeit character of God movement denies any belief that God the Father sacrificed or punished the Son on the cross for our sins. False teachers claim that God did not sacrifice His son. The cross was just a demonstration, they say. Theories being promoted by false teachers in the church regarding the sacrifice in the atonement, the cross as a demonstration, and Christ’s blood as having no power bear a peculiar similarity to the theories of modern spiritualism. The following statements were

supposedly channeled by Jesus Himself through His spirit medium. You may recognize some of the theories of Dr. Maxwell and others as you read these words:

We have not dwelt upon the crucifixion, because of its fearful connotations. The only emphasis we laid upon it was that it was NOT a form of punishment...There is a positive interpretation of the crucifixion which is wholly devoid of fear, and therefore wholly benign in what it teaches, if it is properly understood. ***It is nothing more than an extreme example.*** (*A Course in Miracles*, article titled "The Message of the Crucifixion.")

At-one-ment is the state of our being in Heaven, where we are all at one with God and with each other. Atonement, however, has nothing to do with Heaven. It has to do with the state here, so if you want to use "atonement," it would be in the sense that atonement restores to us the awareness that we are at one with God. (The Fifty Miracle Principles of *A Course in Miracles*, Principle 41.)

The Atonement is thus the perfect lesson. It is the final ***demonstration*** that all of the other lessons which I taught are true...Sacrifice is a notion totally unknown to God. (*A Course in Miracles*, article titled "Atonement without Sacrifice.")

If the Crucifixion is seen from an upside down point of view, it certainly does appear as if God permitted, and even encouraged, one of his Sons to suffer because he was good. Many very devoted ministers preach this every day. This particularly unfortunate interpretation, which actually arose out of the combined misprojection of a large number of my own would-be followers, has led many people to be bitterly afraid of God...[in the crucifixion is the] terrible misperception that God Himself persecuted His own Son on behalf of salvation. The very words are meaningless...I was NOT punished because YOU were bad. (*A Course in Miracles*, article titled "Atonement without Sacrifice.")

The Christian Churches have released into the world a view of the Christ which is impossible for modern people to accept; as the one and only Son of God sacrificed by a loving Father to save us from the results of our sins - a blood sacrifice, straight out of the old Jewish dispensation. We have rejected this view, left the church in our millions, because it doesn't tally with our knowledge of history of science and other religions." *The Reappearance of The Christ and the Master of Wisdom* by Benjamin Crème (prominent British New Age author).

Christians have always taught that Jesus took upon Himself the punishment for our sins by the shedding of His precious blood; but Dr. Maxwell agrees with a "channeled" Jesus that Christ was *not* punished for our sins, and that He was *not* offered as a sacrifice by the shedding of His blood. In other words, the crucifixion and the atonement have nothing to do with Christ dying for our sins. This is what false teachers in the church teach, and this is what New Age spiritualism teaches.

Is it just a coincidence that the false character of God theories we are examining bear such a remarkable similarity to the teachings of a “channeled” Jesus? Or perhaps they have the same goal—the removal of all ideas that we are sinners in need of Christ’s cleansing blood. If you think that is a far-fetched idea, you should know that amongst the God-does-not-kill Adventists, there are many who *refuse* to sing the popular Christian hymn “There is Power in the Blood.” Such has been the negative influence of men like Dr. Maxwell in the church. The words of this popular hymn include these marvelous thoughts: “*Would you be free from your burden of sin? There’s power in the blood, power in the blood. Would you o’er evil a victory win? There’s wonderful power in the blood.*” (words by Lewis Jones, 1899.) It’s as if people think that the blood of Christ is “an unholy thing.” What is happening in our beloved church when such a powerful song is being rejected by an increasing number of Adventists?

The blatant denigration of Christ’s blood by Dr. Maxwell in his statement, “as if there really was ‘power in the blood,’” is forever silenced by the apostle John’s bold declaration that “if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7. The blood of Jesus has power like nothing else in the universe—the power to cleanse sinners from all their sins.

Dr. Maxwell and His “No Fear” Theory

In one of the above quotes from the book *A Course in Miracles* (that the crucifixion “has led many people to be bitterly afraid of God”), we may see that spiritualism is out to convince the world of a theology that is “wholly devoid of fear.” So is Dr. Maxwell.

Dr. Maxwell has stated, “What’s so serious about serving him [God] from fear? ‘God, you are infinitely superior; wouldn’t a little holy fear be good for the universe?—it would keep peace, you know!’ And God replies, ‘That kind of peace turns my children into my enemies.’” (Interview with Graham Maxwell titled “Why Did Jesus Have to Die?”) We would ask Dr. Maxwell: Where did God ever say that holy fear turns His people into His enemies?

Dr. Maxwell says that even “a little holy fear” in the universe would be a terrible thing, but Ellen White does not agree with him:

"Noah did not mix the soft, pleasing deceptions of Satan with his message. He did not utter the sentiment of many of his day who declared that God was too merciful to do such a terrible work. Many asserted that God would grant the wicked another season of probation; but Noah did not indulge them in the faintest hope that those who neglected the present opportunity, who rejected the present message, would be favored with another opportunity of salvation. God means that men shall not only love him, but that his fear shall be in their hearts. Noah’s faith was mingled with fear; for it is written that Noah, being warned of God, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house. His faith intensified his fear; for it was no cowardly fear that moved him. He dared not

suppress the words of God for fear of men, or withhold his message in dread of the consequences that might result because of the opposition and hate of the wicked and unbelieving about him. He knew the power of God, and realized that God would fulfill his word. His fear of God did not separate him from God, but served to draw him closer to him, and to lead him to pour out his soul in earnest supplication. There were many who at first received Noah's message, but the fear of men was greater than the fear of God, and they turned away from the truth of God to believe a lie."
The Signs of the Times, 04-18-95.

"With the peace and joy of those who thus serve God, there is always seen a godly fear, 'lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.' This sanctified fear is entirely proper. It is not a servile, cowardly fear; it is a dread to do anything that Christ will not approve. This fear regulates the Christian experience. Those who feel it sanctify the Lord in their hearts. They regard God with a reverence and love that leads to self-abasement. But their fear is very different from the terror of a slave, who lives in expectation of the lash. This genuine fear leads to firm reliance on God." *The Signs of the Times*, 09-22-1898.

Dr. Maxwell often asserts that God wants to take away our fear; and that is true, but only for those who have been reconciled to God and who have the love of God in their hearts. Dr. Maxwell intentionally fails to make a distinction between servile fear and sanctified fear, and as a result, unsanctified people get the false impression that God will not punish sinners. Dr. Maxwell and those at HeavenlySacntuary.com do not believe that God punishes the wicked; but this theory, when taken to its logical conclusion, will lead the unrepentant to presumption, thinking they can be good friends with God while living in willful disobedience to His law.

Dr. Maxwell once said that even the atheist has no reason to fear God:

And even the atheist knows, though he may have denied all his life that there is a God; that if there is one, He is about to come face to face with Him [if he knows he is about to die]. And he wonders what that powerful something or person will be like. It is very interesting to help such people die unafraid. Or would you think an atheist ought to die scared stiff? He deserves to. You know, even God's enemies have no need to be afraid of Him...And last night we discussed one of the freedoms that comes with friendship, the freedom from being afraid of an unfriendly God. And hence, as Hebrews 2 says, losing one of the fears of dying. Because we know that if we should die, we would awaken the very next moment of consciousness, face to face with a very friendly God. Even if we are going to be lost. (From sermon transcript titled by the transcriber "The Serpent Speaks.")

Dr. Maxwell is not teaching established Adventist doctrine, but rather is engaged in presenting a religious philosophy that is bent on convincing people—even those who refuse to let God rule over them—that there is no need to fear God's destructive judgments. His theories on love and fear sound suspiciously like the theories of modern day spiritualists; for they all argue that God is never angry, and that His love never allows for any degree of anger or destruction of the wicked; but Ellen White wrote that this very form of religious philosophy will end with the destruction of the wicked. **"When the reasoning of philosophy has banished the fear of God's judgment...then it is that sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape."** *Patriarchs & Prophets*, p. 104.

Friendship with God is essential to keeping Christ on the throne of the heart; but those in the false movement who speak of friendship with God leave out the conditions of friendship with God, and fail to warn people that clinging to cherished sin makes void any friendship they might have had with God. God is reconciled to us through His Son, and therefore He is friendly towards us; but reconciliation is a two-way street. If we are not reconciled to God, thinking that we can walk with Him as a friend is presumption. The message being preached by Dr. Maxwell and others is one that is eagerly embraced by the carnal heart—no punishment for sinners, no reason to fear God, no wearing out of God's patience, and no destruction in a literal lake of fire for all who die in a state of rebellion against God's law. Like New Age gurus, false teachers in the church talk only of love and peace and joy and harmony and at-one-ment with God. There are no warnings that to claim friendship with God while at the same time continuing to indulge the pleasures of sin will end in the loss of the soul.

“Could all of those who believe the great and important truths God has opened to his people, exemplify their faith by their lives, they would realize that they have entered into close relationship with God, that they are sons and daughters of God. However little and unknown they may be in the world, they are members of the royal family, children of the Heavenly King. If they could always sense this, there would be a great change in their deportment; and in conversation, would they not talk of their best friend who had made such provision to elevate and ennoble them to be children of God and to enjoy the riches, the affection, the care, the communion, which belong to those redeemed unto God? What a condescension on the part of the Majesty of heaven! What amazing love, that sinners, worms of earth, may be allied to Omnipotence! For to as many as received the Saviour by faith, ‘to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name.’ But how sad seems the condition of those who despise his love, who refuse to accept the salvation purchased for them at such an infinite cost, and once having accepted it, cast it away as valueless! How many are so infatuated with the pleasures of sin that they will cast away with contempt the most precious blessings, the most exalted honors in the universe, and greedily grasp forbidden pleasures! They neglect and despise the friendship of

God; and oh, how brief the time when they will be obliged to leave their chosen objects of delight, for which they sold their souls, and experience woe and despair!" *The Review and Herald*, December 11, 1883.

New Age theology and all counterfeit character of God theologies declare that sinners have no reason to fear God; but the following words of God's inspired servant declare that at the return of Christ, the wicked have every reason to be utterly filled with fear:

"The King of kings descends upon the cloud, wrapped in flaming fire. The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, the earth trembles before Him, and every mountain and island is moved out of its place... 'And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him 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?' Revelation 6:15-17... To the rejecters of His grace no other [voice] could be so full of condemnation, so burdened with denunciation, as that voice which has so long pleaded: 'Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?' Ezekiel 33:11... That voice awakens memories which they would fain blot out—warnings despised, invitations refused, privileges slighted... The men who smote and spit upon the Prince of life now turn from His piercing gaze and seek to flee from the overpowering glory of His presence. Those who drove the nails through His hands and feet [in a special resurrection], the soldier who pierced His side, behold these marks with terror and remorse... In the sin and punishment of those unfaithful men the priests and elders see their own course and their own just doom. And now there rises a cry of mortal agony... They seek to flee from the presence of the King of kings. In the deep caverns of the earth, rent asunder by the warring of the elements, they vainly attempt to hide... The derisive jests have ceased. Lying lips are hushed into silence. The clash of arms, the tumult of battle, 'with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood' (Isaiah 9:5), is stilled. Nought now is heard but the voice of prayer and the sound of weeping and lamentation. The cry bursts forth from lips so lately scoffing: 'The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?' The wicked pray to be buried beneath the rocks of the mountains rather than meet the face of Him whom they have despised and rejected... Those who a little before [Christ returns] were so reckless, so boastful and defiant, so exultant in their cruelty to God's commandment-keeping people, are now overwhelmed with consternation and shuddering in fear... It is impossible to describe the horror and despair of those who have trampled upon God's holy requirements." Excerpts taken from Chapter 40 of *The Great Controversy*.

Dr. Maxwell says that atheists and all those who will be lost need not fear God, but

Mrs. White disagrees. The apostle Paul identifies a certain fear for those who have once had been established in the faith but turn away from God and become antagonistic against Him and His church. **"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."** Hebrews 10:26,27.

We all can agree that God is merciful; but Seventh-day Adventists have always taught that the day will come when God will pour out His wrath upon the wicked in the seven last plagues unmixed with mercy. That teaching is based mostly upon this well-known text: **"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out *without mixture* [no mercy mingled with His wrath] 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."** Rev. 14:10. Ellen White explained that when Christ returns, there will be no mercy mingled with God's wrath:

"As the sun arose for the last time upon the cities of the plain, the people thought to commence another day of godless riot. All were eagerly planning their business or their pleasure, and the messenger of God was derided for his fears and his warnings. Suddenly as the thunder peal from an unclouded sky, fell balls of fire on the doomed capital. 'So shall also the coming of the Son of man be.' The people will be eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, until the wrath of God shall be poured out *without mixture of mercy*. The world will be rocked to sleep in the cradle of carnal security...The multitudes are striving to forget God, and they eagerly accept fables, that they may pursue the path of self-indulgence undisturbed." *Advent Review & Herald*, October 26, 1886.

Any theology or philosophy that teaches that God's patience can never be worn out, and that the time will never come when the wicked need to fear His judgments upon the unrepentant is only helping to rock the world **"to sleep in the cradle of carnal security."** The concept of having no fear of God is a common theme throughout spiritualistic New Age philosophy. Satan is lulling millions into a false security by declaring that those who are controlled by their carnal mind have no need to fear God. Here is what one New Age author wrote about fear:

Is each one to be judged in the end? Indeed, yes! No one can escape God's final judgment. Who could flee forever from the truth? But the final judgment will not come until it is no longer associated with fear. (*A Course In Miracles* by Helen Schucman.)

There is NOTHING to be feared...For it would mean His Love could harbor just a hint of hate; His gentleness turn sometimes to attack; and His eternal patience sometimes fail. (*A Course in Miracles*, lesson titled "The Awakening," March 28, 1968.)

There Is Nothing To Fear...EVER. (*A Course in Miracles*, Lesson 48.)

While false teachers both inside and outside the church are proclaiming that there is no reason to be afraid of God and the judgments that are coming upon the earth, inspiration teaches just the opposite:

"The plagues of God are already falling upon the earth, sweeping away the most costly structures as if by a breath of fire from heaven. Will not these judgments bring professing Christians to their senses? God permits them to come that the world may take heed, that sinners may be afraid and tremble before Him." *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 3. p. 311 (1902).

How the Wicked Die in the Second Death

We have already discussed to some extent the false concepts being promoted in the church about hell. We will here revisit this subject, for in this doctrine the human speculation and the rejection of inspiration by those claiming to have the truth about God's character is best revealed.

False teachers reject any suggestion that God will directly destroy or bring any suffering to the wicked in the second death by a literal fire. But Adventists have always taught that a literal fire will burn the wicked to literal ashes, and that some will suffer longer than others. Who is right?

In his book Dr. Maxwell presents the following thoughts:

Frequently the Bible describes the destruction of the wicked in "eternal fire." Jesus Himself spoke of the day when he would have to say to the lost, "Depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." But what is this "eternal fire"?...The glory that surrounds God is often described in the Bible as having the appearance of fire...When God said that no mortal could see his face and live, he was not threatening that he would kill anyone he caught peeking. To people, in their present sinful state, the unveiled glory of God would be a consuming fire...How, then, could God save sinners? How could he come close enough to win them back to trust? How could he show them that he is a Friend of whom there's no need to be afraid?...But when God unveils his glory in the end, all that is out of harmony will be consumed. On that awesome day, the saved and the lost alike will all be standing in the "devouring fire," "the everlasting flames," of God's glory. (*Servants or Friends? Another Look at God*, 1992, chapter titled "What About the Fire?")

When Dr. Maxwell says that "when God unveils His glory in the end, all that is out of harmony will be consumed," he is stating the same theory expressed by the Good News Tour evangelist in his sermon titled "I'm Going to Hell and Looking Forward to It." Now, it is important to notice how self-contradictory Dr. Maxwell's statement is. First, he claims that God does *not* destroy the wicked. But in the above quote he states: "But

when God unveils his glory in the end, all that is out of harmony will be **consumed**." Take any Thesaurus and look up synonyms for the word "consumed" and you will find "destroyed" or "destroyed completely." Let's substitute the word "destroyed" for "consumed" in Dr. Maxwell's statement. "But when God unveils his glory in the end, all that is out of harmony will be *destroyed*." If God did not unveil His glory, the wicked would not be consumed, or destroyed. But according to Dr. Maxwell (and others), God **does** unveil His glory "at the end." In the very process of unveiling His glory (assuming the theory is correct), the wicked are destroyed. Therefore, God would be directly responsible for the destruction. The self-contradiction found in Dr. Maxwell's theory is the inevitable result of trying to defend a lie.

God's Vengeance

The Bible speaks of God's vengeance over two dozen times, and the Spirit of Prophecy uses this word in relation to what God will do to the wicked. **"While He does not delight in vengeance, He will execute judgment upon the transgressors of His law."** *Conflict and Courage*, p. 155. One dictionary definition of vengeance is "Infliction of punishment in return for a wrong committed." *American Heritage Dictionary*. If God sat back and never avenged the blood of the saints and punished the transgressors of His law, evil would continue to exist forever and it could be said that evil will triumph over good. A time must come when sin and sinners are removed from the universe.

Humans usually exact vengeance prematurely and in a way that makes matters worse. **"For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance."** Proverbs 6:34. Men seek vengeance out of rage; but God's vengeance is consistent with His character of love and mercy. That's why He says, **"Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord."** Hebrews 10:30."

There are voices today saying that God will never destroy the wicked, and especially out of vengeance. The truth is that God's vengeance is done out of mercy, even to those whom He destroys.

"In mercy to the world, God blotted out its wicked inhabitants in Noah's time. In mercy He destroyed the corrupt dwellers in Sodom...It is in mercy to the universe that God will finally destroy the rejecters of His grace. But those who have not, through repentance and faith, secured pardon, must receive the penalty of transgression—'the wages of sin.' They suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity, 'according to their works,' but finally ending in the second death." *The Great Controversy*, pages 543-544.

If inspiration teaches that there is at least some degree of vengeance involved in the destruction of the wicked, we must accept this at face value and not attempt to change the meaning of the language used. There are voices in the church today claiming that if God sends fire down upon the wicked, bringing about the second death, then He would be a cruel tyrant. In the interview titled "Why Did Jesus Have to Die?," Dr. Maxwell

stated that if it is God who destroys the wicked, then "we are doomed—not just to die; we are doomed not just to be executed; we are doomed to be punished and then executed." This is the same sentiment put forth by Bob Rigsby in the HeavenlySanctuary article quoted from earlier that "Death as punishment is a savage and senseless act." False teachers claim that God is a savage executioner if He directly destroys the wicked in the second death. They refuse to accept the clear words of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy on the subjects of vengeance, justice, and punishment as it relates to the destruction of the wicked.

Ellen White rebuked those who see God as cruel for His sending destruction upon His enemies, because their false theories present a challenge to God's authority as man's Creator.

“The Lord commanded Moses to avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites...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.” *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 4, p. 50.

The Bible declares that **“And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity...”** Isaiah 13:11. Ellen White was clear that the wicked will not only be punished by God, but destroyed by Him as well.

“The forbearance that God has exercised toward the wicked, emboldens men in transgression; but their punishment will be none the less certain and terrible for being long delayed. ‘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.’ Isaiah 28:21. To our merciful God the act of punishment is a strange act. ‘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.' Ezekiel 33:11. The Lord is 'merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' Yet He will 'by no means clear the guilty.' Exodus 34:6,7. While He does not delight in vengeance, He will execute judgment upon the transgressors of His law. He is forced to do this, to preserve the inhabitants of the earth from utter depravity and ruin. In order to save some He must cut off those who have become hardened in sin. 'The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.' Nahum 1:3. By terrible things in righteousness He will vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. And the very fact of His reluctance to execute justice testifies to the enormity of the sins that call forth His judgments and to the severity of the retribution awaiting the transgressor." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 628.

Men, blinded by Satan, refuse to acknowledge that there are legitimate reasons why God both punishes and destroys the wicked in the second death. Those who accept the clear words of inspiration realize that God doesn't "execute" the wicked (as Maxwell puts it). One does not *execute* a rabid animal that cannot be cured of its disease; and sub-human butchers like Adolph Hitler will not be *executed*. Like rabid animals who cannot be cured of their disease, the wicked will be destroyed in "**His strange work**" so that the universe will once and for all be rid of sin and sinners. False teachers in the counterfeit character movement think that they are defending the character of God, but in reality they are pouring contempt upon God and challenging His authority by claiming that He is an executioner if He directly destroys the wicked in the second death. They refuse to accept at face value what inspiration teaches.

Carried to its logical conclusion, the theory that there is no punishment for the wicked means that Satan, his evil angels, and the worst of sinners who have brought untold misery upon their fellow men are not deserving of punishment before they experience the second death. Ellen White described how when fire is reigned down from heaven which turns the earth into a "**molten mass**," most "**are destroyed as in a moment**." *The Great Controversy*, p. 673. But she goes on to say that there are some who lived on this earth who were so possessed by evil that they are deserving of a greater punishment than instant destruction. They will "**suffer many days**." Is justice served by punishing a child rapist by sentencing him to 10 minutes in the county jail? No. Is justice served if the wicked are sentenced to unspeakable pain and torment in hellfire for time without end? No. In justice, the punishment must fit the crime. It has been revealed through inspiration that God in His wisdom will punish and destroy the unrepentant wicked in literal fire, and that some will suffer longer than others—according to the degree of their wickedness while living on this earth. God's punishment will fit the crimes of those who perish in the flames. No mortal man should take upon himself the task of reinterpreting what inspiration has revealed about the final destruction of the wicked; yet this is exactly what the false teachers identified in this article are doing. They, along with New Age spiritualists, believe it to be their mission to enlighten the world with the truth about the destruction of the wicked. It is the old serpent's same question he posed in the Garden of Eden: "Hath God indeed

said these things? Let me enlighten you with the truth.”

Many in the counterfeit movement believe that it is the unveiled glory of God that destroys the wicked. The theory is that all of the vivid descriptions in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy of the wicked suffering and dying in the lake of fire only symbolically illustrate the idea of the second death. Inspired words do not really mean what they say. In other words, the Creator of man is not a just and loving God if He punishes the wicked for their violation of His law. In other words, the wicked get off without being punished for the heinous crimes they have committed. The irony is that even amongst the false teachers, there is debate and disagreement on just how the wicked are destroyed. Such is the result of placing human speculation above the revealed word of God.

God's Justice

A theory being promoted by one leader in the counterfeit character of God movement is that God only administers justice in order to heal and restore. If people have to die, it is only because God wants to get our attention, but it doesn't necessarily mean that those who die will not be saved in God's kingdom. There is some degree of truth in this theory concerning God's justice; but the claim is that God's justice is *never* retributive in nature. Supposedly, every incident in Scripture where God took life should not be understood as a punishment by God. Again, we come up against the uninspired theories of men conflicting with the teachings found in the Spirit of Prophecy. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Ellen White makes it clear that their deaths were from the hand of God as retributive punishment for the sin of breaking their vow to God.

“The brief but terrible history of Ananias and Sapphira is traced by the pen of inspiration for the benefit of all who profess to be the followers of Christ. This important lesson has not rested with sufficient weight upon the minds of our people...This one marked evidence of God's retributive justice is fearful, and should lead all to fear and tremble to repeat sins which brought such a punishment...While under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, they made a pledge to give to the Lord certain lands; but when they were no longer under this heavenly influence, the impression was less forcible, and they began to question and draw back from fulfilling the pledge which they had made...Covetousness was first cherished; then, ashamed to have their brethren know that their selfish souls grudged that which they had solemnly dedicated and pledged to God, deception was practiced...When convicted of their falsehood, their punishment was instant death.” *Conflict and Courage*, p. 330.

There are those who insist that any punishment we receive from a life of sin and rebellion against God is only the result of sin itself, and God is not the direct cause of the punishment. In an article written for the SDA Biblical Research Institute, Frank Holbrook addressed this assumption.

It is true that in one sense sin destroys itself, but it is also true that God's love is

a holy love; justice is the other side of the coin. True love and justice are united. And justice requires adequate punishment of transgression and is not to be dismissed by the valid truth that sin destroys itself. The wicked man may die from his use of drugs, or an abused body may give up, or have a shoot-out with the law. And we may say he destroyed himself. But he still faces a judgment at the bar of God. He must give account (Rom 14:10-12; Acts 24:25). And he will be punished according to his deeds (2 Cor 5:10). God "will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom 2:6). This will have to be an act of God. It can in no wise be due simply or only to a mechanism of withdrawal of His blessing and protection inasmuch as executive judgment takes place *after human probation* and those who stand under condemnation are both fallen angels as well as impenitent humanity. (Article titled "Does God Destroy?" published March 20, 1985)

In the executive judgment that takes place after human probation has ended, and after the end of the millennium, Ellen White give a description of the final events as she saw them in vision:

"Satan rushes into the midst of his followers and tries to stir up the multitude to action. But fire from God out of heaven is rained upon them, and the great men, and mighty men, the noble, the poor and miserable, are all consumed together. I saw that some were quickly destroyed, while others suffered longer. They were punished according to the deeds done in the body. Some were many days consuming, and just as long as there was a portion of them unconsumed, all the sense of suffering remained... Satan and his angels suffered long. Satan bore not only the weight and punishment of his own sins, but also of the sins of the redeemed host, which had been placed upon him; and he must also suffer for the ruin of souls which he had caused. Then I saw that Satan and all the wicked host were consumed, and the justice of God was satisfied; and all the angelic host, and all the redeemed saints, with a loud voice said, 'Amen!'... I then looked and saw the fire which had consumed the wicked, burning up the rubbish and purifying the earth." *Early Writings*, pages 294,295.

Notice that when **"Satan and all the wicked host were consumed,"** the **"justice of God was satisfied."** This is judicial punishment. The word *justice* here does not constitute the healing and restoration of the wicked. God's justice was displayed in the destruction of the wicked (the second death) by a literal fire that also had the effect of **"burning up the rubbish and purifying the earth."** Yes, the fire that destroys the wicked in the second death is a literal fire.

Yes, there are times as recorded in Scripture when the wicked became so evil that God removed His protection and allowed Satan to bring destruction upon them. But this does not negate the fact that it is God Himself who will destroy the wicked in the second death. To say that it is merely the glory of God's presence that does the destruction instead of God Himself is like saying that the executioner who throws the

switch doesn't execute the criminal in the electric chair—it was only the electricity that kills the criminal.

Atheists, Scoffers, and the False Character of God Movement Say the Same Thing

Some Adventists today refuse to believe that God ever has, or ever will destroy anyone. They just know that God wouldn't do such an unthinkable thing. One Adventist who thinks that way said: "If you really believe God killed people in the flood, you would have to see Him as personally holding a little child's head under the water and drowning him." These words express the common thread running throughout the false character of God movement—which is the idea that if God destroys even totally evil people, He would be unjust, vindictive, and tyrannical. The human logic that leads to this conclusion fails to take into account the unbridled wickedness of the generation destroyed in the flood—that they were beyond redemption. If the little children who perished in the flood would have been allowed to grow up, they would have become adults with hearts totally given over to evil. If God had allowed that wicked generation to continue on, evil would have continued to spread, and even the faithful eight humans who boarded the ark may have also become evil beyond redemption.

There is an old saying that sometimes we can't see the forest for the trees. If we step back for a moment from the details of the many issues we have been examining thus far and seek a broader picture of the counterfeit character of God movement, we come to a startling conclusion. Atheists and scoffers of religion read the Bible and say, "If what the Old Testament says about God destroying humans is true, then He is a vengeful tyrant." The startling conclusion is that the false "Adventist" teachers we are exposing in this article are saying the same thing—that if it is true that God brought destruction upon the wicked (especially upon little children), then He is a vengeful tyrant.

Here is what one famous American atheist said about God:

"It is impossible to conceive of a more thoroughly despicable, hateful, and arrogant being than the Old Testament God. He is without a redeeming feature. In the mythology of the world he has no parallel. He, only, is never touched by agony and tears. He delights only in blood and pain. Human affections are naught to him...A false friend, an unjust tyrant, sincere in hatred, promise, honest in curse, suspicious, ignorant, and changeable, infamous and hideous;—such is the god of the Pentateuch." *Ingersoll's Views on Religion* by Dr. Gordon Stein and Al Seckel.

Compare what the atheist Ingersoll wrote about the God of the Old Testament with what one of the staff members of HeavenlySanctuary.com wrote:

I made this list, on another thread, of things that God is said to have done (or is like) from OT writers:

1) God is both good and bad.

- 2) Everything that happens is according to the sovereign will of God.
 - 3) Every event in nature from an earthquake to a storm was God flexing his muscles.
 - 4) God treated good people good and bad people bad.
 - 5) God punished people with disease, famine, pestilence, drought, floods, and storms at land and sea to punish wicked deeds.
 - 6) God loved men more than women.
 - 7) God is racist. (He loves His chosen over others)
 - 8) God punished children for what their fathers, grandfathers, and great grandfathers did.
 - 9) God kills at will.
 - 10) God is volatile, petty, violent, and arbitrary, etc. etc.
- Can I really trust someone like this?
(Posted December 28, 2007.)

How can a professed Adventist view the God of the Old Testament as "petty, violent, and arbitrary"? It is because he believes that he has greater insight into the character of God than the writers of the Old Testament. It is because he is wise in his own eyes and has placed his uninspired conjecture above a clear "thus saith the Lord." It is because he has *misunderstood* what the Old Testament reveals about our merciful, loving God. In the forum that the above human opinion was copied from, multiple theories are presented that sweep away faith in the Old Testament Scriptures as the inspired word of God. The claim is made that Old Testament authors lived in "dim light." Here is what one member posted in a series of debates on the HeavenlySanctuary.com forum:

What if the reality of the matter was that because things were so "dim" these people were honestly misguided by their own impulses and believed God to be a certain way, therefore believed Him to be acting a certain way or commanding certain things of them contrary to His real character, therefore recorded events as happening that way? For example: their dim view of God was this angry smiter of any who dared cross Him. So THEY get it into THEIR minds that "God is telling them" to go out and slaughter all these people and take what belongs to them, etc. SO THEY WRITE IT DOWN THAT WAY in Scripture and the confusion continues. Of course then we have to revisit and revise some of our misconceptions about revelation and inspiration, don't we ... *sigh* ... guess that's not gonna be popular. (Posted March 10, 2006.)

This type of speculation shows the extreme extent to which deviating from the truth can lead a person. The above theory offered by a member of the HeavenlySanctuary.com forum drags the heaven-inspired words of the authors of Scripture down to the level of the carnal mind. Essentially this theory claims that the authors of Old Testament books were *not* really inspired by God, but instead only wrote what THEY get into THEIR minds. If this insane theory were true, then the Old Testament is nothing but a book of opinions; and we would have to conclude that the prophets such as Moses (who talked face-to-face with Christ) didn't really understand the truth about God's character. In just

this one forum thread titled "So...Does God Kill?," every possible human theory is put forth to explain away the fact that God destroyed or ordered the destruction of wicked individuals and nations. The members of that forum will never understand His character if they place their own speculation above the revealed word of God.

The God-does-not-kill community has essentially made the same charges against God as the atheists make. Atheists directly slander God by calling Him tyrannical because of His actions as recorded in Scripture. Professed Christians would not intentionally slander God, but because they can't fathom in their minds a God who would reign destruction down upon the wicked and still be a just, righteous, and loving God, they invent theories that seek to reinterpret Scripture to present a god who is more kind and appealing; and the carnally-minded eagerly embrace such a god. Everything the Old Testament says about God is truth; and there are legitimate reasons for the destructions He brought upon wicked individuals and nations. The God-does-not-destroy theorists close their minds to those legitimate reasons, and therefore their self-imposed blindness makes them no more informed about the truth of God's character than the atheist. The true character of God message will provide rational explanations for why God had to destroy the wicked in the past, and why He will destroy those same wicked people in the second death. The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy shed much light on why God destroys the wicked; but there are Adventists who neglect the study of Scripture and the books written by Ellen White, and they easily fall prey to the false teachings of people who insist that the Bible doesn't really mean what it says.

For any who are entertaining the thought that God does not destroy the incurably wicked, be it by water or by fire, it would be wise for them to read Chapter 7 titled "The Flood" in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Here are a few excerpts from that chapter that should convince them that there are times when God's wrath is poured out without any mixture of mercy:

"They [the antediluvians] sought only to gratify the desires of their own proud hearts, and reveled in scenes of pleasure and wickedness. Not desiring to retain God in their knowledge, they soon came to deny His existence. They adored nature in place of the God of nature. They glorified human genius, worshiped the works of their own hands, and taught their children to bow down to graven images...The world was in its infancy; yet iniquity had become so deep and widespread that God could no longer bear with it; and He said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.'...If they did not cease to pollute with their sins the world and its rich treasures, He would blot them from His creation, and would destroy the things with which He had delighted to bless them; He would sweep away the beasts of the field, and the vegetation which furnished such an abundant supply of food, and would transform the fair earth into one vast scene of desolation and ruin...They were unwilling to renounce their sins...As sin became general, it appeared less and less sinful, and they finally declared that the divine law was no longer in force; that it was *contrary to the character of God to punish transgression*; and they denied

that His judgments were to be visited upon the earth. Had the men of that generation obeyed the divine law, they would have recognized the voice of God in the warning of His servant; but their minds had become so blinded by rejection of light that they really believed Noah's message to be a delusion....Had the antediluvians believed the warning, and repented of their evil deeds, the Lord would have turned aside His wrath, as He afterward did from Nineveh. But by their obstinate resistance to the reproofs of conscience and the warnings of God's prophet, that generation filled up the measure of their iniquity, and became ripe for destruction....Mercy had ceased its pleadings for the guilty race...Love, no less than justice, demanded that God's judgments should put a check on sin...Another storm is coming. The earth will again be swept by the desolating wrath of God, and sin and sinners will be destroyed." Pages 91-101.

Jesus predicted that "as it was in the days of Noe [Noah], so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man [referring to His second coming]." Luke 17:26. According to the above quote by Mrs. White, there were people living in Noah's day who were preaching that "**it was contrary to the character of God to punish transgression.**" That is exactly what we are hearing today from the false character of God movement; and those who are ruled by their carnal heart are embracing that lie with great enthusiasm.

False Science Involved in the God-Does-Not-Kill Movement

Recall that in a previous quote, Ellen White wrote that the spiritualistic deceptions that will come into the church will "**make of no effect the truth of heavenly origin, and rob the people of God of their past experience, giving them instead a false science.**" *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 203. The following quote is an example of the false science being presented by the God-does-not-destroy movement. Dick Winn, once a popular speaker in the church, wrote a devotional book in 1986 titled *His Healing Love* that was translated into many languages and sold all over the world. In his book, he asked the question: "How hot is hell?" Then he gave his answer.

...the day will come when those who refuse His gracious invitation for friendship will be given what they have chosen: separation from Him.

When you unplug your lamp, it doesn't explode. The light just goes out. Nor do you need to beat on the bulb in anger for its ceasing to give light. That's simply what happens when it is disconnected. By the same token, when one breaks union with God, life ceases. God does not, in anger, need to crush it out. To be separated from the Life-giver is to be dead eternally.

The people God was addressing in Biblical times did not always understand this cause-effect principle [of cutting off the power to the lamp, or life to the wicked]. It was difficult for them to appreciate the destructiveness of being out of harmony with God. And so the Bible writers employed the imagery of consuming flames to describe the sureness and completeness of the destruction of life apart from God. But being apart from God is in itself the worst

thing that could ever happen to a person. God doesn't need to torch hellish fires to enhance what is already so terrible. (Dick Winn, *His Healing Love*, 1986, p. 332.)

After Dick Winn wrote his book, he scrapped his Seventh-day Adventist faith and walked away from the church.

Winn's theory of how the wicked die is the reverse of pantheism. Pantheism holds that God is present in all life. Winn taught that death is the result of God removing His presence from the living. "To be separated from the Life-giver is to be dead eternally." It is true that those who die the second death will be eternally separated from God; but it is not true that it is separation from God that *causes* the second death. The alpha apostasy of Dr. Kellogg's *The Living Temple* was the pantheistic principle that God's presence was in all life. The complement, or mirror image of that concept, is that if God removes His presence, death is the result. Dick Winn became a victim of seducing spirits.

Another concept in the above statement from Dick Winn's book is one that Maxwell constantly harps on. "The day will come when those who refuse His [God's] gracious *invitation for friendship* will be given what they have chosen: separation from Him." In other words, the wicked do not die the second death because they refused to let go of their cherished sins, or because they were totally evil. They die because they did not become friends with God. Dick Winn, Graham Maxwell, and no telling how many others would have us believe that the second death is not a matter of receiving the wages of transgressing the law and of not accepting Christ's substitutionary death in the sinner's behalf; but only the result of not striking up a friendship with God.

On Dr. Maxwell's website, he states: "He [God] even prefers to regard us not as servants but as friends. This is the truth revealed through all the books of Scripture." But as we previously noted, Maxwell fails to qualify friendship with God. Jesus said, "**Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.**" John 15:14. The idea that people are lost because they did not become friends with God is absurd; and even the vaguest concept of salvation by friendship undermines the necessity of obedience to the law of God.

Also notice how Winn promotes the idea that the authors of the Bible lived in "dim light" by saying that "It was difficult for them to appreciate the destructiveness of being out of harmony with God. And so the Bible writers employed the imagery of consuming flames to describe the sureness and completeness of the destruction of life apart from God." This theory that the prophets who wrote the books of the Bible just didn't have the intelligence to understand the doctrine of hell is the height of arrogance. The false teachers are essentially saying that they have a better understanding of God than those who were chosen by the Lord to author the Bible.

The Counterfeit Character Message Undermines the Doctrine of the Executive Judgment

Every Seventh-day Adventist should know this doctrine as taught by the church:

The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever. (*Fundamental Beliefs*, # 26.)

The doctrine of the executive judgment is based mostly on what the apostle John wrote when he saw **“thrones, and they [Jesus and the redeemed] sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.”** Rev. 20:4. It is during the executive judgment that the punishment to be portioned out to each of the wicked will be determined. Those who deny that the wicked will be punished in accordance to the degree of their evil works in essence claim that this doctrine as taught by the church is of no consequence, for the fate of all wicked has already been determined—they will all suffer no punishment and will die an instant death. The idea of punishing and destroying incurably evil people goes against the way that some people wish to picture God, but their theories reject the plain teachings of inspiration and doctrines that have long been embraced by Seventh-day Adventists. The many false theories held by those in the God-does-not-kill movement do truly **“make of no effect the truth of heavenly origin, and rob the people of God of their past experience, giving them instead a false science.”**

Men have invented theories that try to minimize the destruction of the wicked. The theories vary, but the common idea is that the wicked will be zapped out of existence in an instant, whether by the glory of God’s presence, by His withdrawing His presence, or by natural events. The debate continues as to just how the wicked will die.

The notion is that the words in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy describing the final destruction of the wicked are mere imagery. Nowhere in Mrs. White’s narrative of the destruction of the wicked (as written in *The Great Controversy*) does she say, “Okay, from this point on I will be speaking metaphorically.” There is not even the slightest hint of metaphor. And remember that Ellen White saw in vision the final events that take place after the millennium. Who are Dick Winn, Graham Maxwell, and the people at HeavenlySanctuary.com to contradict her inspired words?

Why would the people claiming to have the truth about God’s character want us to accept some human theory in place of a clear “thus saith the Lord”? It is because they expect us to believe that they have found a more enlightened way of explaining the destruction of the wicked. Their theories are an attempt to make void the understanding that the Adventist people have always had regarding the final destruction of the wicked. It has always been the teaching of Seventh-day Adventists that the lake of fire is literal, and that the wicked will be burned to literal ashes. False

theories have brought into question what has been revealed through inspiration concerning God's final justice.

“Affiliated to the dangers already named [having a wrong concept of the law, and the neglect of the pulpit to enforce the divine law] is the danger of *underestimating the justice of God*. The tendency of the modern pulpit is to strain out the divine justice from the divine benevolence, to sink benevolence into a sentiment rather than exalt it into a principle. The new theological prism puts asunder what God has joined together. Is the divine law a good or an evil? It is good. Then justice is good; for it is a disposition to execute the law.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 465.

Some people who claim to be the defenders of God's character say that God does not destroy the wicked in the second death, but rather that their death is the result of “natural events.” The simple question we would ask is: “What natural events?” After the millennium, the wicked, spurred on by Satan, attempt to attack the holy city. What natural events bring destruction upon the wicked in order to protect the righteous inhabitants of the New Jerusalem? If it is true that natural events destroy the wicked, then nature is placed above the sovereign God of the universe. The natural events explanation for the destruction of the wicked is just one of several competing theories to explain how the wicked are destroyed; and it challenges God's authority in the universe, for if this theory were true, God would have no right to bring His subjects into judgment, investigate their lives, pass sentence on the wicked, and execute the sentence. If He has no right to do these things, then there is no reason for the resurrection of the wicked and the second death.

Ellen White makes it very clear who destroys the wicked in the second death.

“Today Christ is looking with sadness upon those whose characters He must at last refuse to acknowledge. Inflated with self-sufficiency, they hope that it will be well with their souls. But at the last great day, the mirror of detection reveals to them the evil that their hearts have practiced, and shows them at the same time the impossibility of reform. Every effort was made to bring them to repentance. But they refused to humble their hearts...What a scene is this! I pass over the ground again and again, bowed down in an agony that no tongue can express, as I see the end of the many, many who have refused to receive their Saviour. Justice will take the throne, and the arm strong to save will show itself strong to smite and destroy the enemies of the kingdom of God.” *The Upward Look*, p. 301.

Is It God's Glory That Destroys the Wicked in the Second Death?

The most prevalent explanation offered by those who just can't bring themselves to admit that God is the direct cause of the second death is that when God reveals the glory of His presence to the wicked who march upon the New Jerusalem to take the city, the unveiled glory of God becomes a consuming fire that destroys them. This

theory can be easily refuted by the following Ellen White quote:

“Now Christ again appears to the view of His enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God...The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 665.

If the wicked are destroyed by the glory of God's presence, why are they not destroyed at that moment here described by Mrs. White? Note that the **“brightness of His presence...flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth.”** Yet the wicked are not destroyed by God's unveiled glory as it goes out and floods the whole earth. Before their destruction comes, several other events transpire, such as the **“final coronation of the Son of God”** (p. 666). Also, **“the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed”** (p. 666). Still no destruction. **“The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them”** (p. 668).

It is not until Satan **“rushes into the midst of his subjects and endeavors to inspire them with his own fury and arouse them to instant battle”** (p. 672) that fire finally comes down from heaven to begin the process of destruction. God protects His redeemed that are in the city against the attack of Satan and the wicked. He has destroyed wicked people many times in the past; so why would God suddenly become a vindictive tyrant if He destroys the wicked when they march upon the New Jerusalem?

The Wicked Destroyed Out of Mercy and Love

The God-does-not-destroy people scoff at the idea that God destroys the wicked out of love and mercy. Yet this is what Ellen White taught:

“Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,—every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. A life of

rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven...They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.

“Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God’s verdict that the wicked are incurable.

“In mercy to the world, God blotted out its wicked inhabitants in Noah’s time. In mercy He destroyed the corrupt dwellers in Sodom ...It is in mercy to the universe that God will finally destroy the rejecters of His grace.” *The Great Controversy*, pages 542,543.

“The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour’s precept, ‘Love your enemies.’ God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited.” *The Great Controversy*, pp. 541-542.

”The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 541.

In light of these words of inspiration, it is amazing that there are professed Seventh-day Adventists who say that God would be a vindictive tyrant if He destroyed the wicked Himself. Why do they refuse to believe that the destruction is done out of love and mercy? Satan has succeeded in destroying the meaning of inspired words through the use of human reasoning. Words of inspiration become like clay where people reshape them to fit their pet theories. Ellen White wrote that in Christ’s day, **“teachers of the nation interpreted the Scriptures according to their cherished ideas.”** *Advent Review & Sabbath Herald*, August 29, 1899. We are seeing the same thing in modern, spiritual Israel. Some people just will not accept the plain teachings of inspiration. They flatly reject the following light shed on how God will punish the wicked:

"Satan’s punishment was to be far greater than that of those whom he had deceived. It so far exceeded their punishment that it could not be compared with theirs. After all those whom he had deceived had perished, Satan was to still live and suffer on much longer." *Spiritual Gifts*, Volume 1, p. 212.

Was this just Ellen White’s human opinion? No, it was revealed to her in vision.

The uninspired, private interpretations in the counterfeit movement teach *no* punishment, *no* reason to fear His judgments, *no* literal fire, *no* destruction by God. False teachers claim that the words *justice* and *vengeance* do not really mean what we have always thought them to mean—punishment that fits the crime. Friends, please do not be lured into their snare. To believe as they do is to believe in a false god.

Christ the “Savior”

In order to better understand why it is God who destroyed the wicked in Old Testament days, and that it is He who will bring about the final destruction of the wicked, we need to focus on one of the ways that Christ is a Savior—one view of God that many overlook. In order for God to save His people in Old Testament days, there sometimes had to be the destruction of those who were out to destroy His people. There have been enemies of God’s people that were just out to totally annihilate them. If they were successful, then Jehovah would have been a disgrace, and not a mighty God. He would have been a defeated God. Jehovah must manifest Himself sometimes when His enemies, such as Pharaoh, try to establish that they are *greater* than God. Jehovah must assert Himself or He will not be the Jehovah of salvation. If He did not move against evil men, He would not be on the side of His people, but opposed to them.

If *your* life were threatened by an evil person, don’t you think it would be a good thing that God sometimes has to destroy people to save us? When Japan attacked America and would have destroyed us and our way of life, we praised God for saving our nation. Are we to think that when He saved His people in Old Testament days from total destruction by their enemies, it was wrong? But when He saves us today it is right? If Japan had wiped out America, we would have said, “God is no longer for us.” God is a God of love. He loves those who accept Him as their Savior and Deliverer, but He will exact justice upon those who fill their cup of iniquity, and upon those who would seek to destroy His people. Sometimes God’s justice requires the destruction of His enemies.

There are some people who don’t agree with that line of thinking because it goes against their concept of what God should be like. They are unaware that their thinking is exactly in line with pacifist spiritualists who only think only in terms of peace and love and harmony in the cosmos. Dr. Graham Maxwell, in spite of his false teachings about the blood of Christ and the atonement at least is willing to admit that God did destroy the wicked in Old Testament days, for as he put it in one of his interviews, there is just too much evidence in the Bible that He did destroy people. However, Dr. Maxwell does flatly deny that it will be God who destroys the wicked in what we call the second death.

An Inspired Illustration Sheds Light on Why God Must Sometimes Destroy the Wicked

If those who believe that God never kills would stop being wise in their own eyes and accept the plain teachings of God’s last day special messenger, they would see that

there are legitimate, rational reasons why there are times when God must destroy the wicked; and they would see that when God does destroy, He destroys out of love and mercy.

“The Lord commanded Moses to avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites...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.

“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. 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. 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 wiles to transgress, and show open contempt for the wise requirements of Jehovah.

“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.’” *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 4, pages 50-52.

It was as if Ellen White directed the above light to counter the spiritual darkness that is being brought into the Adventist church from those in the false character of God movement. It has always been the tendency of fallen man to create God in his own image, and that is what the God-does-not-kill crowd has done. These people falsely reason that since God is love, He cannot possibly become angry with those He loves so much. These people are described in the above inspired quote—people who **“can see only the destruction of God’s enemies, which looks to them unmerciful and severe.”** So they create in their own minds a god who is never unmerciful or severe; and in order to do that, they must reinterpret Scripture to fit their theories. This idea that God allowed mankind for thousands of years to see Him as being capable of destroying His enemies, but suddenly in these last days is trying to set the record straight, is an absurd notion. What God wants us to understand in these last days is *why* He had to destroy the wicked. Some people can see the merciful side of God, but as Ellen White described them, **“They do not look upon the other side”** of God. That other side is that God will destroy the wicked when it becomes necessary. Once again we offer the following quote to illustrate the dual nature of God's character:

“The same angel who had come from the royal courts to rescue Peter, had been the messenger of wrath and judgment to Herod. The angel smote Peter to arouse him from slumber; it was with a different stroke that he smote the wicked king, laying how his pride and bringing upon him the punishment of the Almighty. Herod died in great agony of mind and body, under the retributive judgment of God.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 152.

The false movement that claims to be teaching the true character of God only portrays the side of God that rescued Peter. They refuse to believe that holy angels are sent by the Lord to punish and lay low those who, like Herod, have stepped over the boundary and become wicked beyond redemption. The false teachers go around claiming that there is no reason to fear God, that He does not punish the wicked, and that he does not bring death to evil men like Herod. The choice is ours: we can believe the false teachers, or those with the gift of prophecy such as Mrs. White.

Adventists who refuse to accept what inspiration says about God destroying the wicked live in a fantasy world and refuse to accept the reality of a world where Satan and those he controls would destroy God's people if He did not intervene. They spin the truth into a lie, and have been so successful that in certain church circles, no one dare speak of God's wrath without the fear of being ostracized and accused of being guilty of misrepresenting God.

Several Elements Involved in the Destruction of the Wicked

Those who teach that God never kills claim that the wicked are *a/ways* destroyed either by their own hand, or when God steps out of the way and allows natural events (volcanoes, earthquakes, etc.) or evil angels to do the destruction; but the theory is that God does not directly destroy. It is true that inspiration teaches that there are times when God removes His protection from the wicked and allows evil angels and nature to do the destruction; but there are also times when God Himself and the holy angels whom He sends take the lives of those wicked who have stepped beyond the boundaries of His mercy. The following quotes demonstrate that there are times when God, His holy angels, evil angels, and the elements of nature at various times take part in the destruction of the wicked:

"A single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians and filled the land with mourning. When David offended against God by numbering the people, one angel caused that terrible destruction by which his sin was punished. The same destructive power *exercised by holy angels when God commands*, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits. There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere." *The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

"I was shown that the judgments of God [during the last days] would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but in this way: They place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reprovcs, and points out the only path of safety; then, if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them." *Last Day Events*, p. 242.

"Satan will then [after probation closes] plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old." *The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

"There are many Ananiases and Sapphiras in our day, whom Satan tempts to dissemble, because of their love of money. By various plans and excuses they withhold from the treasury of God the means intrusted to

them for the advancement of the cause of God. Should the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira be visited upon this class, there would be many dead bodies in our churches requiring burial.” *Redemption: or the Ministry of Peter and the Conversion of Saul* (1877), p. 22.

“At His own will God summons the forces of nature to overthrow the might of His enemies—‘fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word.’ Psalm 148:8. When the heathen Amorites had set themselves to resist His purposes, God interposed, casting down ‘great stones from heaven’ upon the enemies of Israel. We are told of a greater battle to take place in the closing scenes of earth's history, when Jehovah ‘hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation.’ Jeremiah 50:25.” *Maranatha*, p. 297.

The Moral Influence Theory—Yes Or No?

The staff at HeavenlySanctuary.com and Dr. Graham Maxwell deny that they teach the moral influence theory. Recall that the moral influence theory, first taught by the Twelfth Century monk Pierre Abélard, teaches that Christ's death on the cross was mostly a great demonstration of God's love and Christ's obedience. In this theory, the idea that Christ was sacrificed for our sins, or that Jesus in any way paid our penalty for sin, is rejected.

Let's find out why HeavenlySanctuary.com and Dr. Maxwell want to distance themselves from the moral influence theory. Most Adventists are aware of the radio program called *The Voice of Prophecy*. Thank God that they see the moral influence theory for what it is. Here is a description they gave of this theory:

There is in the world—and has been for centuries—an understanding or a theological model that is sometimes called the “moral influence theory.” In a nutshell, it suggests that the main dilemma with sin is mankind's confusion and fear. We don't understand God; because of Lucifer's lies, we just don't comprehend how good He is, how right and how safe and how satisfying His kingdom is. We're racists and liars and cheats and murderers because we're confused, because we don't know better. But IF we could grasp...the attractiveness of God, then some say the cross and the blood and the atonement are really not necessary. (*Voice of Prophecy* broadcast by David Smith, October 31, 2001.)

As we have already seen, all spiritualistic theories lead to the ultimate conclusion that we do not need Jesus as our Savior. This description of the moral influence theory presented by David Smith, the *Voice of Prophecy* speaker, closely parallels what we hear today in the false character of God messages. And David rightly points out that the heresy embedded within this theory is that “the cross and the blood and the atonement are really not necessary.” This is the real reason that some groups and individuals want to distance themselves from Abelard's moral influence theory. They dance all around and speculate on the subjects of the cross, the blood of Christ, the

final destruction of the wicked, the Old Testament authors, and the atonement; but they never really come right out and say in plain English what they believe, which is that they *reject* established Seventh-day Adventist teachings on these doctrines. They want to give totally different explanations of these doctrines other than those established by the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. They have come to *enlighten* us.

Counterfeit Doctrines Cause People to Reject the Truth with the Error

We have now laid enough of a foundation to get to the core reason why the false character movement is so dangerous to God's people. Ellen White described a principle that counterfeits operate on. In the following quote, she applied the principle specifically to counterfeit prophecies, but it also applies to all counterfeit doctrines. In her day, there were a few Adventists who claimed that they were receiving messages from God to give to His people. Regarding those counterfeit prophets, she wrote:

“The things revealed [through false visions] were often common, earthly matters, such as, who should get breakfast the next morning, who should prepare the dinner, who should wash the dishes. Mingled with these frivolous things were sacred truths, which they had found in the Bible and testimonies. Satan’s hand was in all this, to disgust people, and cause them to spurn everything in the nature of visions. Thus the false and true would be rejected together...This is why Satan is so constantly pressing in the spurious [counterfeits]—to lead away from the truth.” *Selected Messages, Book 2, pages 77, 78.*

Do you see the principle of counterfeits? The counterfeit contains so much nonsense as **“to disgust people,”** and many end up throwing away the baby with the bathwater—**“the false and true would be rejected together.”**

In the mid-1980s, a counterfeit movement sprang up within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Several Adventists in various parts of America began to proclaim that they had the power to cast out demons, and many associated with that false "deliverance" movement were claiming to be receiving "thought messages" from God. It could be easily established from Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy that this movement was a counterfeit; yet once people were drawn into that movement, it was almost impossible for them to escape the snare. Those claiming to have the power to cast out demons would convince certain Adventists that they were being oppressed by demons, and marathon deliverance sessions, usually lasting several hours, were conducted to drive away the harassing demons. Adventist exorcists would cast out of unsuspecting and naive church members demons with names like "Peanut Butter," "M&Ms," "Peter Pan," "Aspirin," and "Headache." Many Adventists were disgusted by what they saw going on in the deliverance movement, and realized that it was fanaticism. The "exorcists" would carry on long conversations with the demons; but their verbal jousting was nothing but a veiled form of spiritualism. Those claiming to receive thought messages from God to give to individual Adventists wrote out messages filled with flowery, sentimental nonsense designed by Satan to flatter and deceive carnal hearts. Only eternity itself will reveal how many Adventists fell victim to that counterfeit movement. The people

involved in the movement were dead serious that they had been given a special gift by God; but churches were split and lives were ruined as the result of that false movement. As Adventists around the country observed what was going on, there were many who became so disgusted that they began to deny that there is any legitimacy to casting out demons, and they would reject any who might some day claim to have had a vision or dream—even if the person was truly inspired by the Lord.

The counterfeit character of God movement will lead to the same results. People will see how those claiming to preach the true message of God's character blatantly contradict inspiration, and are teaching theories that are disgusting to Adventists; and in their disgust many will turn away from anyone who stands up to speak of God's loving character. This article has exposed many of those false theories that most Adventists find disgusting, such as:

- There is no power at all in the blood of Christ.
- To emphasize the blood of Christ in the atonement is nothing but blood worship.
- The wicked will *not* be punished in the lake of fire because it is contrary to the character of God to punish transgression.
- God is not directly involved in the final destruction of the wicked (the second death).
- The idea that God destroys the wicked out of mercy and love is to be ridiculed.
- The teaching of Ellen White that in the fires of hell, some of the wicked will suffer longer than others is absolutely to be rejected.
- The lake fire is not literal fire, but only a metaphor.
- At least two conflicting theories are being taught as to how the wicked are destroyed in the second death—one is that they are destroyed by the glory of God's presence, and the other is that they are destroyed when God *removes* His presence. This kind of confusion is to be expected when trying to prove a lie.
- There is no need whatsoever for the legal forgiveness of sinners.
- The atonement has nothing to do with Christ paying our penalty for sin.
- The atonement as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church is nothing but a modern perversion of the true meaning of that term.
- The death of Jesus was in no way substitutionary.
- Jesus did not have to shed His blood on the cross to save mankind.
- God only wants us to be His friends, and we must not see ourselves as His servants.
- We should avoid the use of Christian terms and phrases like “justification,” “sanctification,” “washed in the blood,” “there is power in the blood,” “covered by His righteousness,” “accepted in the Beloved, and “saved by the blood of the Lamb,” for these constitute “dark speech.”
- There is no reason to fear God, even for those who know they are going to be lost.

- Once the church has the right teachers of truth, the Ten Commandments will no longer be needed—they won't even come to mind anymore.
- God had nothing to do with instituting or ordaining the system of animal sacrifices found in the Old Testament.
- God never has and never will kill any living thing.
- If God had ever once killed the wicked, or ordered their destruction, He would be a vindictive tyrant and therefore unworthy of our worship (which is the same charge made by atheists and scoffers).
- The description of Ellen White found in the book *The Great Controversy* on how the wicked will be destroyed in the second death by literal fire was just her own opinion, and therefore it is legitimate to develop alternative theories as to how the wicked are destroyed.
- The writings of Ellen White should not be properly called the Spirit of Prophecy. That's just an egotistical thing on the part of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.
- The kind and loving Jesus of the New Testament is not the Jehovah of the Old Testament who on several occasions reigned destruction down upon the wicked.
- The authors of the books of the Old Testament saw God as a harsh judge, and they had it all wrong when it came to the true character of God.
- The authors of the Old Testament only wrote what they thought in their minds was the truth, and their thinking was based on their concepts of God as being a vindictive, blood-thirsty God. Therefore, there is no truth to the inspiration of the Old Testament.
- The only truth we can know about God is what is revealed in the New Testament account of Christ. The Old Testament is not to be taken into account when searching for the truth about God's character.
- We do not need any authority, such as a prophet of God, to tell us the truth about whether God destroys, because our *hearts* tell us that He does not destroy.
- Moses was a tyrant who taught people to kill anyone who might contaminate God's people with evil practices; and thus Moses was not like Jesus who only taught us to love one another.
- God for thousands of years allowed His people to see Him as a destroyer of the wicked; but today the world is being *enlightened* by the truth that God does *not* punish or destroy the wicked.

Many of the above theories, when taken to their ultimate conclusion, lead to the heretical belief that, as pointed out by David Smith of the Voice of Prophecy, "the cross and the blood and the atonement are really not necessary." The people who are caught up in this false character of God movement would deny that they teach this, but that is because Satan has so confused their minds that they can no longer discern the truth on these subjects.

The above list could go on and on. Many other theories coming out of this false movement could also be labeled as disgusting. Some have insinuated that the

benevolent character of God contains both male and feminine aspects. Some teach that in the Old Testament there are two gods presented—the lord Satan who instituted the system of animal sacrifices and commanded God's people to destroy other nations, and the true Lord God who never harmed a fly. The extreme element of the God-does-not-kill movement now teaches that everyone will be saved, even Satan; for God does not kill—no way, no how. This is the ultimate conclusion that these false theories lead to; and it is but a repeat of the first lie told by Satan in Eden: **"Ye shall not surely die."** Genesis 3:4.

Some individuals within the God-does-not-kill movement pull up short of claiming that everyone eventually will be saved, but they adamantly deny that God destroys the wicked in the second death. These people do not discern the inherent contradiction in their theory. The theory is that, after the millennium, it is when God reveals His full glory to the wicked that they are consumed; and therein lies the contradiction. If God did not reveal His glory, the wicked would not be destroyed. So if the theory is true, the very fact that God does reveal His glory to the wicked is an admission that He does destroy them. He would be ultimately responsible for their death. But the truth is that it is *not* the unveiled glory of God that destroys the wicked. Before Satan leads the wicked to march against the New Jerusalem, **"The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance."** *The Great Controversy*, p. 665. But that glory does not destroy the wicked. It is not until the wicked begin their march upon the New Jerusalem that fire is reigned down from God out of heaven—which starts a process of releasing molten lava from the earth's core that consumes the wicked and turns the entire earth into a vast lake of fire. At least some people in the movement (like Mike Clute of *God's Last Call*) who have latched onto the falsehood that God does not kill have the fortitude to ride the lie to its ultimate conclusion—which is universal salvation.

It is because the counterfeit character of God message mingles so many insidious falsehoods with the sublime truths of God's loving character that many who hear this mingling of truth and error will someday turn away in disgust when the true character of God message goes out into the darkness of the world **"to shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth."** Many Seventh-day Adventists listen to sermons by men who declare that our doctrine of the final destruction of the wicked is a lie and that Ellen White was deceived on many subjects regarding the character of God. They read postings in pseudo-intellectual forums where human opinion is placed above a thus saith the Lord, and many Adventists will become so disgusted that some day when the genuine character of God message goes out to the world, they will throw out the truth with the error. Thus, Satan's goal of introducing a counterfeit character of God message will be met—**"to lead people away from the truth."**

Sentimental Love

Recall this description of last day spiritualism:

Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a

weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight.” *The Great Controversy*, May 21, 19.

In the counterfeit character of God movement, great emphasis is placed on love, peace, trust, cosmic harmony, and friendship with God; but where are the pleadings to be reconciled to God through faith and obedience? Many in the false character movement seem to have a subtle antagonism against the law of God. This is partly because God's people have left Christ out of the law, and legalism has thrived in the church for over a century. At the end of this article is a link to a sermon on what it means to preach Christ in the law. Please take time to hear it.

The flowery, sentimental sermons of men like Dr. Maxwell often leave out the requirements of God's law. These men sound more like New Age philosophers than Seventh-day Adventists. During an evangelistic series held at Andrews University, Graham Maxwell is quoted as saying:

I can hear God saying, I want more than anything else freedom in My family. I want peace and joy and love and freedom from fear. Children, I want you all to be My friends...[and then in his closing prayer] We get the message [God], We want to be your friends. (From a transcript appropriately titled “The Serpent Speaks.”)

It is important to note that there is something missing in Dr. Maxwell's prayer; but not only in this prayer, but in his book and in his Internet interviews. The Bible also speaks of peace and joy, but it never leaves out *righteousness*. **“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.*”** Romans 14:17. Without righteousness, there is no genuine peace and joy in the Lord. New Age theology speaks of peace and joy, but righteousness is never emphasized. Please recall the Ellen White quote used earlier where she described the subtle form of spiritualism that will come into the church in the last days:

“It is true that spiritualism is now changing its form and, veiling some of its more objectionable features, is assuming a Christian guise...While it formerly denounced Christ and the Bible, it now professes to accept both. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight.” *The Great Controversy*, pp. 557-558.

It is puzzling to some as to why Dr. Maxwell is so eager to put the Decalogue out of mind—even saying that when we have the right teachers, the ark containing the Ten Commandments won't even come to mind anymore.

Flowery words similar to those of Dr. Maxwell may be found all over the Internet in the writings of New Age gurus. For example (and notice how there is no mention or *righteousness*—the requirements of God's holy law):

Through developing a connection with God...You feel increasingly safe as you come to believe that there is a source you can always turn to in times of difficulty. As the twenty third psalm says, "God is my shepherd," he will take care of me and won't let me get into trouble if I trust him...The more reliance and trust you develop in God, the easier it becomes to deal without fear or worry with the inevitable challenges life brings...The most fundamental characteristic of God is that it offers you an experience of unconditional love...Have full trust in the wisdom of God...God can provide an experience of joy, security, peace of mind...You begin to experience less fear and more joy... (http://1stholistic.com/Prayer/hol_spiritual_healing.htm#NewAge)

One often-promoted theme of both false teachers within the church and New Age theology is that friendship and at-one-ness with God is to be more greatly desired than reformation and conformity to the law of God. It is declared that friendship with God leads to obedience; but Jesus placed obedience *before* friendship. "**Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.**" John 15:14. Mrs. White always placed obedience as a prerequisite of friendship with God.

"Men and women must have physical and mental strength to appreciate the elevated truths of God's Word, and be brought into a position where they will discern the imperfections in their moral characters. *They should be in earnest to reform, that they may have friendship with God.*" *Advent Review & Sabbath Herald*, May 21, 1914.

"Make friendship with Christ today. Put your case in the hands of the great Advocate. He will plead your cause before the Father. Though you have transgressed the law, and must plead guilty before God, Christ will present His precious blood in your behalf; and *through faith and obedience*, and a vital union with Christ, you may stand acquitted before the Judge of all the earth, and He will be your friend when the final trump shall sound, and the scenes of earth shall be no more." *The Signs of the Times*, 7-27-1888.

The false character of God movement has perverted the true meaning of God's love, and substituted in its place a counterfeit. This perversion is described by Tim Crosby in an article published by the Biblical Research Institute:

It is easy to slip from the truth of "God is love" into its counterfeit: "God is nice." It seems much safer to serve a tame God, always gentle, ever the lamb, never the lion. But as long as the Bible remains our creed, this caricature of God must be rejected. (From Tim Crosby's article titled *Does God Get Angry?*)

The Hypnotic Nature of Counterfeits

How is it that some claiming to be Seventh-day Adventists have run off after strange doctrines, claiming that their theories finally bring out the truth about God's character? The following quote answers that question:

“The ideas that some are presenting in regard to God are seductive and untrue. Those who teach these sentiments will be held accountable for greatly dishonoring God. You should understand clearly that Satanic agencies are clothing false theories in an attractive garb, even as Satan in the garden of Eden concealed his identity from our first parents by speaking through the serpent. You are instilling into human minds that which to you seems to be a very beautiful truth, but which in reality is error. The hypnotic influence of Satan is upon you, and upon all others who turn from the plain word of God to pleasing fables.” *Spalding and Magan Collection*, p. 332.

Here Ellen White explains why people so easily fall victim to spiritualism. It is the **“hypnotic influence of Satan”** that causes people to **“turn from the plain word of God to pleasing fables...Satan is waiting to steal a march upon everyone who allows himself to be deceived by his hypnotism. He begins to exert his power over them just as soon as they begin to investigate his theories.”** *Medical Ministry*, p. 101.

Those words “hypnotic” and “hypnotism” are the key to why Dr. Maxwell and others have been so deceived and so successful in gathering a loyal following of Seventh-day Adventists. The people presenting a counterfeit character of God message come speaking marvelous truths about how it is God's love that causes sinners to repent. Listeners discern no obvious error, so they sit enraptured as a web of theories are spun—theories that soon deviate from the path of truth. Those who are not able to discern that the theories presented stray from the revealed word of God will soon, without realizing it, embrace error as Satan **“begins to exert his [hypnotic] power over them.”**

The promise of spiritualism in any age is supposed enlightenment. Satan's offer to Eve was that if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she would be as a god. Never mind what the Lord told her. If she would follow Satan's suggestions, she would be enlightened.

Today it works the same way. In this article we have gathered up many Bible texts and Spirit of Prophecy statements regarding the final destruction of the wicked and other important truths. Yet along come individuals who, like the serpent in Eden, ask, “Has God indeed said all these things? Never mind what the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy say about the law, the atonement, the blood of Christ, and the final destruction of the wicked. Jews and Christians have not understood God's true character for thousands of years. Even the authors of the Old Testament misunderstood God's true character. Let me enlighten you with the truth. Hell is not literal fire. Hell is the glory of God, and thus hell is to be desired by the righteous.” And many who have never applied

themselves to digging out the truth from inspiration are charmed as they listen to these theories. They know so little truth that they never discern that those strange theories contradict the Scriptures and the plain writings of Ellen White over and over again.

We have shown where many theories being taught in the Adventist Church regarding the character of God bear a strange resemblance to popular spiritualistic theories; and we have seen where such theories ultimately lead. They lead to the belief that we do not need Christ as our Savior. Does this sound absurd? Those in this false movement would never admit that, but the theories they promote lead to that ultimate conclusion. In a commentary on the spiritualistic book *A Course in Miracles*, the All Experts Encyclopedia makes the following observation:

“According to The Course [the book *A Course in Miracles*], ‘We don’t need a savior. Salvation is nothing more than right-mindedness. We are the source of our own salvation.’ This belief obviously strays greatly from what Christianity teaches.”

Here again is what Ellen White counseled about taking false theories to their ultimate conclusion:

“The spiritualistic theories regarding the personality [and character] of God, followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy...They make of no effect the truth of heavenly origin, and rob the people of God of their past experience, giving them instead a false science.” *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 203.

We need to take the theories emanating from the false character of God movement to their logical conclusion. When we do, we discover that the false teachers are saying that the Decalogue is secondary to friendship with God and, but for the stubborn nature of people, is not necessary in the conversion of sinners. Also, the fact that there is no power in the blood of Christ means that it was not necessary for Jesus to shed His blood in order for us to be saved. And since the blood of Jesus had nothing to do with the atonement, the crucifixion is reduced to a mere demonstration. And if our salvation depends not upon our repentance and conformity to the law through the power of God but upon our ability and efforts to trust God and be His friend, then salvation is not something God accomplishes *for us*, but is only the result of our own efforts to be God's friend (which brings a person right back around to legalism). And if we claim that God is a tyrant if His acts of destruction described in the Old Testament are true, then Christians slander God's character as much as the atheists do. And if it is when God reveals His unveiled glory that the wicked are destroyed in the second death, then how can it be said that He does not destroy the wicked? If He did not reveal His glory, the wicked would not be destroyed. And since those who know they will be lost need not fear God, they can live the rest of their lives in sin and false security. If all of these theories are true—then ***we do not need a Savior***. That's where all spiritualism and all false character of God theories lead to. Who more than Satan wants us to substitute theories that remove Christ as our Savior? Dr. Maxwell and others can refuse to admit

that this is what they teach, but we have shown in their own words that these theories are indeed what they do teach.

Exposing the False Movement

The leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not speaking out and warning church members about the false teachings identified in this article. They have their reasons and this author does not question their motives. But this false character movement is flourishing almost without opposition. Most Adventists are still unaware of the counterfeit movement and perhaps church leaders think it best to not stir up the issue. False doctrines in the church are never an easy thing to deal with. We do have the counsel that **“we are not to enter into controversy over these spiritualistic theories, because such controversy will only confuse minds. These things are not to be brought into our meetings.”** *Evangelism*, p. 624. Stirring up a controversy in our churches over the false theories discussed in this article would not benefit our denomination. On the other hand, we are also counseled to **“Unmask the pretentious sophistries.”** *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 196.

The problem is that Adventist churches, campuses, and camp meetings are allowing Good News Tours to be held on their property without being aware of the underlying falsehoods that the promoters of these Good News Tours ultimately desire to spread. They enter as wolves in sheep's clothing, declaring that:

The Good News Tour is an ongoing conference that is entirely about God. The message about God's kindness is open to everyone who desires to listen. The Creator of The Universe has revealed Himself in many ways, but most clearly in the life of Jesus—God in the flesh. Despite Jesus' revelation, God's character has been tainted and misunderstood by many throughout the last 2000 years. We desire to make Him known and make public the beauty of His person—His kindness, His humility, His never-ending forgiveness. (Statement from the Good News Tour website.)

It sounds so harmless. Who doesn't want to know more about "God's kindness"? But the unsuspecting do not realize that these same people believe and openly declare on their Internet forum and published articles the false theories revealed in this article. This article was written with the hope that God will lead those who need to know the truth about this movement to this website.

During the 1970s and 1980s, one of the pioneers of the God-does-not-kill movement—a fanatical, former Adventist minister named Mike Clute—was not taken seriously by the majority of Adventists. His monthly newsletter titled *God's Last Call* promoted theories about God's character that were so absurd that most church leaders and members wrote Clute off as a hopeless heretic. But over the past thirty years, Satan has instilled many of Clute's false theories into the minds of well-respected Adventist educators, church leaders, and ministers. Somehow God's people need to be warned.

Friendship and Reconciliation to God

It has been noted that the growing movement discussed in this article is a natural consequence of the blatant legalism that was abundant in the church for so many decades. The pendulum moved from one extreme (a tyrannical God who exacted and demanded obedience) to the other extreme (a god that more resembles the one to be found in New Age theology). Those at the two extremes have dug ditches on opposite sides of the road and are hurling daggers at each other. The truth is somewhere in the middle of the road. The following excerpt from a sermon by Bill Lehman should help the reader see the simple truth that both extremes have ignored or have never discovered. The reader will note the balanced approach to being reconciled to God.

When God came down to earth in the person of Jesus, He sent messengers called angels, and they said in Luke chapter 2 verse 14, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." Peace on earth. Good will is God's favor to us. God says, "there's no conflict anymore between you and Me." Romans 5 verse 10 makes it evident that when we sinned, we became His enemies—we were in rebellion; but He who has been rebelled against comes out and says, "Peace...there's no more war; and I have favor toward you—good will, not ill will." God is not against us. He loved sinners and came to save them.

Sin has also separated us from God according to Isaiah 59 verse 2, but God came to bridge the separation...So in spite of our sins, God is not hostile towards us. We are in His favor....God so loved the world that He gave Jesus; and He laid all our sins upon Him, and says, "Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

This act of God making peace with man is best described in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 18 and 19: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Do you know what reconciliation means? It means to restore to favor. God was in Christ restoring Himself to favor with us. This is one of the fundamentals upon which our hope is based.

When did God do this? Or when will He do this? When I get good enough? When I do everything right? It says, He *hath* reconciled. It's already done! God has completed the task of reconciling Himself to us, and to make it possible for us to be reconciled to Him. He *is* reconciled, and He has been ever since God came to live with man. And God still lives with man in the person of the Holy Spirit. God is *with us*. He decreed it so.

Please notice who takes the first step. The one who was wronged took the first step. The one who was mistreated took the first step. He does more than take the first step—He takes the responsibility for our wrongness. This puts God on friendly terms with us. Why do we think that God is against us when we sin? Have we really accepted the basic, good news of the gospel. The problem, or snag, with reconciliation is the problem with sin. Sin has separated us from God and we can't do much about it; but something *has* to be done about it, or it continues to separate. And only God can do something about it. Verse 19 of 2 Cor 5 says what He does with the sin: "not imputing their trespasses unto

them," which means no longer holding our sins against us. You ask, "How can He do that?" Verse 21 says, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus was made to be sin in our behalf. He took our sins and accepted the punishment and condemnation for them. So the sin has been *taken away*. Behold the lamb of God which *taketh away* the sin of the world. He laid on Him the iniquity of us all. So God has removed that which separated us from Him. And he did it justly. Therefore, the Bible says in Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Those who are in Christ are not condemned. Those who are *not* in Christ have yet to be reconciled to God. Christ has accomplished peace and we are now in His favor, and sin no longer separates us from God. So peace was declared by God and He says we are now friends so far as He is concerned. But reconciliation is a two-way street. God reconciling Himself to us does not *end* the process of reconciliation. While God is at peace with us, which far too many Adventists still have not come to understand, if I am not in harmony with Him, I cannot walk with Him as His friend. He is reconciled to me, but the question is: am I reconciled to Him? So there is another side to the process of reconciliation that we often leave out.

Part of the gospel message, as shown in verse 20 of 2 Cor 5, is "be ye reconciled to God!" He is reconciled to us, trying to win our hearts and our affections so that we delight to follow Him. To accomplish this plan of reconciling us to Him, His plan is to take those who are reconciled to God and use them to reconcile others to Him. Verse 20 says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." We are to take a message to the world, "beseeching," or pleading with others to be reconciled to God.

We may think we have sinned too many times, but we should be reminded of Peter who had a close relationship with Jesus for years, only later to deny Him with cursing. Yet Jesus came back and reinstated Peter as an apostle. And at Pentecost Christ spoke through His ambassadors to those who *killed* Him, saying repent—I want to save you. If we accept the call to repent, we will be reconciled to God, and will have peace like a river. (From Bill Lehman Sermon titled "Peace Declared—Still Fighting," 11-27-1982.)

God is reconciled to me, but the question is: am I reconciled to Him? How is a person reconciled to God?

“Repentance toward God, because His law has been transgressed, and faith in Jesus Christ are the only means whereby we may be elevated to purity of life and reconciliation with God. Were all the sins, which have brought the wrath of God upon cities and nations, fully understood, their woes and calamities would be found to be the results of uncontrolled appetites and passions.” *Courage and Conflict*, p. 73.

The counterfeit movement promotes the theory that we can have friendship with God without **“repentance toward God.”** The central theme of their message is God’s love,

but they leave out the necessity of obedience to His commandments that is a prerequisite of being reconciled to God; and thus the counterfeit movement fulfills the prediction made by Ellen White of a new form of spiritualism that will enter the church in the last days where **“It is true that spiritualism is now changing its form...Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight.”** *The Great Controversy*, pp. 557-558.

When the legalist discovers that repentance towards God is a requirement for being reconciled to God, he goes about his daily life trying to appease a God who *demand*s obedience. Those who believe that they may cling to cherished sins and still be reconciled to God—be His friends—invent a false god who is not willing to punish them for their unrepentant sins. They do not choose the narrow path of self denial. And then there are those who live exemplary lives but who have been deceived by the enemy of souls to believe and promote falsehoods. They attempt to rewrite doctrine in a way that undermines the clear words of inspiration, and thus **"rob the people of God of their past experience, giving them instead a false science."** *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 203. Please beware of extremists on all sides of this matter of salvation.

Conclusion

The truth about the character of God will be part of the final message to the world, and that message will go out in great power during the Loud Cry. The devil is well aware of how the world is to be lightened with the glory of God's character, and we can be certain that before that day comes, he will endeavor to introduce a counterfeit message. Those who fall into this snare of Satan and embrace the falsehoods revealed in this article will become guilty of undermining the inspiration of God's word, of challenging the authority of the Sovereign King of the Universe, and of echoing the voice of the serpent in Eden by declaring that they have come to enlighten the world of truths that God did not allow people to see until now. God often allows false theories to be advanced within the church to arouse His people to study our doctrines in more detail than we have in the past. As a people we need to understand more of God's love, but from a properly balanced perspective.

We must walk with extreme caution in accepting any so-called new light. Lucifer's false logic resulted in deceiving one-third of the angels who once lived in the presence of God. Our only safety is in clinging to the clear teachings of inspiration.

This final Ellen White quote perfectly describes the modern God-does-not-kill movement, and silences their false theories about God being too nice to destroy the wicked:

"As they reasoned in Noah's day they reason today, when the warning message is proclaimed to fear God and keep His commandments. The wrath of God is soon to fall on all the sinful and disobedient, and they will perish in the general conflagration. Professed servants of Christ who are

unfaithful, who do not reverence God and with fear prepare for the terrible future event, will lull themselves to carnal security with their fallacious reasoning, as they did in Noah's day. 'God is too good and too merciful to save just a few who keep the Sabbath and believe the message of warning. The great men and the good men, the philosophers and men of wisdom would see the Sabbath and the shortness of time, if it were true.' They do not believe a merciful God who made men will consume them with fire because they do not believe the warnings given. This, they reason, is not in accordance with God...God's love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner. Men reason from their own low standard of right and justice. 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself' (Psalm 50:21). They measure God by themselves. They reason as to how they would act under the circumstances and decide God would do as they imagine they would do. God's goodness and long forbearance, His patience and mercy exercised to His subjects, will not hinder Him from punishing the sinner who refused to be obedient to His requirements. It is not for a man—a criminal against God's holy law, pardoned only through the great sacrifice He made in giving His Son to die for the guilty because His law was changeless—to dictate to God. After all this effort on the part of God to preserve the sacred and exalted character of His law, if men, through the sophistry of the devil, turn the mercy and condescension of God into a curse, they must suffer the penalty. Because Christ died they consider they have liberty to transgress God's holy law that condemns the transgressor, and would complain of its strictness and its penalty as severe and unlike God. They are uttering the words Satan utters to millions, to quiet their conscience in rebellion against God. In no kingdom or government is it left to the lawbreakers to say what punishment is to be executed against those who have broken the law. All we have, all the bounties of His grace which we possess, we owe to God. The aggravating character of sin against such a God cannot be estimated any more than the heavens can be measured with a span. God is a moral governor as well as a Father. He is the Lawgiver. He makes and executes His laws. Law that has no penalty is of no force. The plea may be made that a loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God by fire while He had the power to relieve them. But God would, for the good of His subjects and for their safety, punish the transgressor. God does not work on the plan of man. He can do infinite justice that man has no right to do before his fellow man Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but God drowned the vast world. Lot would have had no right to inflict punishment on his sons-in-law, but God would do it in strict justice." *Manuscript Releases Volume Twelve*, pp. 207-209.

Additional Insight into the Truth of God's Character:

1. The late Dr. Milton Crane published a book in 1988 titled *A Modern Challenge to*

God's Authority. This book is out of print but copies are available by searching the Internet. Dr. Crane spent many years at the Loma Linda Medical School, and was distressed by the false theories he was hearing regarding the character of God. His book explores some of the false ideas in the church concerning the destruction of the wicked and how those false ideas are leading God's people away from established truth. He also demonstrates that pantheism is the cornerstone of the false character of God movement today.

2. There are two excellent articles provided by the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists that shed more light on the issues of God's anger and His destruction of the wicked. The articles may be found at:

<http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/Does%20God%20Destroy.htm>

<http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/Does%20God%20get%20angry.htm>

3. Ellen White taught that **"As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain. We must preach Christ in the law, and there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of God."** *The Review and Herald*, March 11, 1890. One of the reasons that those in the false character of God movement focus only upon the love attributes of God is because they realize how dry God's people are from focusing mostly on the law. So as we have said, the tendency has been to swing the pendulum to the opposite end of the theological spectrum and focus only on the love attributes of God; and as a result, many in the false movement sound more like New Age spiritualists than Seventh-day Adventists. We all need to realize that Christ is God, and God is love; so if our ministers and educators would preach *Christ in the law*, they would be putting love into the law. When Christ is preached in the law, the law is not something to be feared or shunned. Please take the time to hear a sermon where Elder Bill Lehman explains what it means to "preach Christ in the law." Here is a link to a website where that sermon may be found:

<http://www.sdabeaconlight.org/HearSermons.htm>

4. Ellen White wrote: **"The surest way to destroy false doctrine is to preach the truth."** *Evangelism*, p. 304. The falsehoods presented in the above article were uncovered as a warning of the snares the enemy has set for God's people. A truth that will put those false doctrines to rest is the doctrine of justification by faith. This doctrine has for the most part been swept under the rug within the Adventist denomination; but properly understood, it brings hope and joy for all who hunger and thirst for truth and righteousness. This author recommends to the reader to hear and study the message of Christ our righteousness, which is the same theme as justification by faith; for this is the third angel's message in verity, and according to Mrs. White, this is the message that will prevail and that will swallow up every other subject as we near the end of time. Legalists hate the message of justification by faith because they have to first admit

that, at their best, they are unrighteous; and many others hate this message because they refuse to believe that God will punish their wicked deeds, in spite of the fact that Mrs. White wrote: **“God has given in His word decisive evidence that He will punish the transgressors of His law. Those who flatter themselves that He is too merciful to execute justice upon the sinner, have only to look to the cross of Calvary.”** *The Great Controversy*, p. 539. An excellent study on justification by faith was done by the late Elder J. W. (Bill) Lehman at the Loma Linda Campus Hill Church in the mid-1970s. Bill ministered at several Seventh-day Adventist churches, was a missionary in Africa, and served as the Canadian Conference Revivalist for many years. He passed to his rest in July of 2001, but continues to bless God's people through his Christ-centered sermons. This message of Christ our righteousness is available to hear and/or read at www.sdabeaconlight.org/CORsermons.htm.

5. Gerald Finneman has written an excellent article dealing with the false assumptions of author Fred Wright. Wright was a pioneer in the God-does-not-kill movement who broke away from the Seventh-day Adventist church and before his death started an offshoot called Sabbath Rest Advent Church. His writings teach that God is never involved directly in the destruction of the wicked, and his book *Behold Your God* contains pantheistic spiritualism. Finneman's article is found at: http://gospel-herald.com/finneman/threads_from_the_east.htm

Please direct comments and questions to BeaconLightSermons@yahoo.com.