

The Adventist Worldview



by John C. Peckham

Preface

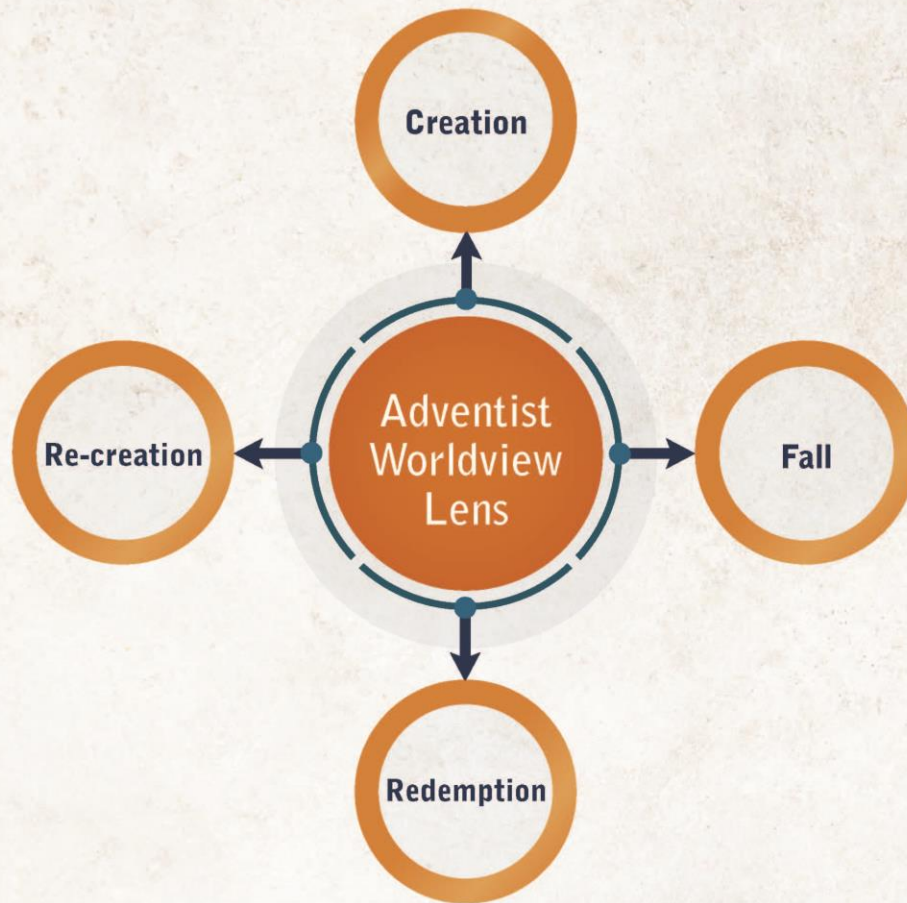
Introduction

Based on a synthesis of biblical principles, the educational philosophy of Ellen White, and research and best practices in the world of education, the North American Division (NAD) Department of Education has developed a *Framework for a Curriculum Development Process*. The framework serves as a guide to help teachers integrate worldview (Purpose), curriculum (Plan), delivery (Instruction), and assessment (Product) into a distinctive Adventist approach to education.¹ The elements of the framework are discussed in the various chapters of this book, with the purpose of fleshing out the curriculum development process from theological, philosophical, educational, and practical pedagogical perspectives.

The worldview sections of the six chapters that follow are written by John C. Peckham and organized around the four overarching issues of the Adventist worldview as identified by the NAD Education department (see chart below): Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Re-creation (or Restoration). After an introduction to the nature of worldview and the conceptual framework for the book in chapter one, chapters two through five consist of chapters devoted to Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Re-creation respectively. These chapters address the big questions of life as understood within the context of an Adventist worldview, including questions like: Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? What is wrong with this world? Why evil? These chapters (two through five) each (1): explain the biblical worldview in its respective sphere and (2) briefly compare and contrast the biblical worldview with major competing worldviews, especially representative forms of naturalism, pantheism, and others. These chapters are followed by a concluding chapter that conceptually ties the various components of the biblical worldview together while pointing toward the wider implications with regard to worldview formation, addressing the question: Why the Adventist worldview?

¹See the “Adventist Worldview Framework”, a graphic that identifies and explains the framework that the Southwestern Union Education Department has constructed and upon which this book is based.

ADVENTIST WORLDVIEW



A worldview serves as a conceptual tool or framework for perceiving and interpreting reality, which, in turn, informs values and beliefs, mission, and vision of an organization. The Adventist worldview accepts the Bible as the standard by which everything else is measured. Four key concepts (with accompanying essential questions) emerge from a biblical worldview that can be used as a lens for the teaching and learning in Adventist schools.

Creation What is God's intention?

Fall How has God's purpose been distorted?

Redemption How does God help us to respond?

Re-creation How can we be restored in the image of God?



Seventh-day Adventist Church
SOUTHWESTERN UNION

EDUCATION

The foundations of an Adventist worldview are essentially theological, dealing with a biblical understanding of God and His relationship with ourselves as human beings and the world in which we live.² Given an Adventist understanding of God and interpretation of the Bible, the graphic titled *Adventist Worldview* presents the concerns with which theology and philosophy must deal in providing a framework that is internally consistent and adequately defensible. The four overarching issues identified are Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Re-Creation.

² This book employs a minimal definition of worldview as a set of beliefs about the most important issue of life. That is, in this book worldview is used as a shorthand way to describe one's conceptual framework relative to the big questions of life. This should not be confused with the broader sense of worldview, which some use to refer to one's entire background, presuppositions, and resulting perspective.

Chapter 1

What is a Worldview and Why Does It Matter?

As an infant, my son Joel loved to play with his blue, bouncy ball. He particularly liked to throw the ball, go and get it, and throw it again. However, he did not throw the ball with any purpose. He simply reared back and threw it aimlessly. Then, with a broad, semi-toothless grin, he'd squeal and run to retrieve it, only to throw it again, aimlessly. The problem, however, was that the ball would end up in places that would lead Joel into all kinds of temptation—under the table, into the room with the cat's litter box, into the bathroom—all places Joel was not supposed to be. Sometimes the ball would keep him in the right room but, before long, the ball would lead Joel into trouble.

How many people today are similarly proceeding aimlessly, following their pleasures without thought or care, not taking the time to evaluate just what they are chasing after and why they are doing so? If one leads an aimless life—or even a life with simply trivial aims—where will one end up? It reminds me of the common refrain that children cry out from the backseat of long (or short) road trips, “are we there yet?” If we don't know where we are going or why we are going there, or perhaps even where we are now, how can we get “there”?

Why Does It Matter What We Believe and How We View the World?

Everyone has beliefs, even if unexamined. Does it matter what we believe and why we believe it? How do our beliefs affect our lives? Imagine for a moment that someone informed you that the location where you find yourself now will be destroyed by a massive tornado in less than fifteen minutes. Would you remain where you are? Only if you didn't truly believe that the tornado was coming or didn't understand that your life was in danger. Genuine beliefs affect action, whether consciously or not. Moreover, values significantly affect the way we live our lives. If you don't know what your values are simply take an inventory of the way you spend your time, effort, and money.

According to scripture, beliefs matter. Indeed, according to Jesus, the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind (Luke 10:27; cf. Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30).³ In other words, love toward God is to include all of our being, including our thoughts, our worldview. Christians are to “study” to show ourselves “approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV). Indeed, the ultimate aim of human life is to know God Himself. As Jesus said, “this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). By these and many other passages of scripture, it is evident that our

³ This and all other biblical references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted.

beliefs matter a great deal. The sum total of our beliefs and perspectives make up our worldview. A worldview is simply the content of our view of the world, including our perspectives, presuppositions, thoughts, and life experience. That is, one's worldview is the conceptual framework through which one views, experiences, and interprets all of reality. As Ronald H. Nash puts it, "In its simplest terms, a worldview is a set of beliefs about the most important issues in life. . . . Every mature rational human being, each reader of this book, has his or her own worldview."⁴

So, what makes up the content of one's worldview? By definition, all beliefs (conscious, intentional, or otherwise) and belief systems are situated within a worldview, whether that worldview is conscious or subconscious, well-thought out or simply adopted from cultural norms (or something in between). Every individual possesses a worldview, whether one has carefully examined worldview alternatives or aimlessly followed their blue ball as it were. Although the concept of worldview is broad, there are a number of questions that are fundamental to one's worldview, the so-called big questions of life, including but not limited to: Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I? What is wrong? Where am I going?

Since one's worldview provides the framework within which all of reality is interpreted, understood, and experienced, the content of one's worldview has a dramatic impact on every aspect of life, including education (learning and behavior).⁵ For example, consider the way glasses affect one's view. If you put on sunglasses everything appears darker. For someone who requires a prescription lens, too strong or too weak a prescription will lead to blurred vision. A non-corrective lens will provide no improvement in sight at all. On the other hand, a perfectly crafted lens will provide clear vision. It matters what glasses we wear. Similarly, our worldview drastically affects our perception of everything and, consequently, the way we live, what we value, and how we think.⁶ As such, worldview is especially significant to the process of teaching and learning. Hence, it is essential that we consciously inform and analyze our worldview.

For instance, my son Joel (18 months old at the time of this writing) has a very limited perspective on the world. His worldview includes an amazing trust of everyone he meets, a belief

⁴ Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 16. In this regard, while some define and use "worldview" broadly to refer to one's entire background, presuppositions, and resulting perspective, in this book we operate with a more minimal definition of worldview as a set of beliefs about the most important issue of life. That is, in this book worldview is used as a shorthand way to describe one's conceptual framework relative to the big questions of life.

⁵ As William P. Alston states, "It can be argued on the basis of facts concerning the nature of man and the conditions of human life that human beings have a deep-seated need to form some general picture of the total universe in which they live, in order to be able to relate their own fragmentary activities to the universe as a whole in a way meaningful to them; and that a life in which this is not carried through is a life impoverished in a most significant respect." "Problems of Philosophy of Religion," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 6:286.

⁶ Ronald Nash comments, "Most of us know people who seem incapable of seeing certain points that are obvious to us (perhaps those people view us as equally obtuse or stubborn). They often seem to have a built-in grid that filters out information and arguments and that leads them to place a peculiar twist on what seems obvious to us." *Worldviews in Conflict*, 18.

that no piece of furniture is too high to climb on, that daddy and/or mommy will always be there to catch him when he falls and that, even when we aren't, falls only produce relatively minor bumps and bruises. From Joel's perspective, the world is generally good, life is mostly safe, and love and affection are readily available. This perspective is normal for a developing child within a loving and safe home but if Joel never grows out of these perspectives, what will the outcome be? If Joel falsely continues his belief in the safety and security of the world he will be in great danger. Very soon he will need to understand that not all people are good or safe, that there are real dangers in our world, that life isn't always fun and that he will not always receive the attention he does now from those around him and that, most of all, as much as his daddy would like to be able to do so, I cannot protect him from many harms and disappointments that infect this world. Does worldview matter? It surely does and more than we often think.

The Biblical Foundation of Adventist Worldview Formation

If worldview is so important, where do we begin the process of examining it and coming to a proper understanding of the Adventist worldview in particular? How should we formulate and evaluate worldview, our own and others? That is, how can we know how we ought to view the world? From where should our worldview be derived? That the Bible is the prime standard of worldview, of all belief and practice, is the basic presupposition of the Adventist worldview.⁷ Many Christians would agree that our worldview should be based on God's word, the Bible. However, as the research of the Barna Group shows, this cognitive commitment often does not bear out in the actual worldviews of many Christians. According to Barna, only nine percent of Christians have what he calls a biblical worldview, based on a response to a survey of the following questions (among others): "Do absolute moral truths exist? Is absolute truth defined by the Bible? Did Jesus Christ live a sinless life? Is God the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe, and does He still rule it today? Is salvation a gift from God that cannot be earned? Is Satan real? Does a Christian have a responsibility to share his or her faith in Christ with other people? Is the Bible accurate in all of its teachings?"⁸ Notably, this only measures cognitive belief. One can imagine the actions that result from diversity regarding these and other beliefs.

Although the vast majority of Christians profess faith in the Bible as the standard of belief and practice, one need only look around at the plethora of denominations and their various beliefs to recognize the great diversity of worldview even within Christianity (not to mention other kinds of theism). Various Christian belief systems hold much in common but they also

⁷ Here and throughout this work, recognizing the Bible as the foundation of worldview should not be confused with the widely discredited classical foundationalism, which incorrectly sought to arrive at an absolutely certain and indubitable foundation of knowledge. The recognition of scripture as the proper foundation of faith and practice itself requires a faith commitment and cannot be indisputably grounded (nor can any other "foundation" be indisputably grounded). See the further discussion of this in chapter six.

⁸ Barna. "Barna Survey Examines Changes in Worldview Among Christians over the Past 13 Years," March 9, 2009. <https://www.barna.com/research/barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years/>

contain crucial differences. In this book, we will focus on the Adventist worldview and its perspective on the fundamental worldview questions, as derived from scripture.⁹

However, anyone with a worldview that is based on scripture as its standard will be asked the question, why the Bible? Why should we base our belief system on the Bible or anything else? Why adopt scripture as the starting point? This is a question that relates to the larger discipline of epistemology, which refers to the study of knowledge itself and therefore stands at the beginning of worldview formation. This relatively brief book cannot do justice to the data-heavy and complex issues of apologetics and, therefore, we will not focus on them beyond cursory overviews when necessary to advance the understanding and implications of the Adventist worldview. However, I will briefly engage the topic of epistemology and the apologetics associated with the preferability of the Adventist worldview, including its biblical foundations and how we “know” or justifiably believe anything at all, in the final chapter. Here, however, it should be noted from the outset that the Adventist worldview is based on the supposition that the Bible is God’s Word, revealed and inspired by the Holy Spirit, and therefore trustworthy and authoritative for faith and practice. “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).¹ Thus, from the Adventist perspective, our worldview is sound to the extent that we correctly understand and apply biblical faith and practice, continually seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance in our interpretation and application of scripture.¹⁰

In the following four chapters, this book will focus primarily on the meaning and relevance of the Adventist worldview, what it is (content) and why it matters (relevance and application) rather than why it is what it is (apologetics). The question of what the Adventist worldview is (content) and why it matters (relevance) is itself a more pressing (existentially prior) question from the standpoint of many students than the apologetic reasoning behind the worldview. For students today, it is all too easy to decide that engaging the issue of forming and understanding a worldview is simply too difficult. One might think: there is some controversy over the question of creation (or some other question) but I don’t really see why it matters, especially to me, so I might: (a) ignore the question, (b) come to a flimsy perspective on it that wouldn’t stand up to the slightest scrutiny (not what we are going for as educators!), or (c) remain agnostic until I see its relevance (among many other less than ideal outcomes). I believe it is essential that we engage both what the Adventist worldview is and why it matters. However,

⁹ The Adventist worldview differs from other denominations on very important technical differences regarding biblical interpretation, contributing to the divergence in overall worldview. The specific beliefs and their biblical bases, distinct from other Christian faiths, should be engaged in further detail. See resources such as *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: a Biblical exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005); Raoul Dederen, ed. *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000).

¹⁰ On the Adventist approach to biblical interpretation, which follows a historical-grammatical approach that seeks God’s intended meaning in all of scripture, see George W. Reid, ed. *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006).

to address the relevance of the Adventist worldview, we must also share a basic understanding of the content of that worldview, which will be a focus of the following four chapters.

The Theocentric Nature of the Adventist Worldview

Although the Adventist worldview is based on scripture, the Bible itself is only available and authoritative because of God Himself, who has revealed Himself in many ways in human history and provided for the accurate and reliable transmission of that revelation in scripture (revelation-inspiration). As such, God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the actual foundation of the Adventist worldview. Indeed all being, everything that was and is and is to come, is grounded in the Creator God, the One who was and is and is to come (Exodus 3:14; Revelation 1:8; 4:8).

If God is the foundation of everything, our worldview must be theocentric, as opposed to the typically anthropocentric worldviews of contemporary North American culture. That is, even though we approach everything from our human vantage point, and could not do otherwise, we should not be satisfied by merely human-centered answers to life's biggest questions. The recognition of God as the ground of everything is itself the revolutionary concept of the theistic worldview. For this reason, the Adventist worldview is necessarily a theological worldview. The questions of human existence can only be properly engaged on the basis of sound, biblical theology.

This theocentric approach, however, does not exclude the very important existential questions common to humanity. Rather, it highlights their relevance and significance since, according to the Adventist worldview, the identity, nature, purpose, and destiny of humanity is inextricably bound up with the nature and character of God, who is love. Thus, by understanding God as He has revealed Himself in scripture, we can come to a truer understanding of ourselves (cf. Psalm 139). The Bible reveals God not in abstraction but in relationship to the world that He has created and sustained in love (chapter two), though it has departed far from His loving, ideal plan (see chapter three) and requires redemption (chapter four) and, ultimately, restoration (chapter five).

The Adventist Worldview Among Other Worldviews: Three Prominent Worldview Systems

As mentioned above, this book will engage competing worldviews as needed to illuminate the Adventist worldview and to highlight the similarities and differences from the primary competing conceptions that both teachers and students face. However, engaging various worldviews leads to considerable complexity. For one thing, there are as many worldviews as there are people. No two people have identical worldviews since each person's worldview is unavoidably shaped by individual life-experiences. Since no two persons live identical lives, everyone will have at least a slightly different view of the world (even though people of similar background may share great worldview similarity). Hence, when we discuss "worldview" we are

speaking in general terms of a body of beliefs that form core commitments shared by groups, without the naïve assumption that those within each worldview are in any way monolithic. Indeed, adherents to each worldview would reject some of the generalizations that are laid out in this book and the reader should be aware of, and expect this, from the outset. However, since we cannot discuss seven billion worldviews, it is necessary for us to proceed on the basis of models, which outline the basic prominent commitments from various worldviews for the sake of understanding and explanation. Again, one should not confuse the models with the beliefs of all individuals who are committed to a particular worldview.¹¹

In order to serve our limited purpose of explicating the Adventist worldview for K-12 education in the North American Division (NAD), this book focuses on the differentiation between models of three major worldview systems (theism, pantheism, and naturalism), which broadly encompass the majority of the very diverse worldviews encountered in North America.¹² The worldviews of theism, pantheism and naturalism, broadly conceived, will illuminate the implications of the Adventist worldview and highlight the most common conceptions that might be faced by the learner in NAD schools. Because it is beyond the scope of this book to delve into the broad diversity of beliefs and nuanced belief systems that exist within these far-reaching rubrics, the treatment of these major worldview perspectives is generalized.¹³ To set the stage for the following chapters, we now turn to an introduction of each of these major worldview rubrics.

Christian Theism

The Adventist worldview is one of many that falls within the rubric of theism, which includes any belief system that believes in one God as the creator and sustainer of the universe, personally involved in the world.¹⁴ As creator, God is not to be identified with the world but as its originator. God stands transcendent from the world but also acts personally within the world. Theism is related to, but must be distinguished from polytheism, the belief in many gods, as well

¹¹ Many issues raised herein impinge upon philosophical and theological arguments that are simplified here to focus on the purpose of the book.

¹² See Humberto Rasi, "Worldviews, Contemporary Culture, and Adventist Thought," in *Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship* (Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic 2000), http://fae.adventist.org/essays/26Bcc_001-15.htm. Cf. Mark P. Cosgrove, *Foundations of Christian Thought: Faith, Learning, and the Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 75-150.

¹³ There are worldviews that do not fit neatly in any of these three categories and/or may overlap with more than one of them. For instance, process panentheism takes some tenets of naturalism but of a theistic variety, i.e., pantheism claims the entire world is part of God yet God is more than the world and thus the system is sometimes referred to as a type of theism. This is but one example of the possible nuance. The reader is therefore cautioned against assuming that all or even most worldviews fit neatly within these categories. We are using these models pedagogically. The reader who is interested in an overview of other major worldviews should see, among others, James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

¹⁴ That God is personally involved assumes that God is a person, with the understanding that "person" here does not mean "human" but refers to one who is self-conscious and has the capacity of reason and will.

as deism, which has come to refer to belief systems where God created (or at least designed) the world but does not intervene in nature or history after creation.¹⁵ The three great monotheistic and Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all accept a personal creator God, with various differences in the conception of the nature of that God and how that God relates to the world.¹⁶ The largest and most crucial difference that separates Christian theism from all other theisms is the doctrine of the Trinity, that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: three persons yet one God.¹⁷ This doctrine was most clearly and centrally manifested in the incarnate Christ Himself (John 1:1; Colossians 2:9)—rejected as the Messiah by mainstream Judaism and accepted by Islam as a prophet (Isa) but not the Son of God.

Because this book is focusing mainly on a positive explanation of the Adventist worldview and its implications for K-12 education, the remainder of the book will focus on Christian theism, particularly the Seventh-day Adventist version of it. Various other theisms are mentioned when it is necessary to understand a perspective or possible differentiation of the Adventist worldview from generic theism and/or Christianity broadly. In the Adventist worldview, God is all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), all-present (omnipresent), and all-good (omnibenevolent). He has freely and graciously created this world and He pours out His unfathomable love toward the goal of a freely reciprocal love relationship with each human being. Accordingly, God is intimately concerned about and interacts with humans throughout history and is deeply affected by the events of the world (time and space). This view contrasts with some forms of Christian theism wherein God is timeless and

¹⁵ In this view, God is like a watchmaker who then lets the watch run. There is a great diversity in conceptions that are called (or call themselves) deistic and, therefore, it is difficult to define deism in a way that would encompass all of them. The basic model of deism used in this book takes up one of the most common points of deism by which it is most clearly differentiated from mainstream Christian theism. Although deism still exists in many forms, the elevation of reason that it promoted has been by-and-large-taken over by naturalist conceptions of the universe. For more on deistic worldviews see Ruurd Veldhuis, "Deism," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Erwin Fahlbusch (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 1:788-9; Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 47-65.

¹⁶ Nevertheless, there are forms of all three of these faiths which have blurred the lines between God and the world, tending toward pantheism or that God is somewhat impersonal.

¹⁷ Do not misunderstand "person" in this context to mean human or otherwise physically restricted organism. A "person" here means a being with self-consciousness, rationality, and will. For an Adventist introduction to the Trinity and the biblical material that supports this crucial doctrine, see Fernando Canale, "Doctrine of God," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 105-59; Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011). A full understanding of the Trinity, like a full understanding of God, is beyond human cognition. However, many people have trouble grasping the Trinity because they fail to make the distinction between what philosophers call the "is of predication" and the "is of identity." "The Father is God," "the Son is God," and "the Holy Spirit is God" are each true statements but it is not true that God is the Father or God is the Son or God is the Holy Spirit. The theologically correct statement that "the Father is God" is like the statement, "the shirt is blue." Blue is a predicate of the shirt not a statement of identity such that we could say blue is the shirt. Moreover, although each person is God the three persons are not themselves identical—the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father, etc. Understood in this way as predicate statements, there is no actual contradiction in saying that three persons are one God because we are not stating that God is three and one *in the same sense* (as if to say God is three persons *and* one person or one God *and* three Gods, both of which would be a contradiction), even if we don't fully grasp the manner in which the three persons exist in triune relationship as one God.

impassible, meaning that God cannot enter into temporal experience or be affected by anything that occurs temporally and spatially. Such a view requires the reinterpretation of the biblical instances of God's temporal and spatial activity, including God's responsive interaction with humans (cf. Jeremiah 18:7-10; Hosea 11:8-9).¹⁸ The Adventist worldview, on the other hand, is grounded in the biblical presentation of God's nature as affected by the world (passible) and active within the realm of space and time (though not restricted by either in the manner that humans are). Thus, God is profoundly invested in the affairs of the world that are impacted by the free decisions of creatures. God is delights in goodness and is overjoyed by each human who accepts His love while also deeply pained and grieved by those who reject Him and perpetrate evil against others (Zephaniah 3:17; Hosea 11:8-9; Luke 13:34; 15:7).

The following four chapters will provide a further summary of the Adventist worldview. First, however, let us briefly address two other major worldview rubrics that depart from theism. As we do so, keep in mind that the treatments of these major worldview rubrics of naturalism and pantheism are presented very broadly. There is a diverse and complex spectrum within these rubrics, especially with regard to pantheism.

Naturalism

Naturalism refers to the belief that only nature exists; there is nothing beyond or outside of nature and, thus, no supernatural. This, of course, denies the existence of a supernatural God and, accordingly, many naturalistic worldviews are also atheistic, denying the existence of divinity altogether (atheistic naturalism) while a less prominent variety considers nature itself to be divine (naturalistic pantheism). Atheistic naturalism often includes the belief that all that exists is reducible to matter (materialism).¹⁹ This book will deal mostly with atheistic naturalism of the materialistic variety because it is the most prominent worldview that will influence students in North America. As such, naturalism as used throughout this book, unless further qualified, will refer to atheistic, materialistic, naturalism.

The materialistic naturalism that is the dominant worldview in North America supports, and is supported by, the Darwinian explanation of origins (macroevolution). This theory itself originated from the enlightenment worldview, which regarded religion as "irrational and

¹⁸ For more on this crucial issue of God's nature and His relationship to the world see Fernando Canale, "Doctrine of God," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 105-59; John C. Peckham, "The Passible Potter and the Contingent Clay: A Theological Study of Jeremiah 18:1-10," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 18, no. 1 (2007), 130-50; Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), 163-213; John C. Peckham, *The Concept of Divine Love in the Context of the God-World Relationship* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015); John C. Peckham, *The Love of God: A Canonical Model* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2015).

¹⁹ Such a conception, however, raises considerable difficulty regarding the existence of "mind" (intelligence).

inappropriate in a scientific age” and thus “sought rational explanations for all of reality.”²⁰ In the view of Darwinian macroevolution—the majority view of the academic western world—the universe as we know it is the result of a random collision of matter (the big bang). Human existence, then, lacks transcendent purpose (why am I here?) because there is no transcendent intelligence or overarching meaning to existence. The identity of humans (who am I?) is reduced to being conceived as simply the result of the long and utterly random process of natural selection. Humans are merely the transient collection of matter, possessing no intrinsic value and unable to ground existence in any grand purpose. The very question of evil (what is wrong?) is out-of-place in this system since there can be no transcendent (absolute) grounding of that which is good.²¹ Human existence is temporary and will eventually come to an end (where am I going?). Each of us has only a few decades to live, after which we will be no more forever. There will be no future, conscious life for any of us. The best that one can hope for is to be remembered and to pass on their genetic code to descendants.

Pantheism

Pantheism comes from the Greek terms pan (all) and theos (God) and generally refers to the view that God is everything and everything is God. That is, God is identical to all that exists; all reality makes up the divine unity.²² Accordingly, there can be no distinction between the natural and supernatural, that which is created and that which creates, since all is God (pantheism). As such, “revelation, creation out of nothing, and the personality of God are of little relevance for pantheism.”²³

There are many different varieties of pantheism, the nuances of which are far beyond the scope of this book.²⁴ There are many views of the precise definition and scope of pantheism

²⁰ James P. Eckman, *The Truth About Worldviews: A Biblical Understanding of Worldview Alternatives* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 18. For an excellent exposition of naturalism see David Papineau, “Naturalism,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2007), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism/#MetNat>.

²¹ See the following chapters on the relationship between these views and the Adventist worldview.

²² As Huw Parri Owen puts it, “‘Pantheism’ ... signifies the belief that every existing entity is, only one Being; and that all other forms of reality are either modes (or appearances) of it or identical with it.” *Concepts of Deity*, Philosophy of Religion Series (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 65. Thus, “God is everything and everything is God ... the world is either identical with God or in some way a self-expression of his nature.” Ibid., 74.

²³ Herbert Hanreich, “Pantheism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Erwin Fahlbusch (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 4:27. The “immanence of God in being (nature) and thought made unnecessary the ideas of creation out of nothing and of a personal, transmundane God who can intervene arbitrarily in the course of the world.” Ibid.

²⁴ There is considerable dispute as to just how pantheism should be defined and who is and is not a pantheist. For example, Paul D. Feinberg has identified seven kinds of pantheism: Hylozoistic pantheism, Immanentistic pantheism, Absolutistic monistic pantheism, Relativistic monistic pantheism, Acosmic pantheism, Identity of opposites pantheism, and Neoplatonic or emanationistic pantheism. “Pantheism,” in *Evangelical*

because various worldviews share the basic conception that there is nothing that exists that is distinct from divinity.²⁵ Elements of pantheism may be seen in the various eastern religions that worship an impersonal deity, such as Hinduism and Taoism (among others), not to mention the various “quasi-religious forms of holistic thinking” such as “new age” worldviews that “take up pantheistic themes.”²⁶

Since most pantheistic systems posit the unity of all things in God, the individuality of humans is of little importance. Thus, questions like, who am I, where did I come from, and what is my purpose, are of little concern. The unity of all things in God also excludes any absolute distinction between good and evil (what is wrong?) because God is all and all is God. As such there is nothing that is actually “wrong” in the sense of a departure from God’s ideal.²⁷ Since humans are already part of God, there is no hope for a future reconciliation with God (where am I going?) and, accordingly, pantheism generally denies personal immortality. That is, each person will finally lose individuality as that person comes to unity with the divine or ceases to exist as subsumed into the divine unity. Some pantheistic systems include the concept of reincarnation, wherein one suffers through many incarnations (higher or lower on the scale of

Dictionary of Theology, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 820-1. For the sake of efficiency, this book utilizes a broad model of pantheism.

²⁵ In some conceptions, all that exists is merely an expression of God’s nature and not necessarily identical with Him. In the nuanced system of panentheism (the term means literally all *in* God), which is sometimes called the new pantheism, God is not identical to the world but the entire world exists only as part of God. In other words, the world is in God but God is more than the world, though God cannot exist apart from some world. See Hanreich, “Pantheism,” 28. Cf. William Mander, “Pantheism,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2012), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pantheism/>.

²⁶ Hanreich, “Pantheism,” 28. Cf. Cosgrove, *Foundations of Christian Thought*, 116-26; Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 144-65. For example, many of the eastern religions fall within the broad scope of pantheism. We will only briefly mention some of the more prominent here and elsewhere throughout this book. The Taoism (aka Daoism) of Lao Tzu and Zhuangzi holds that the Tao (or Dao) encompasses all. At the same time, many gods are worshipped and ancestors are venerated. See Winfried Corduan, *Pocket Guide to World Religions* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 60. Hinduism holds that all reality is one even while believing in various gods (polytheism). Thus, “although Hinduism seems polytheistic, in reality its theology contends that there is one monistic Nirguna Brahman,” the “philosophical Absolute.” Eckman, *The Truth About Worldviews*, 31. “Brahman is the unchanging reality of the universe. . . . the unity that is in the universe and yet beyond it” and includes all objects (animate or inanimate). For this reason some debate whether Hinduism is properly pantheism (all is God) or should be categorized as panentheism (all is in God). “Gods, humans, demons, animals, etc. are all part of Brahman. (The term “Brahman” derives from a language root that means “to expand,” denoting an entity that cannot be limited in magnitude or expansion.)” Ibid., 30. Nevertheless, some schools of Hindu thought consider Brahman to be “personal” in some sense or senses. Even Buddhism, which is often held alongside Taoism, can be conceived broadly as monistic or pantheistic (depending on whether a particular form of Buddhism includes belief in a god or gods). See *ibid.*, 41. A book such as this cannot do justice to the complexity of nuance within eastern religions nor can it provide a description of the various differences between them. For such a study, see Winfried Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths: a Christian Introduction to World Religions*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).

²⁷ Thus, in many pantheistic systems, evil (and suffering) is considered illusory.

being depending on past action—karma) toward the ultimate end of reaching the highest plane of consciousness that is free from suffering, providing liberation from the process of reincarnation and the illusion of material existence.

Differentiation of Christian Theism, Naturalism, and Pantheism

There are numerous points of crucial difference, then, between theism and both naturalism and pantheism. In theism, God is by nature, distinct from the world, a supernatural being, the creator of all that is natural; God's existence and life does not depend upon the world. On the other hand, materialistic naturalism excludes the existence of God altogether, since only matter exists. That is, there is nothing other than nature and nature is itself non-divine matter. Pantheism, from yet another vantage point, embraces the existence of divinity but identifies divinity with the entire world, such that there is no distinction between supernature and nature, creator and created; "God" is all that there is and all is God. Thus, for both naturalism and pantheism the world (in the sense of cosmos, including the universe) is all that there is, whether the world is merely natural, or all is divine, or both (pantheistic naturalism). One could say, then, that in North America, the primary point of departure when it comes to worldview is whether one adopts a naturalistic perspective (whether atheistic or pantheistic) that contends that the "natural" world is all there is, or whether one contends that God exists and is independent of the world as the self-existent being who gives being to everything else—the great "I am" (Exodus 3:14; cf. John 8:48).

Theism thus departs from the other major worldview rubrics in positing God as the absolute ground of the world, distinct from it though personally involved in it, whereas both atheistic naturalism and pantheism posit the world as the sum total of reality (though in different ways). Accordingly, the other worldviews each promote a view of origins that is crucially divergent from Christian theism's view that God personally created the world. Pantheism is generally not interested in the concept of creation since there is no absolute distinction between God and the world. Materialistic naturalism, alternatively, asks how we could have gotten here without God and generally answers by way of big bang cosmology and Darwinian macroevolution. Hence, in both systems, history lacks purpose. In many forms of pantheism history is cyclical and ultimately points to oneness such that linear history loses significance whereas materialistic naturalism posits a linear history that leads to nothingness and has no purpose since there is no overarching intelligence. Indeed, materialistic naturalism is unable to adequately account for the existence and importance of intelligence (*nous*, mind) at all, since all is assumed to be matter.²⁸ In both pantheism and atheistic naturalism, moreover, one cannot

²⁸ *Nous* is the Greek word for mind or intellect and thus refers to the faculty of intelligence. One of the largest questions raised by theists against materialistic naturalism is how "mind" or intelligence could arise from purposeless matter devoid of mind/intellect.

locate human purpose and/or identity in intrinsic value as a created child of God.²⁹ Identity is transient—in atheistic naturalism there is no afterlife whereas in pantheism it is generally believed that the future does not include individual identity.³⁰ These and other major differences that impinge upon major worldview issues will be further highlighted in the following chapters.³¹

Outline of this Book

The following four chapters explain the Adventist worldview and its importance for and impact on Adventist education in four parts: creation, the fall, redemption, and restoration/re-creation?. Each chapter will: (1) explain the biblical worldview in its respective sphere; (2) briefly compare and contrast the biblical worldview with major competing worldviews, including representative forms of naturalism, pantheism, and others; and (3) address the application and relevance of the biblical worldview in a diverse world, especially with regard to various branches of learning.

Chapter two explains the biblical worldview on origins, which provides the basis for the answers to many of the “big questions” such as: Where did I come from? How and when did the universe begin? Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? This discussion will highlight the centrality of the Genesis creation narrative to the wider biblical worldview and its profound significance, not only with regard to the question of origins, but also with regard to the impact on other issues such as the problem of evil and the nature of redemption.

The third chapter explains the biblical worldview regarding the fall, which addresses the origin and existence of evil. This question is especially pertinent to a biblical worldview that asserts that God is both all powerful (omnipotent) and entirely good (omnibenevolent), since it raises the question as to why such a God would allow evil (the question of theodicy). As such, this chapter addresses questions such as: What is wrong? Why evil? Is God good (or does God even exist) in light of the pain and suffering in the world? This chapter engages such questions by explaining the biblical narrative of the fall and the wider context of the Great Controversy, while intentionally engaging the wider “why” questions, especially as it relates to God’s character and purpose(s).

Chapter four explains the biblical worldview regarding redemption. The very concept of redemption assumes that there is something wrong with the world and asks: What is the solution to evil? It further requires answers to questions like: Where did I come from? Who am I (sinful

²⁹ Indeed, in Hinduism, the “human is an emanation or temporary manifestation of the Impersonal Brahman. Humans are not inherently or permanently valuable; nor is the human accountable to ‘god.’” Eckman, *The Truth About Worldviews*, 31.

³⁰ Depending on the form of pantheism the individual may ultimately be swallowed up in the whole of reality (God) or reincarnated without memory of past existences and thus effectively lose one’s identity at each stage.

³¹ However, in those chapters as well, the focus will not be on explaining the competing worldviews but on the Adventist worldview itself.

nature)? Why am I here and where am I going? According to the biblical worldview, redemption from sin and evil can only come through God. Though evil has ruptured the God-world relationship, God desires to fully repair the relationship but must also maintain the justice appropriate to His perfect character of love. As such, atonement is necessary. In His profound love, God has made a way to redeem the world and restore it to his original intention for all creation and each is offered the opportunity to choose to respond positively to God or reject His offer of eternal life and the corresponding reciprocal love relationship that such an invitation entails.

The fifth chapter explains the biblical worldview regarding restoration and, accordingly, addresses major questions including: Where am I going? What is going to happen to me? Further, it asks who am I and who should I be (ultimately)? Further, how can I be who I ought to be? The destiny of human beings is inextricably bound up with the purpose of humanity, grounded in the concept of creation by a loving, personal God. Since God created human beings to be part of a universe of reciprocal love relationships, from both God to creatures and vice versa and creatures toward one another, the ultimate restoration looks forward to the fulfillment of the universal harmony of love. Finally, God will eradicate evil and wipe away every tear, and re-create a new earth where only goodness will dwell.

The sixth and final chapter addresses the question: Why the Adventist Worldview? This chapter conceptually ties the various components of the biblical worldview together while pointing toward the wider implications with regard to worldview formation and learning in a multicultural world with diverse worldviews. This discussion engages the question of the methodological origin of the Adventist worldview, including the fundamental question of how we know what we know and/or believe what we believe (epistemology), in comparison to the methodological origin of other selected worldviews. While such issues would normally be addressed at the beginning of a systematic inquiry, this work addresses these questions at the end in light of a model worldview that is already extracted. This allows use of the model to answer questions of epistemology a posteriori as well as a priori (with respect to the model itself).

Chapter 2

The Adventist Worldview: Creation

Where did I come from? Many long for answers to this question and, often, this longing relates to the meaning of personal existence and the purpose of life itself. The power of such questions of origin and identity is apparent in Hans Christian Andersen's beloved story, "The Ugly Duckling." Therein, a little bird finds itself among ducklings in a barnyard but it is so very different it becomes a victim of much verbal and physical abuse. Leaving the ducklings, he wanders sadly from place to place but doesn't seem to fit in anywhere. After spending a miserable winter alone outdoors spring arrives along with a flock of beautiful swans. The "ugly duckling" is now fully grown and is so lonely that he decides to throw himself into a flock of swans passing by, to be near such beautiful birds even if they kill him. But, shockingly, the swans welcome him. When he looks at his reflection in the water, he realizes that he is indeed one of them.

The "duckling" didn't know his origins and therefore didn't know who he was. Wherever he went, he did not appear to fit in. He lacked understanding of where he came from, what his identity was, and his future purpose. However, the "duckling" was not a duckling at all, nor was he ugly though he was not yet what he would be. It seems to me that we might too miss who we are and our purpose if we do not understand our origins. From the Adventist perspective, this world is not our home and we are not yet what we are intended to be. We are creatures of a loving God who made us for a great purpose, a purpose that is inextricably linked to our nature as beings created in God's image. As such, creation is fundamental to the Adventist worldview as it explains our relation to the Creator Himself.

This chapter sets the foundation for the following three chapters as it addresses the two primary questions: Where did I come from? How and when did the universe begin? The answers to these questions are integral to the formation of one's worldview and provide the starting point for answers to our other big questions such as: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I? What is wrong? Where am I going? However, before we address the Adventist worldview of creation and its implications for such questions, let us first understand what this chapter is and is not.

When the issue of origins is discussed the primary question is often something like, what is the rationale for a particular worldview on the origin of the universe and/or life? Answering questions such as this belongs to the realm of apologetics (the discipline of defending a position) and Peter exhorts us to "always be ready to give a defense (apologia) to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet, 3:15, NKJV). Thus, there is an important place for apologetics, when rightly conceived and executed.³² However, due to the complexity of the issues, a proper defense of the Adventist worldview of creation would require a book (or many)

³² I will briefly engage the topic of apologetics in the final chapter, from the standpoint of worldview methodology, particularly with regard to the question of how we know, or justifiably believe, anything at all, which has large implications for the questions of this chapter, particularly as it relates to the philosophy of science.

of its own. There are a number of quality resources already available in this regard.³³ I firmly believe the Adventist worldview has a compelling rationale as the best explanatory model available (with regard to origins and the other worldview questions) and I'll very briefly explain an outline of this in the final chapter. However, throughout this book, we will focus primarily on what the Adventist worldview is and why it matters rather than why or how one would come to accept that worldview. This chapter, then, focuses on a positive explication of the content and importance of the Adventist view of origins, derived from a sola Scriptura methodology (see chapters one and six).

What is the Adventist Worldview Regarding Creation? The Relational Starting Point: Community of Love

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). These powerful and profound words begin the Genesis account of creation, the first words in the most influential book in the history of the world, the Bible. According to scripture, God's act of creation is the starting point for everything that is, except God Himself who has no beginning. It therefore also provides the logical starting point for our thinking about worldview. As such, the Adventist worldview is centered on God and who He is (theocentric).

The fact that God created raises the question, why did God create at all? God did not need to create since the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have enjoyed a pre-creation love relationship from all eternity (John 17:24). Thus, “God is love” was true even before God created this or any world (1 John 4:8, 16). God creates as a voluntary manifestation of his character of love. Though God has always enjoyed love relationship within the Trinity, God willingly created other beings, desiring to share His love with creatures and receive their love in return. “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God” (1 John 3:1). Thus, God's creation is motivated by his love and is also a manifestation of it.

Accordingly, God created us not only to bestow his love but also to enjoy a circle of love relationship with him and with fellow creatures. As such, creation is relational, that is, it is for the purpose of commencing ongoing love relationship between God and other intelligent beings who, in turn, also love one another. Indeed, because God is love, a theocentric perspective is actually more relevant to humans than the all-too-common anthropocentric (human-centered) perspective. Specifically, within the biblical worldview, the identity, nature, purpose, and destiny of humanity is inextricably bound up with the character of God. That the origin and existence of humanity is grounded in God's desire for loving relationships sheds significant light on the purpose of humanity as creatures destined to enjoy a perfectly harmonious, reciprocal relationship of love with God and fellow creatures. That is, since we are created to be loved and to reflect God's love to him and others, our purpose is much greater than we often realize.

³³ For an excellent starting point, see Leonard Brand, *Faith, Reason, & Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009).

Creation is therefore about more than merely what occurred but, just as importantly, why it occurred. God created human beings for relationship. It should always be remembered (and emphasized to students) that creation is not just a concrete event as beginning but a relational event, not just the beginning of mere being or existence but of being in relationship with God. It is when we separate theological facts outside of their rightful context of relationship that we end up with what is perceived as dry dogma. Many students thus overlook the relevance of Adventist (or any) theology. In my view, Adventist theology, particularly the transmission of it in learning (as well as other) contexts must be explicitly and intentionally relational. Indeed, if the God of love is understood correctly, a theocentric theology is a relational theology.

The Event of Creation

This brings us to the event of creation itself. The God who is eternally love created willingly. Each member of the Godhead was active in creation. The Holy Spirit was there “moving over the surface of the waters” (Genesis 1:2) and the Son was active in creation for “all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3 NKJV; cf. Col 1:16). Scripture doesn’t tell us specifically how long ago the event of creation took place. However, the evidence within Genesis (genealogies, etc.) and the rest of scripture points to the location of the creation week thousands, not millions or billions, of years ago.³⁴

Not only is the creation account presented as relatively recent but it is specifically described as taking place over one week of contiguous 24-hour days. The genre and language used in Genesis 1 is unmistakably language of historical prose and demonstrates that the author intended to describe literal (rather than figurative) days. Specifically, the following four elements together demonstrate that a text refers to six literal 24-hour periods: (1) the word day (*yom*), (2) the verb “to be” (*hayyah*, here in the past tense, “was”), (3) evening and morning, and (4) the day is given a number.³⁵ All four of these elements appear in the refrain, “so the evening and the

³⁴ We do not know the precise date of creation because it is likely that the Genesis genealogies skip some generations (a very common practice in ancient near East genealogies that in no way compromises the historicity of the account) and may have rounded numbers off. Further, there are different numbers of years in different ancient versions (in particular, the numbers differ in the Hebrew Masoretic text, the Septuagint (LXX), and the Samaritan Pentateuch). However, as Randall Younker states, all biblical chronological reconstructions “point to a *recent* creation of life on earth.” *God's Creation: Exploring the Genesis Story* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1999), 43. Moreover, “even if one suggests that some of the numbers were rounded off or that there might be room for a gap somewhere, surely it would involve only a few years and not the hundreds or thousands or even millions required by conventional science.” *Ibid.*, 48-49.

³⁵ See William H. Shea, “Creation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 420-21. As Gerhard Hasel puts it, “the semantic-syntactical usages of *yom*, ‘day,’ in Genesis 1, when compared with semantic-syntactical usages and linguistic connections of the same term in other Old Testament passages that do give it an extended meaning, do not allow it here to mean a long period of time, an age, or the like. The Hebrew language—its grammar, syntax, and linguistic structures, as well as its semantic usage—allows only for the literal meaning of ‘day’ for the creation ‘days’ of Genesis 1.” Gerhard F. Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal ‘Days’ or Figurative ‘Periods/Epochs’ of Time?” in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John Templeton Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 40-68.

morning were the _____ day.” The historicity of the Genesis creation account holds significant implications for the entire Adventist worldview (see the implications below), which is derived from a sola Scriptura theological method.³⁶

The creation narrative contains especially significant information regarding the divine-human relationship, which is emphasized by two accounts of the creation of humans on day six, once from a broad view (Genesis 1) and once more in a way that draws out more detail (Genesis 2).³⁷ Humans were the crowning event of creation week, just a little lower than the angels (Ps. 8:5), made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and for relationship with Him. The depth of God’s concern for humans is evident in the intimate way that God created Adam. Since God is omnipotent (Rev. 19:6; Jer. 32:17), it follows that He could have simply spoken humans into existence but instead He chose to intimately fashion Adam, forming him of the dust of the ground and personally breathing life into him (Genesis 2:7). Imagine the almighty God, creator and sustainer of the universe, kneeling in the dust, intimately shaping Adam and then breathing life into him. Amazing! Moreover, God not only stoops to create but, in doing so, commits Himself to a relationship with His creatures which will ultimately lead to taking upon Himself death on the cross (Phil. 2:8).

The imagery of day six addresses not only the vertical dimension of love—God loving us and our duty to reciprocate love to Him—but it also points directly to the horizontal dimension of love—our love for one another. For instance, the creation narrative demonstrates the basic equality of all human beings. Humans were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and thus possess intrinsic value. Indeed, according to scripture, all humans are descended from Adam and Eve and are, therefore, family. There is, then, a basic equality and kinship of all humanity as divine image bearers such that racism and ethnocentrism of any kind has no place. Humans are all of one blood (Acts 17:26) regardless of where we were born or our parentage. We have intrinsic value as God’s creatures, loved by Him and intended for greatness through reflecting His love.

Likewise, the creation of both male and female in the image of God demonstrates the male-female equality intended in God’s creation (Genesis 1:27). The narrative in Genesis 2 further confirms this in numerous ways. At first, Adam has no companion. While God recognized that it was “not good for the man to be alone” and planned to “make him a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18), God did not immediately do so. First, animals are brought to Adam to be named and Eve is created after it is apparent to Adam that he has no companion and perhaps exciting a longing for Eve, enhancing Adam’s appreciation of her and bringing him to the recognition that he was made for relationship (Genesis 2:19-20). God then creates Eve from

³⁶ See Reid, ed. *Understanding Scripture: an Adventist Approach*; John C. Peckham, "The Analogy of Scripture Revisited: A Final Form Canonical Approach to Systematic Theology," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 22 (2011), 41-53. See also the brief discussion in chapter 6.

³⁷ On the difference between the complementary accounts in Genesis 1 and 2, which foreshadow the entrance of evil in Genesis 3, see Randall W. Younker, "Genesis 2: A Second Creation Account?" in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John Templeton Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 69-78.

the side of Adam (Genesis 2:21-23), not from Adam's head or foot as if she was to be above or below him, but from his side as an equal.³⁸ Accordingly, Eve was to be Adam's "helper suitable for" Adam as an equal not a servant (Genesis 2:18). Notably, the same Hebrew word that is used to describe Eve as Adam's "helper" (ezer) is elsewhere used of God (cf. Genesis 49:25). As such, the term does not require subservience. At the same time, all who are part of the relationship of love that God puts in place in creation are intended to serve in love, which God Himself models most fully within the plan of salvation (John 3:16; 15:13).

The relationship between God and humans, then, is to be a reciprocal love relationship. Humans are to reflect God's love to Him and others, including service toward God and loving service to fellow humans, loving one another even as we are loved (John 13:34). Moreover, humans are to be stewards of God's creation (Genesis 1:28), to cultivate the land (both before and after the fall, Genesis 2:15; 3:23) and take care of God's creatures. The creation narrative sets up the ideal, then, for both vertical and horizontal relationships as well as how we should relate to God's creation. Here we find that all humans should live in harmony as one family and we find the more specific family ideal of a marital relationship between one husband and one wife that is to continue forever with such intimacy that husband and wife are to be considered "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

The ideals of vertical and horizontal love relationship, instituted at creation, are also evident in both the time and space in which God placed man and woman. God "planted a garden toward the east, in Eden" placed Adam in it (Genesis 2:8, 15), and then Eve was created and she joined Adam (Genesis 2:21-23). Not only do Adam and Eve dwell there together but God's presence also graces that place since God walked "in the garden in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). Imagine, for a moment the intimacy of relationship in Eden, a paradise where humans and God enjoy unmediated relationship together without the separation brought about by evil; Eden was a sanctuary before any need of atonement, where perfect divine-human and human-human love relationship dwelt.

Notice further the timing. Adam and Eve are created on the sixth day and located in Eden. Their first sunset, then, would begin the Sabbath. The first full day of their relationship with one another and with God, took place on the seventh day, upon which God rested after completing his work of creation and blessed and sanctified it as a memorial (Genesis 2:1-3). The Sabbath is thus itself a day of relationship and one of rest. God made it holy and set it apart for our rejuvenation in loving relationship with God and one another. A day of remembrance of who we are; how we came to be; the One who made us and is worthy of all love and worship; how we should treat one another; and the anticipation of future re-creation. In the Sabbath we remember the creation purpose of love relationship between ourselves and the God of love and ourselves and fellow humans. In the Sabbath we see the supremacy of the Creator who enjoys intimate relationship with us within a temple of time. Likewise in the Sabbath we are reminded of the

³⁸ Ellen White comments, "Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 46.

divine ideal for healthy family relationships. All of this points back to the foundational divine intent of perfect, everlasting love relationships.

Finally, God's creation of this world in Genesis 1 and 2 was perfect, without any evil. This is highlighted in the creation week refrain that God "saw" what he had created and it was "good" (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) and, when God finished creating at the end of day six, "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31; cf. 1 Tim. 4:4). As shall be discussed in chapter three, evil was alien to this world and came from elsewhere. As such, moral harmony reigned in the world God created. The law of love between God and humans (later distilled in external form), which is a manifestation of God's character and leads to unending universal harmony, was in place and unbroken, internal to humans. Since there was as yet no evil in God's creation of this world, there was no death and, indeed, God intended that there would be no death or sickness or suffering at all. Thus, humans were created for eternal life and bestowed with conditional, yet wholly unmerited, immortality. So it would have always remained, were it not for human choice to depart from God's law of love (see chapter three).

Why Does It Matter? The Meaning and Worldview Implications of Creation

Why does the Adventist worldview of creation matter? The biblical understanding of God's act of creation provides the conceptual framework of the absolute distinction between God as the supernatural Creator and everything else as created nature. This basic starting point sheds light on all of the major worldview questions, some of which we will now consider.

Where Did I Come From?

According to the biblical creation account, all humans are descended from Adam and Eve and are therefore a product of God's special creation of humans as His crowning act of creation week. God intended to enjoy eternal love relationship with creatures. This perspective is bound up with the Adventist commitment to the historicity of the biblical account of creation, especially Genesis 1-11. There are many competing worldviews regarding the origin of the universe and/or life.³⁹ Here we will give the most attention to macroevolutionary theory since it is the leading

³⁹ As explained in chapter 1, rather than attempt to address competing worldviews in any comprehensive fashion, which would become unwieldy very quickly, this book focuses on the differentiation between the three major worldview systems (theism, pantheism, and atheistic naturalism), which broadly encompass most of the very diverse worldviews. See Rasi, "Worldviews, Contemporary Culture, and Adventist Thought." Competing worldviews will be addressed to illuminate the implications of the Adventist worldview and highlight the most common conceptions that might be faced by the learner in NAD schools. Necessarily, the treatment of competing worldview perspectives is oversimplified. The reader who is interested in an overview of other major worldviews should see, among others, Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*.

worldview in North America that competes with the biblical view and is the primary naturalistic explanation of origins.⁴⁰

It is essential to distinguish between evolution in general and the subcategories of micro- and macro-evolution. The term evolution itself merely refers to change across successive generations that are inherited by progeny. In this limited sense, “evolution” is demonstrable and apparent. The Adventist worldview recognizes the proper historical and scientifically verifiable process of microevolution (along with many other creationists), which stands in accord with scripture. However, the Adventist worldview rejects macroevolution, which is mutually exclusive to the biblical account in Genesis and elsewhere.⁴¹ Microevolution refers to relatively small changes to organisms in a given population over time and is completely compatible with the biblical perspective on creation (see further below). On the other hand, macroevolution refers to major evolutionary transition from one kind of organism to another and posits that all life is descended from a universal common ancestor via the process of natural selection, descent with modification, etc. While microevolution is scientifically demonstrable and in accord with the biblical data, macroevolution is excluded by the biblical data and is also being severely challenged by advances in knowledge in areas such as microbiology and others. However, scientific revolution regarding origins has, so far, been strongly resisted.⁴²

Macroevolutionary theory lacks a generally accepted explanation of how the universe originated (cosmogony). The big bang theory has come to provide a generally accepted theory of the early development of the universe (cosmology), though not its absolute origin, positing that the universe was once a gravitational singularity, while the origin of this singularity remains an open question. Some theorists believe that the evidence strongly suggests that the universe must have had some kind of a beginning while others emphasize that there is not enough evidence to definitively conclude whether or not the universe had a beginning.

Macroevolutionary theory comes in many forms. The distinction most pertinent for our purposes is between naturalistic evolution, which posits that evolution is purposeless, and theistic evolution, which posits God as the force behind evolution. In the view of naturalistic evolution,

⁴⁰ Macroevolutionary theory provides the prevailing view of both atheistic naturalism and many other non-theist perspectives. Pantheism (see the brief introduction in chapter 1) is not addressed specifically in this section because, generally speaking, it does not provide a compelling solution to this question. Some systems of pantheism are not concerned with this question at all whereas it is often not a very important issue even within those systems that do address it. Some forms of pantheism are congruent with the development of the universe as posited by macroevolution whereas others are more prone to a cyclical view of all reality more akin to a steady-state universe. See Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 144-65.

⁴¹ See Brand, *Faith, Reason, & Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design*, 162-79. There, Brand distinguishes between microevolution, macroevolution, and megaevolution where microevolution “refers to relatively small evolutionary changes within the species of organisms” and the term megaevolution “refers to evolutionary change which produces major groups of organisms including new families and any taxonomic category above the family” whereas macroevolution might (depending on who uses it) refer to any evolution above the species level. *Ibid.*, 162 ff.

⁴² On the difficulty with which paradigm change occurs in conventional scientific thought, sometimes regardless of the strength of data that challenges currently accepted paradigms, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

the origin of the universe (as singularity) must be explained by chance because designed purpose is methodologically excluded as an explanatory model; that is, naturalistic evolution starts from the presupposition of naturalism, which means that no supernatural exists and, accordingly, no supernatural event could ever take place. As such, there is no overarching intelligence in the universe and there cannot, therefore, be a grand purpose or design. Rather, after billions of years of the development of the universe by natural processes, life originated (abiogenesis) a few billion years ago and all life descends from a universal common ancestor through the purposeless, natural selection of descent with modification.

In theistic evolution, on the other hand, God created through the natural processes of macroevolution. This view generally accepts the macroevolutionary description of the data regarding the timing and processes of the origin and development of the universe but suggests that God is the cause behind all of these processes. Beyond theistic evolution, the intelligent design movement challenges Darwinian explanations by suggesting that the evolutionary process shows an abundance of evidence that appears to not be accounted for by undirected processes but, rather, appears to require intelligent design. While the affirmation of God's existence and/or an intelligent designer accords with the Adventist worldview, to the extent that both theistic evolution and intelligent design theories affirm macroevolution, they deny the historicity of the biblical account of creation in Genesis and elsewhere, and raise very problematic issues (as will be discussed below). For example, why would God create through a process that requires vast ages of suffering and death (long before sin)? Some suggest that God lacked the power to do otherwise than create in this way, protecting the goodness of God at the expense of His omnipotence.⁴³ However, scripture affirms both divine omnipotence and goodness and, accordingly, such an option is not available to the Adventist worldview that is founded on sola Scriptura.

Progressive creationism provides a further option that attempts to salvage the biblical narrative of creation by suggesting that God created gradually over deep time such that the new kinds or organisms that appear in geologic history were created by God at different times over the ages. This view proposes that the "days" of Genesis might have been merely figurative. However, since careful biblical interpretation of the text confirms that Genesis explicitly refers to literal days, this view effectively denies the historicity of the biblical account of creation.⁴⁴ Moreover, this view appears to be susceptible to the "God of the gaps" criticism since it posits divine intervention wherever scientists cannot currently explain an apparent leap in the

⁴³ For instance, consider the panentheist (to be distinguished from pantheism but closely related to it) perspective posited by process theology. See Peckham, "The Passible Potter and the Contingent Clay: A Theological Study of Jeremiah 18:1-10."

⁴⁴ As mentioned earlier, the view that the author of Genesis intended the days of creation week to be understood as regular days is recognized by not only creationists but also by many other biblical scholars who may not accept the historicity of the account but recognize that the author intended it to be read as historical. See Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1," 54. SECOND MENTION SO CITATION SHORTENED. Generally speaking, those who deny that the author intended literal days are those who hold a hybrid view, attempting to adopt the deep time evolution of life of the most prominent scientific views and fit it into a reading of the biblical text.

development of organisms (e.g., the Cambrian explosion). The naturalist assumes that eventually these “gaps” will be filled by science and there is no need for such a God. In progressive creationism, then, God merely provides the explanation for the gaps in current scientific hypotheses, which affords God an ever-shrinking role.

The crucial difference between the Adventist worldviews and those above comes down to the issue of the historicity of Genesis 1-3. Do Genesis 1 and 2 show evidence of intent to portray a historical account of creation? If the answer to this question is yes, anyone who believes in the authority of scripture should be a creationist. The literary genre, along with specific characteristics of the text, provides the key to answering the question as to whether Genesis intends to portray a historical account of creation. Specifically, some genres of biblical literature (such as poetry) are more inclined toward metaphorical imagery. However, the text of the entire unit of Genesis 1-11 is historical prose and this is evident from a number of indicators, including: the unity of the narrative, the vav-consecutive verbal form, which is a feature of Hebrew that is usually used in historical narrative, the repeated formula “these are the generations of,” and the general similarity of the style with later historical narratives in Genesis and elsewhere.⁴⁵ Genesis 1-11 also manifests poetic qualities that supplement the basic prose genre without undercutting the demonstrable intent to communicate history. The historicity of Genesis 1-3 is further implied by the fact that the creation narrative is fundamental to the entire biblical worldview. Indeed, a great deal of biblical theology is directly dependent on the creation and fall narratives of Genesis 1-3. This is quite significant for the question of historicity since, in Hebrew thought, theology and history are inseparable. That is, in Hebrew thought, meaningful theology could not be built on non-historical myth; true theology requires true history.

Here, a distinction should be recognized between two views of creation that each accord with the sola Scriptura perspective in upholding the historicity of the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2: (1) young life creationism (YLC) and (2) young earth creationism (YEC).⁴⁶ Young life creationists posit that the creation account in Genesis 1-2 is historical but believe that significant time passed between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 such that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1) refers to God’s initial creation of the universe as a whole, which may have taken place billions of years ago and included the raw material of this earth, while verse 2 refers to God’s creation in one week wherein God returned to the raw material that was previously created, and thus verse 2 states, “the earth was formless and void. . . .” For young life creationists, this has the advantage of according with interpretations of the scientific data that posit the significant age of the earth and also assists in explaining the supposed problem of distant starlight—light from stars that has apparently come from millions/billions of light years away and wouldn’t have reached us (absent divine intervention) if the stars are only thousands of

⁴⁵ See Younger, *God's Creation*, 28-49; Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1,” 40-68.

⁴⁶ For a summary of both biblical and non-biblical models and an evaluation, see Ariel Roth, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 340-51.

years old.⁴⁷ According to YLC, the raw material of this earth could be billions of years old and the stars could have also been created long ago. In this view, then, the earth is old but life on it is young, thus young life creationism.

Young earth creationism, on the other hand, posits that both the earth and the life on it were created thousands of years ago. A subset of this view called mature earth theory posits an alternate explanation for the apparent age of the earth and distant starlight, etc. Consider the example of the creation of Adam. Imagine for a moment that Adam has just been created five minutes ago when a scientist happens to find him in Eden. How old would the scientist believe Adam was? The scientist would assume that Adam had lived a number of years when, in fact, Adam was only five minutes old. This is because Adam was created mature, with the appearance of age but not actual age. Likewise, the trees in Eden would appear to be old but would have only been created minutes previous to the scientist's examination, and so on. Accordingly, the entire earth (and perhaps viewable universe) could have been created as mature and this would explain the apparent age of the viewable universe while preserving the fact that the earth is relatively young.

Both the YLC and YEC perspective provide possible interpretations of the creation narrative that are congruent with the biblical narrative while excluding (and providing interesting responses to) macroevolutionary theory. The adoption of macroevolutionary theory, on the other hand, requires a denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-3 and also has significant implications for wider biblical theology. Among other issues, the acceptance of macroevolutionary theory would: (1) exclude not only the historicity of Genesis 1-11 over and against the author's apparent intent but also falsify the many passages throughout scripture that point toward such a special creation and assume the historicity of Genesis 1-11, including the words of Christ Himself,⁴⁸ (2) posit the existence of death before sin, breaking the biblical link between sin and death and thus excluding Christ's redemptive work to reverse death by overcoming sin, (3) favor an ethical system of survival of the fittest and the extrinsic value of humans rather than an ethics of love and the intrinsic value of humans, (4) exclude the special creation of the world thus calling into account the re-creation of the new earth and undercutting the biblical view of eschatology. In all this, if biblical history is merely non-historical mythology, then it cannot provide true theology. So, where did I come from? The Adventist worldview adopts the historicity of the biblical account of creation and answers that humans are the result of God's special creation as described in Genesis

⁴⁷ In this view, the mention of the stars on the fourth day of creation is a parenthetical statement affirming that God created the stars also without asserting that they were created on that day. See Younker, *God's Creation*, 30-36. Some also posit that the sun and the moon appeared on day four and the author presents a phenomenological reading, that is, from the author's perspective of their appearance (not that they came into existence then). See Shea, "Creation," 420. Whatever model is adopted, it should be recognized that questions remain.

⁴⁸ Those who would dismiss the historicity of Genesis 1-2 must also call into question other parts of scripture that point toward a special creation. See Job 38-41; Ps. 8; 19; 33:6-9; 102:25-27; 104; 124:8; 146:6; 148; Neh. 9:7; Amos 4:13; 5:8, 9; 9:5, 6; Is. 40:26-28; 65-66; Jer. 10:11-13; 27:5; 51:15-16; 32:17; Zech. 12:1; Matt. 19:4-5; John 1:1-3; Acts 4:24; 17:24; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16-19; Heb. 4:4; 11:3; 2 Pet. 3; Rev. 10:6; 14:6-7. Consider also the repeated reference to "the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:10; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). See the further discussion of this in Shea, "Creation," 429-40.

1-2. This basic answer is essential to the Adventist worldview because it provides the starting point and holds huge implications for our other worldview questions, to which we now turn.

Who Am I and Why Am I Here?

The biblical worldview of creation grounds the identity and purpose of humans as created in the image of God, meaning that we are specially created with a purpose designed by God, who loves us. Moreover, the biblical view of creation presents human beings as spiritual beings, more than mere matter though not to the exclusion or devaluation of material existence. That is, according to scripture, human beings are the product of a material body created by God and the breath of life breathed by God. Thus, in Genesis 2:7 there must be (1) dust or body + (2) breath of life or spirit = a human or living being (*nephesh*, often translated soul but never referring to an immortal soul or one that is separate from the body). In keeping with this wholistic understanding of human nature, Adventists place considerable emphasis on healthy living, believing that it is our duty to care for the body that God has given us and, in doing so, extend the positive impact we might have on the world (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Further, as created in the image of God, humans possess intrinsic value as God's creatures, apart from any functional and/or extrinsic value, and this is crucial to our understanding of ourselves and one another in the contemporary landscape inclined toward pragmatism and the devaluation of human life. According to the creationist view, prior to anything we do, we are children of God. We may embrace that status and enjoy a love relationship with God or ultimately reject it, but one needn't strive to create or prove self-worth in the eyes of the world; we are already invaluable to the One who is the source of all value. With this understanding, we should strive to take care of ourselves and of one another.

Pantheistic views, on the other hand, generally rule out or devalue the individuality of human persons.⁴⁹ Most forms of pantheism (all is God) posit a unity of all things, which might treat the individual as temporary illusion (eastern monistic pantheism) or may recognize the distinction of individuality while locating the value of the "individual" only in its connectedness to the all-encompassing divine. As such, in many pantheist systems, individual humans possess little or no individual value, purpose, and/or meaning, except as drops in the ocean of divinity. Accordingly, it is nonsensical to ascribe intrinsic value to humans, or to make an absolute distinction between the value of a human and that of any other creature, because all value derives from the divine Unity.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ There are many forms of pantheism and differentiating between them here would not significantly add to the discussion of the importance of the Adventist worldview for education. Thus, the discussion of pantheism here and elsewhere is rather simplistic. For those interested in a discussion of such worldviews in and of themselves, see Sire, *The Universe Next Door*.

⁵⁰ "In pantheistic terms it makes little sense to speak of the intrinsic value of a human life as measured against a standard independent of how that life affects others, since for the pantheist all such value, even so-called 'intrinsic value,' is partly derivative. The standard of intrinsic value and perfection cannot be determined without

Naturalistic macroevolution muddles the value of human beings in an alternative fashion, since the logical conclusions of a Darwinist system leads to value being determined by usefulness to survival. While many naturalists would agree with various forms of secular humanism that ascribe high value to human life and human achievement, naturalism itself does not actually provide consistently logical grounds for doing so.⁵¹ Accordingly, some naturalists explicitly assert that humans do not possess intrinsic value but that a highly intelligent dog might be more valuable than an intellectually deficient human and that asserting otherwise amounts to a kind of anthropocentric racism.⁵² Indeed, if humans are the result of accidental descent with modification via purposeless macroevolutionary process, what intrinsic value could humans possess? As holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl and others have described, it is no wonder that the perception of human value has deteriorated to the extent that all kinds of atrocities are perpetrated by one human against another, and by humans against themselves.⁵³ If we are but a mass of chemicals or highly developed animals, it is difficult to see our own value or to come to grips with questions of identity and purpose. In a naturalist view, humans have no transcendent purpose. The universe itself is the result of aimless process and all that has been, is, and will be shall pass away or into something else. The length and meaning of a human life (if there is any meaning) is miniscule in comparison to the immense natural process that no individual significantly affects.

What, then, gives my life meaning for the naturalist? You might hear things like, “live your best life,” or “you only live once,” etc. But this raises the question, what is my best life?

reference to the divine Unity. The essential nature and well-being of a person, or anything else, cannot be analysed apart from its context in relation to the Unity and everything it includes.” Mander, “Panthemism.”

⁵¹ See the compelling yet highly readable description of naturalism’s failure to ground human value, and indeed, absolute value in general, in Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 66-93.

⁵² For example, Peter Singer, professor of bioethics at Princeton University, writes: “if we compare a severely defective human infant with a nonhuman animal, a dog or a pig, for example, we will often find the nonhuman to have superior capacities” with regard to anything that can “plausibly be considered morally significant. . . . Only the fact that the infant is a member of the species *Homo sapiens* leads it to be treated differently from the dog or pig. Species membership alone, however, is not morally relevant. . . . Humans who bestow superior value on the lives of all human beings, solely because they are members of our own species, are judging along lines strikingly similar to those used by white racists who bestow superior value on the lives of other whites, merely because they are members of their own race.” He frames this view specifically on the basis that the “sanctity-of-life view,” which he defends in part, is “impossible to restore in full” because “the philosophical foundations of this view have been knocked asunder. We can no longer base our ethics on the idea that human beings are a special form of creation, made in the image of God.” Peter Singer, “Sanctity of Life or Quality of Life?” *Pediatrics*, 72, no. 1 (1972) 128-29. It is difficult to argue against Singer if one adopts naturalistic premises.

⁵³ Viktor Frankl, a holocaust survivor who endured Auschwitz, wrote, “If we present a man with a concept of man which is not true, we may well corrupt him. When we present man as an automaton of reflexes, as a mind-machine, as a bundle of instincts, as a pawn of drives and reactions, as a mere product of instinct, heredity and environment, we feed the nihilism to which modern man is, in any case, prone. I became acquainted with the last stage of that corruption in my second concentration camp, Auschwitz. The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the ultimate consequence of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment—or, as the Nazi liked to say, of ‘Blood and Soil.’ I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Maidanek were ultimately prepared not in some Ministry or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers.” Viktor E. Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), xxvii.

Indeed, if there is no transcendent purpose in what sense is anything good, better, or best? What difference does life actually make if we are all the result of aimless chance, without a purpose for the future? As such, the naturalist view of origins has difficulty grounding objective meaning and purpose and, accordingly, some thinkers have given way to nihilism.

Nihilism (from the Latin term nihil, meaning nothing) is the view that life is wholly without value and meaning and thus amounts to absurdity. To be sure, naturalists are not necessarily nihilists, and many are not (at least consciously). However, if one draws out all of the logical consequences of naturalism it is difficult to ground enduring meaning and value of humans and/or the world within a worldview that posits that existence itself is the result of purposeless causation and will come to nothingness. Many humans feel a lack of meaning and value in their lives but, rather than embracing nihilism, self-medicate within the North American culture of pragmatic achievement on the one hand and amusement on the other, which both decrease the time and effort (if any) given to examination of the big questions of life. However, if one's pragmatic dreams of achievement are shattered and/or the amusements of this world become dull, the endpoint is all too often despair. Unfortunately, contemporary North American culture presents such a strong distraction from the most important questions of life that such questions often only strike many humans with force at their most vulnerable, which may lead to tragic outcomes.

Existentialism attempts to provide an alternative to nihilism, positing individual meaning and value while embracing the view that there is no overarching meaning, value, or purpose in this world. In this view, in light of the lack of transcendent design or purpose, humans have no nature and as such, humans make their own existence, that is, you make of yourself who you will be and create your own meaning. Only this is true existence. The future is entirely open to your free choices. Although existentialism is little understood by many learners, it pervades the output of culture in media (especially music, television, and films) such that many of this generation have adopted many facets of the existentialist worldview without being consciously aware of the meaning of existentialism.

Such views are far removed from the biblical view that humans were created in the image of God (*imago dei*) and, as such, have a purpose that is temporarily unfulfilled in this world but will be fulfilled in the world to come. According to scripture, we were made for a purpose and our origin as special creation of God grounds that purpose and identity. The future awaiting those who believe in a Creator is so great that it is beyond human imaginings (1 Corinthians 2:9, see chapter five). For now, suffice it to say that when one knows where they are from, the question of purpose has satisfying answers. Indeed, when one understands that a loving Creator made me, even me, and has a purpose for me, even me, then the trials and disappointments of this life, though they are often deep and should never be trivialized, are “not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18, see chapter three). The life to come will overcome all our disappointments which, though great now, cannot compare to the endless joy and love that God will pour out on His beloved.

So, who am I? From the standpoint of the Adventist worldview, I am (and you are) a child of God, His special creation imbued with inestimable and enduring value. Why am I here? To be loved by the Creator God of the universe who is love and to reflect His love in return and to all others and thus enjoy this harmony of love relationship for eternity.

Where Am I, What is Wrong, and Where Am I Going?

The biblical worldview regarding creation identifies humans as part of a world that God created with loving purpose. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, though God created the world entirely good (Genesis 1:31), this world has departed from God's original intention and thus we find ourselves in a world of sin, suffering, and death. While the creation account does not tell us where we are going specifically it does provide the hope for a future, a hope of resurrection and the creation of a perfect new earth by the Creator because: (1) if God can create the world *ex nihilo* then He can re-create a perfect world, including those whom He saves unto eternal life; and (2) natural death is therefore only temporary, a sleep, since God possesses the power to re-create and resurrect. All who believe in Christ will enjoy eternal life in heaven and the new earth. God is preparing a place for all who love Him, a home and will re-create this earth for an eternity of bliss in love relationship, a return to the original intention that will never again be marred (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1-7; see chapter five).

Pantheistic systems, however, locate humans as not separate from God and awaiting a future eternal life but as part of God already since everything is God. As shall be discussed in the following chapter, pantheism thus excludes an absolute distinction between good and evil because God is all and all is God such there is nothing "wrong" in the sense of a departure from God's creation ideal; evil is thus illusory. In many pantheist systems, the future will lead to the loss of the illusion of individuality as the "person" comes to a higher (or possibly lower, at least in the short-term) level of unity with the divine, as is often posited in various views of reincarnation, karma, and the cyclical nature of history in many Eastern religions, which have further significantly impacted Western thinking and practice. In other pantheist systems, the individual ceases to exist while the material body is subsumed into nature as a whole.

Materialistic naturalism, conversely, locates human beings as part of a world that is the result of pure chance (atheistic macroevolution) and, as such, there is really nothing "wrong" with the world since "wrongness" would assume purpose and/or overarching value (see chapter 3). Further, in naturalism, there is no future life for the individual human. Many naturalists believe that the earth will eventually collapse in on itself while others believe it will expand forever. Either way, we won't be here and will never be heard from again, nor know anything of that which is to come.

Theistic evolution on the other hand can coherently recognize evil in the world but presents a major moral problem for God since it raises the question, would a good and loving God allow billions of years of death for no purpose? That is, if God is omnipotent as the Bible describes, God could create the world perfect as the Bible also describes. Accordingly, there

would be no reason for the ages of suffering and death (before sin) that are posited by macroevolutionary theory. If God “created” through macroevolutionary processes because he lacked the power to create otherwise, on the other hand, then why should we believe that God possesses the power to bring about eternal life in heaven and a re-created earth in the future?

Here and elsewhere, creationism (YEC or YLT) is quite important over and against all forms of macroevolution. In the biblical worldview, humans who accept Christ will ultimately be saved by Him from the consequences of sin, including death, which resulted from the first sin by our ancestors. However, if one accepts the macroevolutionary view then there was death and suffering for billions of years before humans even came to exist, let alone sinned, thus breaking the sin-death-redemption link.⁵⁴ That is, if sin came in before creation, how could Christ’s conquering of sin save us from death? According to scripture, the first Adam fell in Eden but the second Adam, Christ, provides redemption from the Fall, which He makes available to everyone. Thus “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin” (Romans 5:12). Yet, “if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17).⁵⁵ To put it simply: If there was no fall as the cause of death then there is no link to the cross, no redemption, no resurrection. If there was no first Adam there can be no second Adam.

Likewise, “if creation week does not reveal how things actually happened, then there is not much reason to believe what it says about salvation or eschatology.”⁵⁶ According to the biblical worldview, the world itself is suffering the effects of sin: “For the creation was subjected to futility” but “the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now” (Romans 8:20-22). However, if God did not create the world perfect to begin with, why should we believe that we will accomplish the re-creation of a perfect world in the end? The entire restoration as the culmination of the plan of salvation is thus put in jeopardy. Here, the Sabbath as a memorial of creation is of utmost importance (see chapter 5).

⁵⁴ “Biological death can no longer be regarded as in any way the *consequence* of anything human beings might have been supposed to have done in the past, for evolutionary history shows it to be the very *means* whereby they appear. . . . The traditional interpretation of the third chapter of *Genesis* that there was a historical ‘Fall’, an action by our human progenitors that is the explanation of biological death, has to be rejected. This means that those classical formulations of the theology of the ‘redemptive’ work of Christ that assume a causal connection between biological death and sin must also be recast.” A. R. Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming--Natural, Divine, and Human* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 222. See also John Templeton Baldwin, “The Geologic Column and Calvary: The Rainbow Connection-Implications for an Evangelical Understanding of the Atonement,” in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John Templeton Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 108-23.

⁵⁵ The text goes on: “Therefore, as through one man’s offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life” (Rom. 5:18, NKJV).

⁵⁶ Fernando Canale, *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Lithotech, 2005), 138.

So, where am I? The Adventist worldview answers that I am (and you are) in a world created by God for which he has a purpose. What is wrong? The problem stems from the entrance of alien sin and death, to which God provides the solution. Where am I going? I have the opportunity of being re-created unto eternal life through faith in the Creator who will re-create an eternal, perfect world where I will be loved by the Creator God of the universe who is love and reflect his love in return and to all others, enjoying the universal harmony of love unto endless ages.

Chapter 3

The Adventist Worldview: The Fall

As a child, I vividly remember becoming engrossed in a serial story, printed weekly in Guide magazine, called “The Sword of Denis Anwyck” by Maylan Schurch.⁵⁷ The story focuses on a young man named Denis, an orphan living as a foster child with a family in medieval times. Denis passionately hates the King of the land and this animosity is especially powerful whenever he remembers the last time he saw his parents. As he screamed “Father! Mother!” the King’s soldiers snatched him away from them. For that reason, Denis absolutely despised the King. Many adventures ensue as Denis slowly comes to realize that there was an explanation for what happened when he last saw his parents. First, he finds answers in a book written by the King himself entitled, “The Chronicles of Pestilence, Being an Account of the Dread Black Death and Times Following.” The words in the book make everything clear as the King writes, “It fills me with great bitterness and my people hate me for it, but the dreadful truth about this plague is that it can be transferred from the dead to the living. By separating the living from the dead, I save the living.” Denis is moved to tears as it dawns on Denis that he was separated from his parents only to protect him from the black plague. The truth about the King sets Denis free from the hatred he had harbored almost his entire life. The King had always and in every case, acted out of love for His people. This truth about the King’s character changes everything.

In much the same way, many people’s worldviews are shackled by pain and suffering such that they cannot even begin to fathom that God could be loving, kind, and good. The evil they have witnessed or experienced brings them to hate or dismiss God. Where is God when there is suffering? If God is good, why is there so much evil?⁵⁸ If God is both all-good (omnibenevolent) and all-powerful (omnipotent) as the Bible asserts, then He must possess the power to prevent all evil. Yet, we see evil all around us. Some reason that God must either not be good after all or He lacks the power to prevent evil. But, what if there is an explanation, a behind-the-scenes perspective that makes some sense of our human history of sin and suffering without justifying evil on the one hand or belittling the magnitude of our suffering on the other?

This chapter builds on the worldview of creation, focusing on the questions: What is wrong? Why evil? Is God good in light of the pain and suffering in the world? The answer to these questions shed light on many of the other big questions such as: Where did I come from? Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I? Where am I going? This chapter will engage such questions by explaining the biblical narrative of the fall and the wider context of the Great Controversy, especially as it relates to God’s character and purpose(s).

⁵⁷ The serial was published as a stand-alone book: Maylan Schurch, *The Sword of Denis Anwyck* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2009).

⁵⁸ In fact, God is not to blame for the evil in this world. The one who is culpable for evil, the originator of evil, continually accuses God of being unjust.

What is the Adventist Worldview Regarding the Fall?

What is Wrong? The Great Controversy and the Problem of Evil

The Adventist worldview recognizes the enormity of evil in this world as well as the fact that evil itself should not exist. Evil is alien to this world and will one day be eradicated. Yet, the injustice of this world stands in stark contrast to God's entirely good creation of this world.⁵⁹ Suffering and death pervade the earth. Accordingly, we are faced with an exceedingly difficult question that demands an answer, the classic question of theodicy: If God is good and all-powerful, why evil?⁶⁰ The problem of evil as an objection to God's existence, moral goodness, power, and/or creation/providence has made many atheists and agnostics and created no small amount of cognitive dissonance among believers, including our students. Indeed, if God could prevent it, why would He allow evil at all? Why doesn't He simply end all evil at once? In light of the pain, suffering, and all other kinds of evil in this world, is God really good?

Within the Adventist worldview, these questions are addressed, in part, by understanding the Great Controversy. Though many of our questions will not receive sufficient answers until they are resolved in the world to come, the Great Controversy perspective provides an explanatory model that is firmly rooted in the biblical data and possesses matchless beauty and far-reaching explanatory value.⁶¹ Briefly stated, the Great Controversy refers to the cosmic battle between God and Satan over God's authority and reign over the universe, particularly with regard to questions raised by Satan regarding God's character. Yet, how could there be any war between good and evil if God is omnipotent? The answer to this question (and other related ones) requires an understanding of the nature of the Great Controversy.

Consider the parable of the wheat and the tares wherein a landowner (representing Christ) sows only good seeds in his field. However, tares (weeds), representing evil, spring up among the wheat. Upon seeing this, the servants of the owner ask him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" (Matthew 13:27). This mirrors the question regarding evil: If God created the world entirely good why is there evil in it? Notice the master's reply, "An enemy has done this!" (Matthew 13:28). Evil is the result of an enemy who opposes the master. This answer provokes a follow-up question by the servants, "Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?" (Matthew 13:28). Similarly, many ask today, why God doesn't simply eradicate evil immediately? The master's reply holds the solution: "No," he says, "for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together

⁵⁹ One might wonder at this juncture how an omnipotent God could "intend" something that does not come to pass. This relates to the distinction between God's ideal will and what might be called His "effective will," which will be discussed further below. Suffice it to say at this juncture, God does not always get what He wants.

⁶⁰ The term "theodicy" is derived from the Greek words for God (*theos*) and justice/righteousness (*dike*) and thus relates to the question of God's justice and/or goodness in light of evil

⁶¹ It is important to recognize that we cannot answer all of these questions at once and a book such as this provides the opportunity only to provide limited and partial answers, which oversimplify the issues and run the risk of being perceived as trivializing the problem of evil. That is never my intent in this chapter.

until the harvest” (Matthew 13:29-30). Although God will finally put an end to evil, uprooting it prematurely would result in irreversible collateral damage to the good.⁶² The parable of the wheat and tares thus provides an outline of the Great controversy between Christ and Satan. Evil is the result of Satan’s action, not God’s and it is allowed for a time because to do otherwise would result in even greater tragedy.

The Entrance of Evil

Yet, this raises further questions like how did this Great Controversy begin and why would God allow the enemy to mar His creation? When God finished creating the world it was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Moral harmony reigned and evil had no part in God’s creation. Evil came from elsewhere. Scripture describes the entrance of evil into this world in the Fall narrative. Adam and Eve originally lived in perfect moral harmony with God and one another (Genesis 2:25). Yet, they also possessed moral freedom as evidenced by the fact that God instructed them that they could eat from any tree in the garden except one (Genesis 2:16-17). In Genesis 3:1, the serpent subtly misstates this very command by asking “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). Eve replies by correcting the statement, noting that there is only one tree from which they may not eat lest they die (Genesis 3:2-3). Whereas the serpent subtly planted doubt with his first question, he responds now with a direct contradiction of God’s words by asserting, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5). This is a direct attack on God’s character. If the serpent is to be believed, God is a liar who doesn’t really want what is best for Adam and Eve but is withholding something good (knowledge) from them to oppress them. That is, God is a tyrant and humans should rebel against God, just as Satan did! Eve is thus presented with a choice: believe what God has said or entertain the serpent’s insidious slander of God’s character.

Tragically, both Adam and Eve decided to disobey God and eat of the forbidden fruit. Immediately, their eyes are opened to evil. They had been naked and unashamed (Genesis 2:25) but now they try to mask their guilt and have become afraid of God, the very One who created and loves them and desires only good for them (Genesis 3:7-10). Adam blames Eve and, indirectly, God who gave her to him, while Eve blames the serpent, exposing the relational strife caused by sin (Genesis 3:12-13). Sin separates from God (cf. Isaiah 59:2) and repels love. God’s creation intent of reciprocal love relationship was thus ruptured and jeopardized.

Through that first sin, Satan becomes the temporary “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4) and evil, along with its consequences of suffering and death, became part of the universal human experience as each descendant of Adam and Eve inherit a bent toward sin (sinful nature); all humans sin and thus all die (Romans 5:12; cf. 6:23). In the very next chapter of Genesis, Adam and Eve’s son Cain commits the first murder against their

⁶² As discussed in further detail below, God allows evil initially because to do otherwise would eliminate freedom and, with it, love.

son Abel (Genesis 4:8). Ever since, humans have inflicted suffering and evil of all kinds upon one another and against God.

Yet, even in the midst of the near despair brought by sin, God responds with amazing grace, declaring the good news of future salvation that will be accomplished through Christ's conquest over Satan in the plan of redemption; the serpent will bruise Christ's heel but Christ will crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).⁶³ Here the gospel itself is framed within the context of a Great Controversy, unfolded throughout the rest of scripture. Christ endures the ultimate suffering and, in doing so, redeems all those who love Him while defeating Satan and making certain the final eradication of evil, suffering, and death (see the discussion of this in chapters 4 and 5).

The Origin of Evil

Although evil and death enter human experience through the sin of Adam and Eve, evil already existed in the universe. This is evidenced by the serpent's slander against God in Genesis 3. This enemy of God is elsewhere identified as "the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9), a "liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Revelation 12:7-9 further explains, "there was war in heaven, Michael [Christ] and his angels waging war with the dragon [Satan]. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down . . . his angels were thrown down with him."⁶⁴

According to Ezekiel 28, this conflict between good and evil originated in the heart of a perfect angel who chose to rebel against God.⁶⁵ Ezekiel 28:12 cryptically addresses the "king of Tyre" but this does not refer merely to a human king as evidenced by the fact that he is called the "seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (v. 12), said to have been present "in Eden, the garden of God" (v. 13), and referred to as "the anointed cherub who covers" on "the holy mountain of God" (v. 14). This being was, then, an angel who had served by the very throne of God, a covering cherub, depicted in the sanctuary by the cherubim on the ark of the covenant

⁶³ This is often referred to as the *protoevangelium*, that is, the "first gospel." It is not without significance that the first gospel is stated to the serpent, for the gospel itself also declares the coming end of the evil sowed by Satan.

⁶⁴ Seventh-day Adventists believe that "Michael," which means in Hebrew "(the one) who is like God," is another name for Christ, the second person of the Trinity, not merely an "angel" but the ruler (the *arch* in archangel from the Greek term for chief or ruler) of the angels (notice that Christ often refers to "His angels," Matt. 13:41; 24:31; cf. Rev. 12:7). Michael, then, is the name of that recurring figure known in the OT as the "angel of the LORD" (Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11; Ex. 3:2-4; 14:19; 23:20-23; Judges 13:13-22; Hos. 12:3-5) or the "angel of His [YHWH's] presence" (Isa. 63:9), who is Himself God (as evidenced in the context of the verses mentioned earlier).

⁶⁵ Both Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 contain oracles addressed to human kings. However, the language in both passages points beyond a mere human audience to Satan himself as the intended addressee (cf. Gen. 3:15). Ezekiel 28:12 speaks of a "lamentation for the king of Tyre," a subtle shift from the "prince of Tyre" as the addressee earlier in the chapter (28:2). See José M. Bertoluci, "The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy between Good and Evil" (ThD dissertation, Andrews University, 1985).

(Exodus 25:19; Ezekiel 28:16). Twice, the text explicitly declares that this angel was “perfect,” the second time declaring, “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you” (Ezekiel 28:15; cf. 12). This could refer to none other than Satan himself.

Yet, how did evil then arise from this absolutely perfect creature? Satan sinned by turning inward in pride so that his “heart was lifted up because of” his “beauty” and he “corrupted” his “wisdom” (v. 17). Similarly, Isaiah 14 refers to Satan’s attempt to exalt himself above God and usurp divine glory, saying “I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God” (Isaiah 14:13), “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14). Toward this end, Satan became “filled with violence” by the “abundance of [his] trade” (Ezekiel 28:16; cf. 18). The term translated “trade” (*rekullah*) derives from the Hebrew root (*rakil*), which refers to “slander” (cf. Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 20:19).⁶⁶ Thus, precisely what Satan did in the garden of Eden, maliciously slandering and defaming God’s character by depicting Him as a self-serving liar in order to foster rebellion, he also perpetrated in heaven (the “mountain of God”) among the angels, sowing seeds of discord. Although these passages shed light on how sin arose, why any perfect being would originate sin will always remain a mystery because no rational explanation or excuse exists; Satan’s sin was utterly nonsensical and unjustifiable.

The Nature of the Controversy

The controversy between God and Satan, then, is over God’s character, originated by Satan’s rebellion in an attempt to elevate himself by slandering God’s name in heaven (Ezekiel 28; Revelation 12) and on earth (Genesis 3). Yet, how can there be a controversy between God, who is omnipotent, and Satan, a finite being? The narrative of Job and the very important but oft-neglected story from Daniel 10 shed significant light on this question by outlining some of the workings of the Great Controversy.

The book of Job presents a council of celestial beings before God, which Satan attends (apparently as earth’s representative), pointing to the larger, cosmic significance of events on earth (Job 1:6-7).⁶⁷ God asks Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil” (Job 1:8). The immediate context provides little background for God’s question but it makes sense within the wider context of scripture where Satan is described as “the accuser of our brethren” who “accuses them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10). Satan’s continual prosecution of God’s people insinuates that God Himself is unjust in maintaining them

⁶⁶ See Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11, no. 1-2 (2000): 108; Richard M. Davidson, “And There Was Gossip in Heaven,” *Adventist Review*, October 30, 2013.

⁶⁷ The phrase “sons of God” in Job is not clearly explained but appears to point to heavenly beings, perhaps representatives of other worlds, that meet before God periodically (or at least did do so at the time of Job).

as His people and it appears that God raises Job's name here in opposition to this kind of accusation. This implication is bolstered by Satan's allegation that Job fears God only because God has blessed and "made a hedge about him" and all that belongs to him but would bitterly curse God if met with calamity (Job 1:9-11; cf. 2:5). In essence, Satan's claim is that Job doesn't really love God but serves Him only for special favors.

God responds by allowing Satan to put his theory to the test, but only within limits, first granting Satan power over "all that he has" but prohibiting personal harm (Job 1:12) and later allowing Satan to afflict Job personally but spare his life, after Satan sadistically claims that Job only cares about himself (Job 2:3-6). Satan brings numerous calamities against Job's household, including loss of wealth, the death of servants, and the death of his children (Job 1:13-19) and, later, afflicts intense suffering upon him personally (Job 2:7), yet Job in each case refuses to curse God but continues to bless His name (Job 1:20-22; 2:9), falsifying Satan's charges.

The narrative of Job thus provides a behind-the-scenes glimpse of a cosmic dispute between God and Satan. Although Job's friends contend otherwise, the text reveals that Job is not being punished for evil but was being held up as an example of faithfulness (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). Satan is trying to break Job: (1) as evidence of his claim that no one would (or should) love and obey God, whom he claims is unjust and (2) as grounds to charge that "justice" demands that God condemn Job (and by extension all humans), even as Satan himself stands under divine condemnation for rebellion, all the while intending the blame for evil to fall upon God in the minds of humans while he himself gleefully perpetuates misery far and wide.⁶⁸

We thus learn a number of things about the Great Controversy. First, bad things happen to "good" people (cf. Ecclesiastes 7:15; 8:14; Jeremiah 5:28; 12:1; Luke 13:1-5). Second, Satan, not God, is the monster who continually seeks to wreak havoc upon God's children (cf. Job 2:7; 1:12), indirectly injuring God. Third, Satan possesses power to work evil in this world (as earth's temporary ruler after the Fall) but not without limitations. Fourth, God's protection of His people from all the effects of evil would leave open Satan's charge that people who appear to love God, like Job, only fear God because God blesses and protects them and that, by shielding them from evil, God does not allow Satan a fair chance in the Great Controversy. Fifth, Satan's restricted power as the temporary "ruler of this world" (John 12:31) functions within some "rules of engagement" that are known to both God and Satan (but which are not known to us).⁶⁹

Many of these points are also apparent in the oft-overlooked narrative of Daniel 10, especially the concept of "rules of engagement" within the controversy. Daniel fervently prays for understanding for three weeks and, although God heard Daniel's words "from the first day," the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" withstood God's angel for "twenty-one days" and only

⁶⁸ In the end, Job is vindicated by God, his friends are shown to have been wrong, but the text gives no indication that Job receives any understanding of the wider, cosmic, significance of this test case; an amazing testament of faith indeed!

⁶⁹ However, it would be speculative to extrapolate from the story of Job that the Great Controversy works in precisely this fashion in every case. While it is reasonable to assume that God does not want Job to be afflicted (cf. Lam. 3:32-33), there is a larger context of the "rules of engagement" of the Great Controversy within which the suffering of Job is indispensable.

arrived after Michael (Christ) intervened (Daniel 10:2, 12-13).⁷⁰ But, how could it be that an angel of God could be delayed for three weeks? Being all-powerful, God possessed the power to respond to Daniel immediately. Yet, the Bible presents a real conflict here between the forces of goodness and darkness.⁷¹ In order for such a conflict to transpire, God must not be exercising all of His power and the enemy must be afforded some genuine freedom and power that is not removed capriciously but is restricted by some rules of engagement known to both parties (the details of which are not revealed to us). This limited freedom is nonetheless significant freedom afforded to Satan to work out his government as the “god” and “ruler of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), which consequently limits God’s own course of action.⁷²

This narrative, as many others in scripture, demonstrates that God does not meticulously control every event on earth. Rather, there are many things that happen that God does not desire.⁷³ Indeed, God’s ideal desire was that no evil ever occur at all. He hates evil. Why, then, does God allow evil? Why does an omnipotent God allow the forces of evil to oppose Him and carry out things contrary to His desires? Unfortunately, we cannot do justice to the magnitude of this question here. However, I believe the allowance of evil itself testifies to the nature of God’s character of love.

Why Evil? Divine Love and Freedom

God did not need to create this (or any) world. God already enjoyed an eternal love relationship within the Trinity before creation. However, God desired to share His love with creatures and to enjoy a reciprocal love relationship with them and thus created a world in which reciprocal love is possible. However, this kind of a world requires freedom because love, by

⁷⁰ Jacques Doukhan explains that v. 13 most likely should be translated “the chief prince (superlative)” or “first of the first princes” (cf. Dan. 8:25) and not “one of the chief princes.” Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 2000), 163.

⁷¹ Not all scholars believe the struggle is with a demonic being and the text itself is not entirely clear. Notably, Ellen White comments on this passage, “For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus. . . . All that heaven could do in behalf of the people of God was done. The victory was finally gained; the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, and all the days of his son Cambyses.” Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 571, 572. Thus, both Gabriel and the powers of darkness were trying to influence the decision of the earthly king of Persia with regard to the treatment of the Hebrews.

⁷² The concept of divine self-limitation is complex but may be understood by considering promise-making. If God makes a promise, would He ever break it? Of course not. Therefore, to the extent that God makes a promise He has limited His future course of action. This in no way endangers His omnipotence but it manifests that if God grants true freedom He must not directly and meticulously control everything that happens. By granting true freedom to others God necessarily limits His own course of action.

⁷³ For example, God does not desire that any perish (Ezek. 18:32; 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9) but some do choose to reject Him (Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34).

definition, cannot be determined.⁷⁴ Yet, freedom itself includes the possibility that God's creatures would decide to reject His love and rebel against Him. Thus, the necessary context for love requires freedom and, accordingly, the possibility of evil. God did not desire that evil would enter into his creation, but He allowed it because to do otherwise would exclude love.

The Bible consistently maintains that evil is alien to God's creation and is not the result of God's actions but those of creatures who have rebelled against God's will.⁷⁵ God has done everything He could do for this world but many have chosen to reject God's love. Consider Isaiah's song about the relationship between God and His people, symbolized by a vineyard owner and the vineyard, respectively. The vineyard owner makes every preparation for the vineyard, locating it on "a fertile hill," clearing its stones, planting the "choicest vine," and building a watchtower (Isaiah 5:2). Yet, though it should have brought forth good grapes it brought forth rotten grapes, literally, stink-fruit (Isaiah 5:2). Therefore, God Himself appeals for humans to recognize that He has done everything He could have done for this world, saying, "Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it?" (Isaiah 5:3-4, NKJV). Any doubt in this regard is met by Christ's quotation and continuation of this object lesson in His parable of the vineyard owner. Jesus adds that this very vineyard was "rented out to vine-growers" (Matthew 21:33). Yet, when He (God) twice sent His servants (the prophets) to collect the produce those renting His vineyard beat and killed His servants (Matthew 21:34-36). Finally, He sent His son (Jesus), saying "They will respect my son" (Matthew 21:37). But the renters murdered His son (Matthew 21:38-39).

What more could God have done? The Father loved us so much that He gave His beloved Son (John 3:16).⁷⁶ The second person of the Godhead willingly laid down His life for us as a demonstration of His great love (Romans 5:8; cf. John 10:17-18). However, although God desires that each one would reciprocate His love, He will never force anyone to turn to Him. God's love is freely offered and it must be freely received. For this reason, some are finally lost. God doesn't always get what he wants. So, why evil? Because God is love and desires a reciprocal love relationship with others He allows freedom and that means creatures possess the power to reject God and His will and many creatures have indeed egregiously misused this

⁷⁴ That is, by definition, God could not force intelligent beings to love him in return, for that would not be love at all. Indeed, God is the originator and bestower of freely given love (cf. Hos. 14:4). See Peckham, *The Concept of Divine Love in the Context of the God-World Relationship*.

⁷⁵ This is true despite the frequent misunderstanding of Isa. 45:7 in the KJV, "I make peace, and create evil." The Hebrew word translated evil (*ra'*) need not refer to moral evil but often simply refers to calamity, the absence of peace. The fact that the term parallels "peace" in this verse shows that the reference is not to moral evil and, thus, the term is correctly rendered "calamity" in the NASB (this is recognized by many other modern translations as well, including the NKJV). Within the context of Isaiah 45, God is referring to His sovereignty in contrast to foreign gods but this does not mean that God brought moral evil into existence in the world but that He can and does bring calamity in judgment (though He "does not afflict willingly," Lam. 3:33). Yet, one must also be careful to not thereby assume that all calamities come from the hand of God. Jesus explicitly stated that some do not (Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-7).

⁷⁶ That God's love for the world is in no way selfish, though it does seek and enjoy reciprocation, is most clearly demonstrated in Christ. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NKJV).

freedom that is necessary for love and turned it against love, perpetrating unspeakably horrendous evils.

Yet, the further question remains, why does such evil continue? As illustrated in the parable of the wheat and the tares, the premature eradication of evil would inflict collateral damage (Matthew 13:28-29). God will finally put an end to evil but allows it for a time. He allows it initially because to do otherwise would eliminate freedom and, with it, love. He continues to allow evil because if He were to destroy it prematurely creatures would not understand why He did so and serve Him out of fear rather than love.⁷⁷ However, allowed to continue temporarily, the enormity of evil is clearly seen by all as the horrible results of sin unfold before the on-looking universe, before “angels” and humans (1 Corinthians 4:9). When the Great Controversy is finally ended (see chapter 5), it will be clearly seen once-for-all that all of God’s laws and actions have always only been loving and that the inevitable result of departing from God’s will is tragedy, since God knows all and has given His law in order to bring about a totally harmonious universe of love. All of God’s creatures will, in turn, understand that God is love, that all of his commands have always been, and always will be, out of love, intended toward the ultimate happiness of all. Thus, God’s name will finally be vindicated (cf. Philippians 2:10).⁷⁸ God will make an utter end of evil and “wipe away every tear” and “there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain” for “the first things have passed away (Revelation 21:4).

In the meantime, Paul assures us that it will all be worth it; “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed” (Romans 8:18; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17). Paul in no way intends to minimize or trivialize the immense suffering in our world but if our suffering is great, consider how much greater is that joy which God has in store for us (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9). The very fact that God Himself came, taking on humanity, humbling Himself unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8) demonstrated that He considered this world, despite evil, to be worth the cost to Himself. In giving Himself for us God demonstrated His unfathomable love (Romans 5:8) and “His righteousness” as both “just, and the justifier” (Romans 3:25-26). The solution to the problem of evil, the ultimate theodicy, will be fully understood in the world to come. In the meantime, however, the suffering God on the cross unequivocally demonstrates the depth of God’s love and goodness. If there had been any other way to ensure that the universe would continue in unceasing love and uninterrupted goodness forevermore would he not have chosen it? God Himself has suffered the most of all

⁷⁷ Ellen White explains it this way: “The inhabitants of heaven and of other worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then [at the time of Satan’s rebellion] have seen the justice and mercy of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted from existence, they would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. Evil must be permitted to come to maturity. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages Satan must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might forever be placed beyond all question.” .

⁷⁸ On the question as to why God would care to vindicate His name, and whether such a view is supported by the Bible, see the discussion of this issue under the implications section below.

and knew in excruciating detail the suffering that He would endure by creating this world, but He did so anyway because of His great love for us. He has done all He could do, and there is no greater love (John 3:16; 15:13). God is love (1 John 4:8, 16).

Why Does It Matter? The Meaning and Worldview Implications of the Fall What is Wrong?

Most worldviews agree that something is wrong in this world but there are widely divergent views of what precisely is wrong and what the solution might be, if any. In the Adventist worldview, evil exists in the world as a result of sin, the creaturely rebellion against God's law of love such that the world is not now as God intended it to be. The problem of evil is a universal problem, infecting every human being and, indeed, all of creation, which was originally created by God without defect but "subjected to futility" by the Fall (Cf. Genesis 3:17-19) yet "will be set free from its slavery" when God restores this world (Romans 8:20-21; see chapter 5). Strikingly, however, the worldviews of pantheism and naturalism cannot make sense of the nearly universal assessment that the world has gone "wrong" somehow, nor can they adequately explain the universal human longing for something much better (see chapter 4).

For example, a consistent application of the pantheistic worldview trivializes evil since, by the definition of pantheism, if there is evil it must be in God, who encompasses everything. Thus, some suggest that nothing is actually "wrong" since everything is part of God. Although various versions of pantheism recognize "evil" and speak of it as such, the evil spoken of often amounts to nothing more than illusion or temporary disharmony.⁷⁹ For example, consider the yin-yang of Taoism where any dichotomy between good and evil is only perceived but not real since yin and yang make up an indivisible totality. From this perspective, then, all that is actually "wrong" with the world is the illusion of evil, since evil itself is an illusion.⁸⁰ Accordingly, many Eastern pantheistic worldviews teach the one suffering to ignore the suffering, sometimes by way of meditation or some other method to "escape" mentally/spiritually from this supposedly

⁷⁹ In some systems, the idea of karma (loosely, what goes around comes around) superimposes a kind of effective morality, but such morality lacks a fundamental underpinning and it might give the impression that whatever misfortune (or fortune) that befalls someone is the deserved consequence of previous actions (perhaps in a past life). Of course, some misfortunes are the consequences of evil action or inaction but scripture also describes calamity and misfortunes that fall on people that are not the direct result of individual shortcoming. See Job; Ecclesiastes 8:14; Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-3.

⁸⁰ Hinduism takes a similar approach. Francis Schaeffer recounts a discussion with "a young Indian who was of Sikh background but a Hindu by religion. He started to speak strongly against Christianity, but did not really understand the problems of his own beliefs. So I said, 'Am I not correct in saying that on the basis of your system, cruelty and non-cruelty are ultimately equal, and that there is no intrinsic difference between them?' He agreed...The student in whose room where we met, who clearly understood the implications of what the Sikh had admitted, picked up his kettle of boiling water with which he was about to make tea, and stood with it steaming over the Indian's head. The man looked up and asked him what he was doing and he said, with a cold yet gentle finality, 'There is no difference between cruelty and non-cruelty.' Thereupon the Hindu walked out into the night." Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1982), 110.

illusory world.⁸¹ The inability of pantheism to adequately account for evil, which is part of the universal human experience, is a devastating flaw of this worldview in my view.⁸²

For materialistic naturalism on the other hand, there cannot be anything wrong with this world in an absolute moral sense because there is no overarching purpose or meaning to the universe. If there was (and is) no purpose for the universe, how could it have missed its goal?⁸³ Asserting the “wrongness” of the natural order assumes purpose (telos), which does not exist according to a consistent Darwinian perspective. This is directly related to the question of the origin and/or existence of the distinction between goodness and evil itself (metaethics).

Because the belief that something is absolutely wrong in a moral sense assumes some objective standard of goodness, the Darwinist worldview may recognize evil only in a reduced sense, e.g., the presence of suffering and absence of pleasure. Yet, even if one agrees with the utilitarian premise that pleasure ought to be maximized and pain minimized, nothing prohibits one from rejecting the utilitarian assertion that I should be concerned for the happiness of everyone as opposed to merely being concerned with my own. The ethical treatment of others appears to lack grounding in non-theistic ethical systems.⁸⁴ Indeed, ethical egoism’s prime value of selfishness is directly in line with Darwin’s survival of the fittest.⁸⁵ While many Darwinists would not subscribe to ethical egoism, the two perspectives are mutually supportive.

⁸¹ For further information see Sire’s chapter on Eastern Pantheistic Monism in *The Universe Next Door*, 149 ff. See also Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*.

⁸² There are diverse pantheistic views and it is far beyond the scope of this work to delve into them in a way that would do justice to the numerous intricate variations of pantheism. However, I have yet to encounter any version of pantheism that adequately accounts for evil, which is part of the universal experience of humans. C. S. Lewis put it this way, “If you do not take the distinction between good and bad very seriously, then it is easy to say that anything you find in this world is a part of God. But of course, if you think some things really bad, and God really good, then you cannot talk like that. You must believe that God is separate from the world and that some of the things we see in it are contrary to His will.” C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 37.

⁸³ Unless there is some standard or a real “ought” for the universe, how can one say that anything has gone wrong? J. L. Mackie thus proclaims, “The problem of evil, in the sense in which I shall be using the phrase, is a problem only for someone who believes that there is a God who is both omnipotent and wholly good. And it is a logical problem, the problem of clarifying and reconciling a number of beliefs: it is not a scientific problem that might be solved by further observations, or a practical problem that might be solved by a decision or an action.” “Evil and Omnipotence,” in *The Problem of Evil: Oxford Readings in Philosophy*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 25.

⁸⁴ See Louis P. Pojman, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, 7th ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 1990), 166-79. Of course, the debate continues as to whether any such system can actually ground the moral treatment of other human beings. “Naturalism can make good sense of why we might feel or believe that we have moral obligations, but it has a much harder time explaining moral obligations themselves, and its deterministic framework means that vital moral categories, to survive, have to be watered down and replaced.” David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *Good God: the Theistic Foundations of Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 28. “Indeed, How collections of atoms could generate and issue genuinely binding moral commands is altogether mysterious, if not absurd.” *Ibid.*, 11. The Christian Theistic worldview, on the other hand, is strongly supported by any belief in objective moral values. For a further discussion, see *ibid.*

⁸⁵ Ethical egoism, popularized by Ayn Rand, is the system of ethics that claims that selfishness is a virtue. That is, each person should act in their own long-term best interest regardless of the interests of others. For a highly

Perhaps we might simply agree that it is wrong to mistreat humans and propose a pragmatic code of ethics. However, this raises the question, why are humans afforded value at all? Why should I or anyone agree to this pragmatic code?⁸⁶ If humans are not intrinsically valuable by divine creation, why can't one assert that humans are no more valuable than the mass of chemicals of which we consist and act accordingly? How does one decide whether and to what extent humans should be valued, if at all, as well as whether or how anything else should be valued (animals, nature, etc.)? Why is anything afforded value at all?

Some naturalists contend that there is no logical rationale for appropriating value to anything such that all values are merely the result of emotional preference (emotivism and/or prescriptivism) or my personal subjective will to create my own personal values (existentialism).⁸⁷ Many have, accordingly, turned to the increasingly popular perspective of moral relativism, which contends that right and wrong, or good and evil, are not absolute categories but are merely relative to human decision. In the end, however, relativism is self-defeating since the contention that all values are relative is itself an absolute evaluative statement.⁸⁸ Moreover, relativism can easily lead to nihilism (the view that nothing matters) and consequently, despair. The fast pace and constant stimulation of twenty-first century culture distracts many from looking further into the larger question of values. However, upon sustained inquiry the perspective that there are no objective values (whether emotivism/prescriptivism, existentialism, or nihilism) amounts to a devaluation of everything and cripples the ability to coherently defend a moral high ground and call evil by its right name (e.g., what do we say about the unspeakable atrocities perpetrated by terrorists?).

readable introduction to this and other ethical systems, see Steve Wilkens, *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: an Introduction to Theories of Right and Wrong*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011).

⁸⁶ One might say that I should agree out of self-interest, as part of the social contract or otherwise, to protect my personal health, property, etc. But, even in this case, my agreement would only be to the extent that I could make others think I agreed so that they would respect my property. It would not require that I actually abide by these values, so long as I could do harm to others without detection, avoiding any personal negative consequences. Eventually, in my view, all ethical pursuits based on naturalism break down. Thus, the moral argument for theism is in my view among the strongest.

⁸⁷ Emotivism claimed that moral statements are nonsensical (that is, they do not properly derive from reason or experience) such that any moral norm is merely subjectively emotional but not objectively rational. For an introduction, see Pojman, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, 143-47. This view has been heavily criticized because it relies on the now discredited verification theory of meaning (logical positivism), which claimed that belief must be self-evident *a priori* (an analytic truth) or verifiable by sense experience. However, the verification principle itself is neither of these. On the other hand, many in contemporary society avoid nihilism (the view that nothing really matters) by adopting (whether consciously or subconsciously) a kind of existentialism wherein I create my own values and make my own life. There are no objective "oughts" or values but I choose, no one else. In doing so, I make myself who I am and I determine my own happiness and self-fulfillment. One need only survey the broad cross-section of contemporary entertainment that presupposes these ideas, which face our students continually. See Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 117-43.

⁸⁸ It is interesting to note in this regard that Buddhism is a system that is all about ethics, "a religion founded on human ethical behavior as the sole basis for attaining Nirvana." Eckman, *The Truth About Worldviews*, 42. Yet, what is the basis of such ethics upon which one might achieve Nirvana?

Despite many philosophical attempts, then, naturalism does not adequately ground objective morality. Natural law theory, the view that we can derive ethics from the laws of nature (not to be confused with naturalism), might be a helpful complement to a theistic perspective but provides no help to a naturalist perspective because it struggles to defend how an “ought” could be grounded in what “is.”⁸⁹ That something is this way or that way does not necessarily reveal how it ought to be.⁹⁰

In the theistic worldview, on the other hand, morality is grounded in God and His eternal character of love such that value is bestowed through His special creation of the world. Yet, some theistic systems are severely challenged by the question, is God Himself moral? If God is not good then, of course, He cannot be the basis of good itself. Some Darwinists, in this vein, point to the evil in the world and assert that an overarching purpose cannot be discerned in the light of the apparent disorder (dysteleology). Although the problem of evil is a powerful challenge to theism, the Great Controversy perspective helpfully addresses the paradox of an all-powerful (omnipotent) and completely good (omnibenevolent) creator God alongside the evil that we see in the world, without claiming to resolve all of the complex questions surrounding this issue. As briefly described earlier, evil was and is allowed because God granted creatures significant freedom to accept or depart from His will and since God’s will is only good (God’s law of love) the freedom to depart from it requires the possibility of evil. Freedom was itself granted by God because reciprocal love would not be possible otherwise since love must be freely given and freely received. Thus, the evil in the world is not a result of any deficiency of divine goodness nor the product of divine weakness but stems from creaturely decisions to depart from God’s will, which was only allowed by God because of His overarching, loving purpose that required freedom.

Here, it is essential to distinguish the Adventist worldview from the view of some theists that God predestines or determines all events to occur precisely as they do, without the input of any other wills. This view requires that everything ultimately happens as God wants it to happen. Every occurrence must therefore be God’s will, including the very worst evils. The Great Controversy perspective, however, contends that God did not desire that Adam and Eve sin nor does He desire that any child should suffer or die. Possessing divinely granted freedom, creatures often act in direct contrast to that which God desires and thus things in this world are not now as the omnipotent and omnibenevolent Creator intended them to be. For example, evil agencies are allowed to oppose God’s purpose temporarily (e.g., Daniel 10). Christ longed to save Jerusalem and its inhabitants saying, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . How often I wanted to gather your

⁸⁹ The influential skeptic David Hume claimed that one cannot derive an “ought” from an “is”—known as the is-ought problem. *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Volume II, Book III. The question continues to be heavily debated among moral philosophers.

⁹⁰ This problem of grounding the very existence of the moral “ought” faces no such problem, of course, from a theistic perspective such as the Adventist worldview proposes.

children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34, NKJV). Thus, God does not always get what He wants.⁹¹

From this perspective, one may speak of God’s “will” as ultimately effective provided that one understands that God’s “will” itself includes the resolution to allow others to act contrary to that which He ideally desires.⁹² Accordingly, the result of this matrix of decisions in our sin-sick world is not indicative of the true nature of God’s government but manifests the results of departing from God’s will, begun by Satan’s rebellion and continued by human sin within the context of the temporary government of the evil one. God’s original plan was that evil never exist. Evil is alien to God’s creation and, eventually, will be eradicated once and for all and God’s character of love will be vindicated (see chapters 4 and 5).⁹³ Until then, we should oppose evil at every turn and in any form in which we encounter it.

So, what is wrong? The Adventist worldview maintains that the world we live in has departed far from God’s ideal. Because of the entrance of sin and evil into this world, suffering and death pervade the earth as the rebellious enemy (Satan) enjoys a degree of power to manifest his government, thereby revealing the dire effects of departure from God’s law of love. Yet, God has not left us alone in this world filled with evil. He intervenes even now but His ultimate, final intervention will amount to a restoration of this world and the total eradication of evil, suffering, and death.

Who Am I, Why Am I Here, and Where am I Going?

Nearly all human beings recognize that something is wrong with us; that is, we are each imperfect (to say the least!). However, in naturalism, the problems of human nature are not the result of sin. In one sense, nothing is “wrong” since there is no transcendent purpose for this world and thus no design for human life. There was no Fall that has disrupted the being and purpose of humanity, rather, humans are the result of a long process of progressive evolution and we have no future beyond this life. As such, the question of the human condition loses some of its significance even as secular humanists try to hold on to an elevated view of humanity. On the other hand, the pantheistic view minimizes the importance of individual identity such that evil is just part of the balance of the universe, in some such systems trivializing individual sin and sinfulness as illusion and/or an aspect of divinity. Where am I going? Both pantheism and naturalism have no solution to the question because neither appear to be able to adequately account for its premise (see chapter 5).

⁹¹ See John C. Peckham, “Does God Always Get What He Wants? A Theocentric Approach to Divine Providence and Human Freedom.” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 52, no. 2 (2014): 195-212.

⁹² Accordingly, that all things “work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8:28) does not mean that all things are good or that all things were intended by God or even that all evils were necessary for the good but, rather, that God will bring a greater good out of the Great Controversy as a whole.

⁹³ In the end, God’s name will be vindicated and it will be seen that God did all He could do and has been completely just and loving in His dealing with the problem of sin and evil (see chapters 4 and 5).

In the Adventist worldview, however, humans were created perfect but as a result of the Fall each human being is infected from birth with a sinful nature, a predisposition or “bent” toward sin (Psalms 51:5; 58:3; 3:23) such that no human is perfect now (Romans 3:10; Psalm 14:1-3). This sin disease, encompassing both internal disposition and external action, is beyond human ability to resolve (Jeremiah 13:23) and can only be remedied by divine action (see chapter 4). In the meantime, our purpose is dually focused. We are intended for perfect love relationship with God and others but, for a time, we endure a world embroiled in conflict. In this context, we are called to contest evil and be vessels for goodness, lights in a dark world, salt in an otherwise rotting corpse that will one day be resurrected and transformed.

So, who am I, why am I here and where am I going? I am meant to be in perfect love relationship with God and one another but I am temporarily enslaved by a sinful nature, from which only Christ can set me free. I am infected with sin and therefore in desperate need of redemption and restoration, which no creaturely enterprise nor innovation can bring about. I need a hero, a Savior. Praise God that He has not left me to the designs of an enemy but has enacted a plan of redemption to rescue me so that I can be restored and live with Him for eternity. This future (where I am going) is inextricably linked to recognizing that where I am now is not where I should be. The hope of a better future requires admission that the present is far less than perfect and that I myself am pervaded with evil. The depth of human sinfulness is especially apparent when I compare myself to the one true exemplary of humanity, Jesus Christ. The closer I get to God the more clearly I see my own deficiencies. It is by looking to Christ that I not only recognize the problem but also find the solution. In Christ, I am redeemed (see chapter 4) and await a future when I will be fully restored in love relationship to God and fellow creatures (see chapter 5).⁹⁴

⁹⁴ We are not destined to wallow in our fallen state, as most earthly worldviews have us doing, whether cyclically or otherwise. By remembering where we came from (see chapter 2) and recognizing that we are now fallen, we can recognize what God desires to do, and is doing with those who allow him to, right now in redemption, and the future total restoration that will restore us to the creation ideal forevermore.

Chapter 4

The Adventist Worldview: Redemption

I was four years old and my sister was seven. My room was a kitchen that had been converted into a bedroom and it contained cabinets large enough for us to climb around in them. So, of course, we did. We were enjoying a game of hide and seek, but then we found something in the cupboards, cans of blue paint. Before long we decided to open a can. That would be fun! Before we knew it we had accidentally spilled a paint can and we were covered with blue paint, along with the countertop and the floor. We knew that we were in big trouble. Trying not to make things worse, we went downstairs to face the music. However, by walking downstairs we were tracking blue paint throughout the house! When my mother saw us and immediately recognized what had happened, she was not at all amused. In fact, when my father came home from work later that day she said to him, “You’re lucky you still have children!” She was not happy about what we had done but my mom loved my sister and me very much. She didn’t abandon us because of our mess and she didn’t leave us covered with paint either. She forgave us and she cleaned us up. However, she spent a long time cleaning the blue paint off of both of us and off the cupboards, the countertop, and the floor. There was a cost to our mess, which my mom bore since we were unable to cleanse ourselves. We learned our lesson and I’ve never looked at a can of paint the same way again.

According to scripture, all human beings are sinners (Romans 3:23). We’re all covered in sin and we are incapable of cleaning up our mess. However, God loved the world so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, who gave His own life to clean us all up and eradicate evil. This chapter explains the biblical worldview regarding redemption, God’s solution to the sin and evil problem that has resulted from the Fall (see chapter 3), and responds to questions such as: What is the solution to evil? and What is the remedy for sin? The Adventist worldview’s perspective on these questions sheds further light on other worldview questions and sets the stage for the question of the next chapter, Where am I going?

What is the Adventist Worldview Regarding Redemption?

The History of Redemption

Redemption is neither automatic nor without considerable cost. Why did God go to such lengths and endure such profound anguish to redeem us? The cost was incalculably high yet God was willing to endure suffering because of His great love for us. God was not willing to give up on His creatures but continued to desire a reciprocal love relationship with us. God is love. However, restoration of this love relationship, severely ruptured by the Fall, requires redemption.⁹⁵ Because the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), Adam and Eve deserved to

⁹⁵ One may wonder why anything would be “required” of God. This will be taken up further in this chapter and relates to the Great Controversy as depicted in the previous chapter.

perish for their sin. Yet, God immediately met the situation with amazing grace (Genesis 3:15), without which the divine-human relationship would have ended immediately. Although God needn't have done so, He both created humans and continues to preserve us even in our sinfulness, despite the immense cost to Himself.⁹⁶ God, being compassionate, not only suffers in our suffering and is pained by the evil in our world, but also took upon Himself further suffering in order to resolve sin, suffering, death, and repair the broken love relationship with us. If humans were to be saved, the entrance of sin and evil required mediation and atonement in order to uphold the justice of God in accordance with His law of love. In the plan of redemption, God metes out grace and justice, answering once and for all the Satanic claims against His character and government.

God was not caught by surprise by sin. Even before the restoration of relationship was required, God had a plan of salvation (Revelation 13:8), the mystery of the gospel, put in place before the world began (1 Corinthians 2:7; cf. Romans 16:25-26). The second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ the righteous, would manifest God's unfathomable love by taking on humanity without becoming less than divine and triumph over evil by taking it upon Himself as a willing and innocent victim of evil, thus giving His perfect life as a substitute for sinners, submitting to death on the cross, so that all who believe in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life (cf. John 3:16; 10:15-18; 15:13; Philippians 2:7; 1 John 2:1).⁹⁷ This was foreshadowed by the symbolic system of sacrifice, which typified the ultimate, so very costly, remedy to the problem of evil; the perfect life and death of the Son of God.⁹⁸

This symbolic system was instituted in the aftermath of sin, when the guilt-ridden nakedness of Adam and Eve, which they were unable to cover by their own attempt by fig-leaves, was covered by God Himself, who made "garments of skin . . . and clothed them," requiring the first sacrifice (Genesis 3:21). This sacrifice, as all others throughout biblical history, pointed to the Christ, the One perfect "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). No animal death could atone for sin, no skin could cover the enormity of transgression, no ritual or human action of any kind could heal the rift created by evil. Only God could accomplish the remedy; Christ would provide and apply the once-for-all atonement by His perfect life and death (Hebrews 9:12; 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18).

The cross event does not stand alone but is at the center of the history of redemption, all of which is crucial because the solution to the problem of evil requires the full revelation of God's character in history, providing a final and full answer to the enemy's slander by showing

⁹⁶ Not only was God's grace bestowed at the original sin but it is continually bestowed on us sinners now. Our lives are gifts of God twice over.

⁹⁷ Indeed, the entire Trinity would willingly suffer for the redemption of humankind. The Father and Spirit would both be grieved as they were separated from the Son while weight of sin would fall on the Son.

⁹⁸ Typology is "the study of persons, events, or institutions in salvation history [types] that God specifically designed to predictively prefigure their antitypical eschatological fulfillment in Christ and the gospel realities brought about by Christ." Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 83.

God's infinite love and incomparable goodness so that evil will never rise again.⁹⁹ Satan's claims that God is a tyrant who does not really have our best interest at heart and is therefore unworthy of love and obedience are decisively met by scripture's record of God's longsuffering mercy and compassion for His people even in the midst of repeated apostasy.¹⁰⁰

We come to know and love God by encountering His love as demonstrated in the history of redemption, which provides a stark contrast to the designs of the enemy. Throughout this history, evil follows the inevitable course of the departure from God's law of love while God unfailingly responds with love and justice. Over the antediluvian ages, sin pervaded the world to the extent that "every intent of the thoughts of [the human] heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5), bringing enormous grief to God, who, though He "does not afflict willingly" (Lamentations 3:33), carried out the just judgment of love against evil by a worldwide flood (Genesis 6:5-8).¹⁰¹ God graciously spared a remnant in the ark yet, before long, their descendants mounted massive rebellion against God, threatening to return the world to the pre-flood critical mass of evil. Consequently, God dispersed them throughout the world, creating a situation in which God had no special people through whom to manifest His character and carry out the plan of redemption (Genesis 6-11).

To rectify this, God created a people by calling Abraham out of the Mesopotamian culture of polytheistic idolatry, electing him and making a covenant with him that would bring blessing to all people (Genesis 12-15). Through Abraham and his offspring Israel, the ruptured divine-human relationship is displayed in microcosm, highlighting God's surpassing love and justice as He works out His plan to restore His original design. Although not entirely unfaithful, Israel manifested the sinfulness and evil common to all post-fall humanity (Genesis 16-50).¹⁰² Through a series of events begun by brothers selling one of their own into slavery, Israel finds itself enslaved in Egypt (Genesis 37-Exodus 1). But God miraculously rescues His people in the Exodus and proceeds to reveal His law to Moses, along with the specifications for the sanctuary that would manifest God's method of saving sinners and through which a holy God can dwell among His people, all of which is crucial to the covenant relationship of love between God and His people (Exodus 2-31). Yet, even as God is doing so, the people engage in the disgusting worship of a golden calf, a heinous rebellion and rejection of God worthy of immediate destruction (Exodus 32). However, God again demonstrated His unfathomable character of

⁹⁹ Christ defeats violence by being the willing victim of it.

¹⁰⁰ Without such a historical manifestation of God's character, the central issue of the Great Controversy might remain unresolved, leaving open the question (raised by Satan) of whether God is truly good and whether He truly has our best interest in mind.

¹⁰¹ It would neither be loving nor just to continue such evil to continue forever. At some point, it must be brought to an end. The world reached that point not only once but is even now drawing to that point a second time. That this is the inevitable course of departure from God's will is manifest unmistakably in that the world takes this course not once but twice.

¹⁰² Israel, Abraham's offspring, are not chosen merely for their own benefit but God desired to save not only them but all peoples of the world through the light that He would shine on and through them, if they would be willing conduits of His grace.

longsuffering grace, compassionate love, and steadfast justice, sparing those who would repent and repairing the shattered covenant relationship with His people (Exodus 32-34).¹⁰³ This cycle of rebellion repeats throughout the history of Israel but is met over and over again by God's persistent merciful love, simultaneously manifesting both God's character of justice and love and the wickedness of sin and its inevitable results (see the poignant summaries of the God-Israel relationship in Nehemiah 9; Ps. 78).¹⁰⁴

Finally, God the Son came to this earth, taking upon Himself humanity in the incarnation, leaving His throne in heaven to suffer and endure a life of hardship ending in torturous death (Philippians 2:5-11). His life on earth provided the greatest revelation of God in human history (John 10:30; Colossians 2:9). Those who saw Him saw the Father as He demonstrated God's love and justice (John 14:9). In all this, Christ represented not only divinity but also took it upon Himself to represent humanity as the truly "elect" one who is beloved and pleasing to God, in perfect harmony with the law of love, thus bridging in Himself the chasm between the holy God and sinful humans (John 1:1-3, 14). Christ was affected by sin but not infected by it so that He could be the perfect offering through whom our infection might be healed and our corruption turned to incorruption (1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 2:22). His life was the flawless example of true humanity, His death the substitute for our sin that provided removal of our guilt, the true sacrificial lamb for all transgression (1 Corinthians 5:7). He willingly took all the sins of the world on His shoulders (John 10:17-18), bearing suffering far beyond the physical anguish of the crucifixion inflicted by the very ones He desired to save and inspired by the devil himself. Jesus ultimately died of a broken heart, bearing the sins that were not His, becoming sin though knowing no sin, so that we might become His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21; cf. Numbers 21; John 3:15). Yet, this was not the end. He laid down His life but He also took it back up again, rising from the dead as the "firstborn from the dead" (John 10:17; Colossians 1:18). Because of His resurrection, all who believe in Him might also be resurrected (John 3:16). Through His perfection, those who surrender to Him may be perfect (Philippians 1:6). Through His election, all who accept Him may also be elect and beloved (Ephesians 1:4-7; 1 Peter 2:4-10). By His pleasing of God the offerings of sinful humans may be accepted before the throne of God (Hebrews 13:21; 1 Peter 2:5). Through His true and untainted sonship, we might be adopted as children of God, with all of the inheritance rights that entails (Rom. 8:15, 23; Ephesians 1:5).

At the cross, Christ forever assured victory in the Great Controversy, defeating the claims of the devil. Yet, the reconciliation between God and humans is not complete. Christ's work of atonement continues as He functions as the true High priest in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews

¹⁰³ Here and elsewhere throughout scripture God's mercy and justice kiss (Ps. 85:100), both integral to His steadfast love, which is here revealed: "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished" (Ex. 34:6-7).

¹⁰⁴ God was amazingly patient with His people, continually calling them back from rebellion and, when necessary, disciplining them for their own good (Deut. 8:5, 15-16), as a father disciplines the son that he loves (Prov. 3:12; cf. Deut. 4:36-37), though He "does not afflict willingly" (Lam. 3:33). Indeed "love" without appropriate discipline is not genuine love.

8:1-6; 9:11-12), interceding and ministering to provide both forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). The original ideal of intimate relationship between God and humans, ruptured by sin, is still in the process of being restored by the mediation of God in Christ and will culminate in the second coming of Christ to take all of His children home with Him, never again to be separated, to suffer, or to die, but to live the fully abundant eternal life of love toward God and fellow creatures (see chapter 5).¹⁰⁵

Understanding the Divine Action of Redemption/Atonement

(1) What is atonement?

Atonement describes God's solution to the problem of evil that has ruptured the God-world love relationship.¹⁰⁶ God desires to fully repair that relationship but must at the same time maintain the justice appropriate to His perfect character of love. The wages of sin is death yet God desires to save sinners (Romans 3:23; 2 Peter 3:9). How could this be accomplished without God being unjust? God accomplishes both the justification of sinners and the maintenance of His own justice by willingly taking the consequences of sin upon Himself, thus providing a substitutionary atonement that enables divine-human reconciliation and makes certain the final eradication of evil and God's victory in the Great Controversy (Romans 3:22-26; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:24; 3:18).¹⁰⁷ Numerous questions arise regarding the meaning of atonement, such as: Why was Christ's death required for atonement? What did Christ accomplish in the incarnation and at the cross? Is substitutionary atonement immoral or merely a legal fiction? Is God truly just in saving sinners? The Great Controversy sheds significant light on these questions, ultimately manifesting that there was no other way for God to provide salvation for sinners without compromising justice and love.

(2) Why was Christ's death required for atonement?

Sin clearly requires a remedy. We are in need of reconciliation to God, that is, atonement. However, couldn't God have reconciled His people to Himself in some way other than the death of Christ? This question has been the source of much debate throughout the centuries, with

¹⁰⁵ In the meantime, however, the relationship between God and His creatures is necessarily distanced. Whereas God had "walked" in the garden (Gen. 3:8), demonstrating the original intimacy of His personal relationship with Adam and Eve via personal presence, after the Fall the full presence of God would destroy them because of their sin. Sin separates from God (Is. 59:2). However, God does not abandon His people but, rather, mediates His presence throughout history. The sanctuary itself, within which the typical system of mediation (pointing to the antitypical mediation of Christ) took place, was erected with the stated purpose of God dwelling among His people (Ex. 25:8).

¹⁰⁶ The English word atonement is a concatenation of the words "at" and "one" to literally convey reconciliation (at-one-ment) in an attempt to adequately translate the rich Hebrew term *kippur*. When atonement is complete, humans will once again be "at one" with God. See Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, "Atonement/Expiation in the Old Testament" in W. E. Mills (ed.), *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Mercer University Press, 1990), 30.

¹⁰⁷ "Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation." Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 753.

various answers, yet many still ask why God couldn't simply forgive without restitution in much the same way that I might forgive someone who has wronged me? Is God unwilling to forgive? Did God require blood in order to be satiated?¹⁰⁸

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all desired to save us and needed no convincing. At the same time, it would not do to simply neglect, reject, or modify His perfect law of love. If God were to overlook sin, or change His law to accommodate it, that would both lead to a continually imperfect world and be akin to an admission that His law was unjust, or at least imperfect, as Satan had claimed at the outset of the Great Controversy.¹⁰⁹ God is love and His law is a perfect transcript of His character of love, not an external norm to which He must submit but congruent with His love.¹¹⁰ This law of love provides the only way in which a universe filled with free beings can exist in perfect harmony without conflict of interest (self vs. other) as opposed to the universe we now inhabit that is plagued by billions of agents who have departed from God's will, directed by incessant selfishness.¹¹¹ The true happiness of all the

¹⁰⁸ Some aspects of the atonement do not make immediate sense to our human attempts at understanding. Accordingly, that God's plan of redemption was a "mystery" that required revelation (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 6:19) and remains something into which even angels long to look (1 Pet. 1:12) should engender humility in us as we see through a mirror dimly (1 Cor. 13:12).

¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, God cannot simply change the rules midstream for two reasons. The law is already perfect and any change would either make it less perfect or be an admission that it wasn't actually perfect from the outset. Secondly, even the slightest deviation would have severe consequences via cause and effect (in a universe of free will). Death is the inevitable result of departure from God's will for none can live without His sustenance. It would be far worse if God granted eternal life to all creatures in their sin! Thus, "the wages of sin is death" and it is good that it should be so (Rom. 6:23). But God wants to redeem, so He pays the price and satisfies His own wholly just law. He thereby upholds it, He does not remove it or simply "drop charges" arbitrarily in a way that would also be open to claims of injustice. On the contrary, He assumes and pays the penalty Himself. As Ellen White puts it, "Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died. . . . It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross." White, *The Desire of Ages*, 762-63.

¹¹⁰ Since God's character is love, His law is a manifestation of that love. How could it be that there was no other way to provide atonement? This also makes sense within a Great Controversy setting where God is allowing other wills and there are rules of engagement in place. One might then say, well, God created the law didn't He? Is it some external standard? There are a number of possible ways of looking at this but the simplest explanation is to say that the law is itself a transcript of God's character. It is not an external norm to which He must submit but part of God's very character. Further, since God by nature knows the end from the beginning, His law works not only in the abstract but also applies to the practical world such that the outworking of the law of love, if never deterred from, would lead to everyone's greatest happiness; an eternal blissful harmony of reciprocal love relationship! Thus, "the law of God is as sacred as God Himself. It is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom. The harmony of creation depends upon the perfect conformity of all beings, of everything, animate and inanimate, to the law of the Creator." Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 52.

¹¹¹ Many have asked why God made the rules as they are and the best answer is that they are themselves the best rules that could have been—in agreement with God's character of love and producing the best possible consequences in a world of free beings. Only God knows the end from the beginning and only He can foresee the only way that all beings can live in harmony for eternity. Thus, God prescribes His perfect and unchanging law, which will lead to everyone's best happiness provided that all trust God unreservedly. Surrender to faith in God's goodness, love, and wisdom is necessary because only God can see the inevitable outcomes of the extremely complex results of billions of choices, while none of us can know the end from the beginning. Thus, some of God's laws may not be understood by us in the short run but we must trust that God has our best interest in mind. For an

inhabitants of the universe requires total submission to God's law of love—not out of fear, not out of force or unilateral divine determination, but out of love, which is evoked by God's own self-revelation, prompting creaturely recognition that God is only good and only desires that which is best for us.¹¹²

But, what about the penalties of the law, especially the death penalty for sin? Death is the best possible outcome for someone who rejects God. Consider the alternative. Imagine endless existence in a sin-sick world. Such a world would inevitably deteriorate and be far worse than our present world (as bad as it is) since the mediating effects of God's providence would be removed. Endless existence in such a world would be exponentially worse than death. Should God let evil continue forever? God's law is not harsh; it is the result of God being a God of love. Sin ultimately leads to death. In order to justify repentant sinners and yet uphold His holy law, God in Christ willingly took the consequences of sin upon Himself, in doing so making certain that evil will finally be utterly vanquished. In this way, God reveals to all that He is entirely just, demonstrating His justice while displaying the most profound mercy. If there had been any way other than submitting Himself to a life of suffering and an excruciating death, would not Christ have chosen it? Consider His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done" (Matthew 26:42; cf. 39; Luke 22:42).¹¹³ Yet, in all this, then, we should recognize that it is not that God Himself needs to be satisfied and/or convinced to forgive. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). God is and was willing to forgive; it is the law that must be fulfilled (satisfied) in order to maintain justice (Romans 8:3-4).¹¹⁴ That which God did not desire, the death of the Son as our substitute, was God's will in this instance only because it was the only way to achieve His greater desire to save us.

excellent treatment of the relationship between God's character of goodness, ethical grounding, and God's moral commands, see David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *Good God: the Theistic Foundations of Morality*.

¹¹² Of course, this doesn't fit the contemporary individualistic ideal, which rejects any sovereign authority, including that of God's law. However, imagine billions of people going in their own direction for eternity? It would be a worse fate for all of us than death—we see a taste of the consequences of individual autonomy in this dark world. On the other hand, a human monarchy doesn't work in our world because humans are corrupt and power further corrupts. However, since God is wholly just he is the only one that can institute a perfect government. Although democracy may be the best available earthly government because of sin it is not the best government in a perfect world. Rather, in the perfect world that God designed each citizen has been granted moral freedom but willingly exercises their freedom to only and always choose that which God wills, understanding that He alone is all-wise and all-loving and doing so leads to the best and true happiness of all.

¹¹³ Notice, this implies that there was no other possible way. God's will is to save sinners and this was the only way to do it! That is, this was the only way that God could save sinners and maintain His justice, that is, be both "just and the justifier" (Rom. 3:26). However, even this explanation shouldn't be mistaken for the whole reason or purpose of the atonement. It was far more effective than any one model of the atonement can encapsulate, as shall be seen in our brief discussion of the next question.

¹¹⁴ God did not need to be convinced to forgive but is freely willing to forgive (Amos 7:2; Jer. 5:1; Deut. 29:19; Hos. 14:4; Ps. 103:3) and God the Son Himself suffers the consequences of sin (John 1:29; 1 John 3:5), giving Himself on the cross (Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20). As such, Christ fulfills the role of both priest and sacrifice (Heb. 2:16; 9:11) necessary to satisfy the just claims of the law.

(3) What did Christ accomplish in the incarnation and at the cross? That is, is Christ's atonement merely via penal satisfaction, moral influence, or something else?

Although much is revealed in scripture, both why Christ died and what Christ accomplished and is still accomplishing in the process of atonement is known to us only in part (1 Corinthians 13:12). For this reason, no one metaphor of salvation is sufficient to provide the total picture. No one depiction can capture the majesty, grandeur, and magnitude of salvation through Christ Jesus. Accordingly, scripture presents the atonement as multi-faceted: Christ's atonement provided (among other things): the all-sufficient and perfect sacrifice, the effective mediator, our substitution, a ransom-redeemer, expiation and propitiation resulting in justification and reconciliation, victory over the power of evil, and an example of how humans should live in love relationship to God as well as a demonstration of God's righteousness and the depth and vastness of His love for us. Let us take a brief look at a number of these facets.

First, the atonement of Christ is substitutionary. As explained above, God could not simply acquit the guilty (Exodus 34:7); He must somehow uphold justice alongside mercy and accomplishes this through a substitutionary atonement. However, some have suggested that the atonement is simply a manifestation of God's love that was not necessary in order to deal with the sin problem but merely purposed to awaken recognition of the depth of God's love. This perspective is usually referred to as the moral influence theory of the atonement, which denies that Christ's death was needed to make any kind of restitution or as a substitution for sinners.¹¹⁵ On the one hand, this perspective correctly emphasizes that the atonement manifests God's love in amazing fashion and impacts creatures' view of God's character, which is itself integral to the Great Controversy worldview. Indeed, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Notice, however, that this demonstration of love itself includes substitution; "Christ died for us" (emphasis mine; e.g., Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; Ephesians 5:2; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9:28; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14). This manifestation of divine love, moreover, was not simply an arbitrary ploy. It would not make sense for me to show my love for my wife by running out in the street in front of a car shouting "see how much I love you honey!" Rather, the depth of God's love was manifest in that when faced with the choice of either giving up His beloved children or taking sin upon Himself, with all the suffering and the ignominious death that entailed, God was not willing to let us perish. He took death willingly on our behalf and thus manifested the greatest love—love deeper and wider than we can fully comprehend.

Accordingly, Christ's substitutionary death was a sacrificial death. Just as the Passover lamb was the substitutionary offering for the firstborn in each Hebrew home during the tenth plague of the Exodus, Christ's death on the cross provided a vicarious offering for each sinner (1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:22; cf. 9:12). Christ's substitutionary atonement is likewise depicted by way of the ransom and redemption metaphors. He "gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1

¹¹⁵ The moral influence theory is generally attributed to Peter Abelard (1079-1142) in his *Epitome of Christian Theology*, though he himself did not exclude other aspects of the atonement and thus did not advocate a simple moral influence perspective.

Timothy 2:6; cf. Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45) and “who gave Himself for us to redeem us” (Titus 2:14), “in Him we have redemption through His blood (Ephesians 1:7; cf. Romans 3:24; Hebrews 9:12, 15; 1 Peter 1:18-19).¹¹⁶ This redemption imagery develops from the rich Hebrew background of the ransoming of a slave by payment and/or the freeing of one who is in debt beyond which they are able to repay (Exodus 21:7-11; Job 6:23; Ruth).

This substitutionary ransom/redemption facet of the atonement relates to three significant questions. (1) Is substitution immoral? (2) Who is the recipient of redemption/ransom? (3) Is the justification brought about by atonement merely a legal fiction? With regard to the first question, who would consider it just for a judge to simply penalize someone else for the crime of another, let alone his own son?¹¹⁷ While it is true that in a criminal case we often consider substitution unjust, what if the atonement is viewed as analogous to a civil case—a relational rather than abstract context. In such cases, it is entirely permissible for one to voluntarily pay the fine of another, which dovetails with the much of the commercial imagery of atonement as ransom and redemption (both depict a civil, commercial transaction). The judge can pay the fine for the traffic offender. Moreover, even in our legal system one might not consider the payment of one’s penalties by another to be unjust. For example, in December of 2012, a man struggling to support his wife and two small children was pulled over for an expired vehicle registration sticker. He explained that he had no excuse for letting the sticker expire but “It was either feed my kids or get my registration done.”¹¹⁸ The officer wrote a citation and handed it to the man with a \$100 bill alongside the ticket. Did the officer (who elected to remain anonymous) perpetrate an injustice? I do not think so.

Likewise, God can pay the wages of sin for us and this is wholly just, even moreso because God Himself is the Creator and Owner of all, the one whom all sin is ultimately against.¹¹⁹ The penalty is not thereby removed nor is the law thwarted or nullified when a benefactor may take the penalties upon himself.¹²⁰ There is thus no such thing as cheap grace;

¹¹⁶ Notice the close association between the idea of substitutionary death and that of ransom/redemption “for us.”

¹¹⁷ The cross is a scandal not just because of the humiliation that Christ suffered but because of the very idea of substitution itself. Thus some try to find ways around it. However, scripture is entirely unashamed of the substitutionary redemption provided by Christ. Perhaps the semblance of injustice is due to both improper use of analogy and our faulty understanding.

¹¹⁸ “Officer Wraps \$100 Bill in Ticket to Needy Driver.” Kdvr.com. December 13, 2012. Last modified December 16, 2012. <http://kdvr.com/2012/12/13/officer-wraps-100-bill-in-ticket-to-repenting-needy-driver/>.

¹¹⁹ J. C. Smuts Van Royen contends that Christ stands as our voluntary surety and guarantor and, thus: “It is no more wrong for Christ to pay our debt before the law than it is wrong for someone who has cosigned a bank loan for a friend to pay the debt should delinquency occur.” J. C. Smuts Van Rooyen, “Grace Finds a Way,” *Ministry* 53, no. 5 (1980): 6.

¹²⁰ Many reject the language of penal substitution because of an aversion to the language of “penalty.” However, there is a crucial distinction between a penalty that is inflicted upon (or charged from) someone involuntarily and someone voluntarily taking a penalty upon themselves just as one would pay the fine of another or post bail to remove someone from prison. Thus, Christ is “the one who, seeing the helpless condition of the fallen race, came to redeem men and women by living a life of obedience to God’s law and by paying the penalty of disobedience.” Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 207.

God Himself paid the ultimate price for us. In this way, God doesn't deny or trivialize all the pain and suffering in this world or enable the continuance of evil by treating it leniently, pretending that evil is not so bad after all. God is willing to forgive sin but He is not willing to pretend that sin is okay, nor is He willing to downplay the horrible effects to which it inevitably leads. To do so would be neither just nor loving.¹²¹

Yet, this raises the question, who is the recipient of the ransom/redemption transaction? The ransom or redemption "payment" is not to convince the Father to forgive. He already desires to reconcile creatures to Himself. It is Satan who is bloodthirsty. He is the "accuser of our brethren" who continually points out that without such penalty the law would be breached, vindicating his charges against God's law as true and requiring his own acquittal (Revelation 12:10; cf. Zechariah 3). Yet, Satan does not receive payment. God makes restitution to the law (cf. Romans 8:3-4) and He suffers the loss so that we might lose nothing in the transaction and yet no one can rightly claim that God's law has been unfulfilled (and was thus unjust, imperfect, or arbitrary).¹²²

In all this, Christ is both "just, and the justifier" (Romans 3:26). In the process of atonement, Christ removes the guilt from sinners by taking it upon Himself and dealing with it once and for all (Romans 3:24-25; 1 John 2:2). This is expiation, the removal of guilt, which results in propitiation, the removal of wrath, leaving those who are in Christ justified and no longer under condemnation (Romans 8:1). This is so because God's righteous wrath, itself a product of His justice, is always directed only at sin/guilt and where there is no guilt there is no wrath. In much the same way that any sane person should be angry at child abuse, God is always appropriately angry at sin, since sin always results in injury of God's children. As such, expiation is not an appeasement of a bloodthirsty god but God Himself taking upon Himself the cost of sin and shouldering the world's guilt, receiving in Himself the horrendous consequences of evil and thus removing the enormous weight of guilt from all who accept Him as their substitution so that He may, in turn, bestow upon us the eternal weight of glory (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17). We are thus justified (counted as just as a consequence of the removal of our guilt) through Christ's blood if we have faith in Him (Romans 3:26). We can then be reconciled to God (God's goal for atonement), since that which was separating us from Him is removed via atonement (Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2:11-16; Colossians 1:19-22).¹²³

¹²¹ Thus, God upheld the just requirements of the law while finding a way to save us who had fallen under the curse of the law, from which Christ has redeemed us (Gal. 3:13). In this way, the removal of guilt is not the ignoring or overlooking of guilt, as if God is pretending it is not there. No, sin must always be dealt with, it cannot simply be swept under the rug because every sin affects relationship and we know what happens when unresolved issues are allowed to fester continually in our relationships. Only God stands at the guarantor of justice, the one who has been wronged but has never wronged anyone – the just victim – the only one fit to bring a case against us. God makes restitution without having to state or imply any falsehood about what has happened and is happening.

¹²² It must be remembered that the ransom/redemption language is, to some extent, metaphorical and should not be stretched too far. Other facets of the atonement are needed to balance the overall picture of atonement.

¹²³ Christ does not gain anything but loses (since He suffers an eternal loss in a very real way) so that we might lose nothing in the transaction and yet no one can claim that God's law has been unfulfilled or was arbitrary or tyrannical.

Yet, is justification, then, merely a legal fiction? Is not God declaring us to be just when, in fact, we are not? If God acquits the guilty, Satan's accusation that God is unjust would be valid. However, justification is no legal fiction. God will by no means clear the guilty (Exodus 34:7). That is why He took the penalty upon Himself: to remove guilt from those who accept Him. The declaration of the believer's righteousness is not fictional but akin to a promissory note signifying that God will finish in us what He has begun (Philippians 1:6). God's reconciling work, the atonement, thus includes the phases of both forgiveness (justification) and cleansing (sanctification; cf. 1 John 1:9). Those who are "in Christ" by faith are accounted (reckoned) as righteous (Romans 4:3-9; Galatians 3:6) while at the same time being made righteous as God works in them. Accordingly, justification and sanctification, though theologically distinct, cannot be separated.¹²⁴ Rather, one who is truly justified by faith in Christ will also be sanctified by faith in Christ. Thus, humans who have surrendered to Christ, making Him Savior and Lord of their life, will ultimately have victory over sin through God's ongoing work in their life. In the meantime, believers are counted as acceptable by being covered by Christ's acceptability. Humans, who are on their own incapable of pleasing God, may please Him by faith (Hebrews 11:5), through the only truly pleasing One (Hebrews 13:21), being thus perfect "in Christ."

4) Is God Truly Just in Saving Sinners?

The facets of the atonement make a great deal of sense collectively within a Great Controversy context, which helps us understand why God couldn't simply overlook evil but had to deal with it through atonement. However, Satan's allegation that God is not just would continue to loom large if God's very saving of sinful people was not carried out in such a way that triumphed over this allegation while also meeting the enemy's accusations against God's people, particularly that they should not be saved (cf. Zachariah 3:1-5; Jude 9; Revelation 12:10). Thus, the atonement must also answer questions such as: Is God truly just in saving any humans, all of whom merit death by their sin? If yes, is God just with regard to who is saved and who is not saved? Do the people whom Christ saves really accept Christ? Has God truly done all that He could do to save those who are finally lost?

God answers these questions and others via the judgment aspect of atonement. Although God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, NKJV) and has made complete and perfect provision of atonement by His perfect life and death on the cross, not all will accept Christ as their substitute. Yet, all will come into judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10; cf. Matthew 12:36-37; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16; Hebrews 10:27-11:2; Revelation 20:12; 22:12).¹²⁵ Before Christ's return, those who have truly accepted Christ as their

¹²⁴ "The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven." Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, June 4, 1895. Both of these are received by surrender to Christ: "both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ. The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God." White, *The Desire of Ages*, 300.

¹²⁵ Note well that the statement that the righteous will "not come into judgment" (John 5:24) is better rendered will "not come into condemnation." The Greek term (*krisis*) may refer to the negative decision of judgment

Savior and Lord will be vindicated by heavenly judgment (Daniel 7:9-10; 8:14).¹²⁶ Thus, when Christ comes in glory all cases will have been decided and He will “reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:27; cf. Revelation 20:12; 22:12).¹²⁷ Of course, God is omniscient and thus has no need of any investigation to reveal to Him who should be saved and lost (2 Timothy 2:19). This pre-advent (investigative) judgment, then, does not supply information to God but clearly manifests to the universe that God is just (1 Corinthians 4:9); God has not arbitrarily chosen some to be saved and some to be lost, but justly saves all those who have manifested faith in Christ and persevered in love (Matthew 24:13; 2 Timothy 4:8) whereas all those whom God does not save are lost due to their own decision to reject God’s love; sadly yet justly condemned by their own unbelief (cf. John 3:18).¹²⁸

All will see that God is wholly just and loving and God’s justice and love will never again be questioned once this insurrection is finally put down (see chapter 5). Christ’s redemption thereby triumphs over the devil by completely debunking the Satanic claims that had begun the Great Controversy. That is, the plan of redemption not only provides salvation for sinners while maintaining justice but, in doing so, also accomplishes the vindication of God’s name.

Is God unjust? Surely not? Is His law arbitrary or tyrannical? Not at all, it is absolute based on God’s love and Christ forever demonstrated the importance of the law, God’s own

(condemnation) rather than to judgment generally. That this term refers to condemnation here and does not exclude any judgment of believers is apparent by reference to other passages that teach that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10).

¹²⁶ This pre-advent, investigative judgment began in 1844 at the end of the prophetic 2,300 days when Christ entered into the second phase of His high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (Dan. 8:14), typified by the yearly Day of Atonement in the ancient earthly sanctuary (Lev. 16). This pre-advent judgment is explicitly revealed in the vision of Daniel 7, which contains a heavenly judgment scene (v. 9-10) followed by an interlude of events on earth (v. 11-12) leading up to the second coming (v. 13-14). For an excellent and highly readable overview of Christ’s sanctuary ministry, the investigative judgment, and the prophecies of Daniel related to both, see Roy Gane, *Altar Call* (Berrien Springs, MI: Diadem, 1999). Cf. Roy Gane, *Who’s Afraid of the Judgment?: The Good News About Christ’s Work in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2006). See also Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “The Sanctuary,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 375-417; Richard M. Davidson, “The Good News of Yom Kippur,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 2, no. 2 (1991), 4-27; Jiří Moskala, “The Gospel According to God’s Judgment: Judgment as Salvation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 22, no. 1 (2011), 28-49. On the reality of the heavenly sanctuary according to scripture, consider Ex. 25:8-9; Heb. 6:19-20; 8:1-5; 9:11-12; 10:19-22.

¹²⁷ Thus, it is no coincidence that scripture emphasizes God’s evaluation of His people, who are counted as “worthy” and “precious,” “beloved,” “pleasing,” “acceptable” in His sight, not through their own merits but by being joined to Christ (Rom. 8:1, 15-17; 23:1-2; Eph. 1:4-6; 5:2; Col. 1:10; 2 Thess. 1:5, 11; 1 Pet. 2:4-10; Heb. 13:21). On this, consider the evaluative aspect of God’s love as discussed in Peckham, *The Concept of Divine Love in the Context of the God-World Relationship*.

¹²⁸ John 3:18 states, “He who believes in Him [Christ] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (NKJV). It must be understood that John 3:18 does not mean that those who believe in Christ are not judged at all. Indeed, that would contradict many other biblical texts such as 2 Cor. 5:10. Here, the term is meant in the sense of condemnation or negative judgment. That is, none who believe in Christ will face condemnation for, as Paul says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

justice and goodness and love, by giving Himself on the cross. Is God love? Absolutely, He gave everything for us and has done everything He could do to save every individual, without in any way compromising His justice (cf. Isaiah 5; Matthew 21). Christ thus defeats any and all claims of the devil, while condemning evil by taking the suffering inflicted by it—the results of Satan’s rebellion—as an innocent victim, thus laying to rest once and for all any claim that God is selfish or that His law is arbitrary.¹²⁹ Christ is finally the victor, triumphing over evil by vindicating the divine character as the one who is both “the just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26), falsifying the claims of Satan against Him and against those who love Him and exposing the depravity of Satan’s government. Christ thus defeats all the enemies of goodness: sin, death, Satan and his demonic forces; evil is overcome and defeated once and for all (Genesis 3:15; Revelation 12:7-9; 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:2, 10). This astonishing demonstration of God’s justice (Romans 3:26) and love (Romans 5:8) itself evokes our love in response, contributing to reconciliation.¹³⁰

5) Why Does God Vindicate Himself?

However, why does God vindicate Himself? Specifically, some raise the question, why would a sovereign God need to demonstrate His righteousness in order to vindicate Himself? When most Christian theologians speak of God’s sovereignty or “control” they are assuming determinism, that is, the belief that everything happens due to God’s unilateral determination, ruling out the free will of creatures to act otherwise than they do. From this perspective, the idea of God’s vindication of his character is, indeed, nonsensical. Since God unilaterally controls everything (according to thoroughgoing determinism), He could merely unilaterally determine that all creatures recognize His righteousness. Of course, this would rule out the possibility of free response and, hence, love itself (see chapter 3). Being omnipotent, God possesses the power to simply force everyone to recognize His will. He could even force everyone and make them believe that they are not being forced! But He does not because He allows freedom in order to allow the possibility of genuine love. He does this, though He need not do so, because of His own amazing love. He Himself pays the highest price, He suffers the most in this Great Controversy. However, in the end, it will all be worth it since “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed’ (Romans 8:18; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17).

But that raises the decisive question of this Great Controversy: What about all of this suffering (see chapter 3)? The enemy’s claim since the beginning has been that God does not really want what is best for us; He is not really love (Genesis 3:5-6). The enemy sowed the seeds of evil all over then turned around and blamed God for it (Matthew 13:24-30). In this regard,

¹²⁹ If God’s law were arbitrary, God would have laid it aside to avoid the immense suffering in the person of the Son, would He not? If He were selfish, He surely would not have suffered exponentially more than any other in order to save us.

¹³⁰ In the future, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess the Lordship of Christ and the justice and character of God (Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10-11; Rev. 5:13; 15:3; 19:1-6). Christ is, then, unequivocally both fully just and the justifier. His name is vindicated by Himself and that vindication is manifest to the world.

God desires to manifest His character because, if human beings think God is a tyrant who is responsible for evil, why would they love him? If God does not protect (and vindicate) His name how will creatures know the truth about Him and come to love Him? For this reason, God is profoundly concerned with His reputation and character before the world (e.g., Genesis 18:24-25; Exodus 32:12-13; Numbers 14:15-16; Deuteronomy 9:28; Joshua 7:7-9; Psalms 23:3; 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; 143:11; Isaiah 5:1-5; 48:9-11; 66:5; Jeremiah 12:1-4; 14:7; Ezekiel 18:25; 20:9, 14, 22, 44; Daniel 9:19; Romans 3:3-5).

The plan of salvation, then, is not opposed to God's vindication of His character but bound up with it. There is a crucial link between God's demonstration of His righteousness and His justification of sinners (see especially Romans 3:25-26). The question of theodicy, God's goodness, is thus at the very heart of the gospel. Humans are saved in order to enjoy an everlasting love relationship with God, living with him and others in perfect harmony for eternity. This universal harmony will be the result of perfect love, which itself requires that everyone trust God fully.¹³¹ No, God does not need to vindicate his character; He does not need to provide an answer to anyone. However, He voluntarily lowered himself to become a man and subjected himself to death, even the death of a cross, so that creatures might understand why this has all occurred and that God never desired any of the pain, evil, and suffering in this world; that God is love, that He will bring it to an utter end, and that if there was any other way, He would have chosen it. He did not need to do it. He doesn't need us and He could have avoided all of the pain and suffering that He has endured, but I'm so very thankful that He did not. God is love.

The Process of Being Redeemed

We all need a Savior because we are all sinners (Romans 3:23). Yet, the good news is that Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10) and has made provision for every sinner by His death and ongoing mediation so that anyone who accepts Him can be saved (1 John 2:2). God desires that no one perish and works toward the salvation of every human being (2 Peter 3:9; Titus 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:4; John 12:32; Romans 12:3). Because of our sinful natures, without divine prompting, none would turn to Him in faith or repentance. However, God has not only made universal provision by paying the redemption price for the sins of all, He also initiates relationship with everyone; Christ enlightens every human being that has

¹³¹ Here is where many in our world would suggest that God should manifest his character. What about the one who is the victim of her father's sexual abuse? What about the mother who loses her husband and children to cancer? What about all of the pain and suffering? If God is "in control" in the deterministic sense, what do we say about God's character? It will not suffice to say we simply shouldn't ask such questions. God himself in scripture tells us to ask such questions (and books like Lamentations affirms that they are righteously asked). People who have endured such suffering have the right to ask such valid questions as long as they are truly seeking God's answer through scripture.

come into the world (John 1:9; cf. Jeremiah 31:3; Ezekiel 34:11, 16; Luke 19:10; John 6:44; 12:32; Romans 2:4).¹³²

So, what must I do to be saved? Although the emphasis must always remain on what God has done for us and is still doing in us, God requires positive response in the process of redemption. In order to be saved one must exercise faith in Christ: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31; cf. John 3:16; Romans 5:6-11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 1:23-24). To believe in God, however, is more than just cognitive recognition. It is complete trust in God, the total surrender of one’s life to Him (John 15:5; James 4:7-8; Ezekiel 11:19; 16:26; Galatians 2:20). This saving faith assumes repentance, that is, sorrow for sin and a desire to turn from sin through God’s power (Acts 2:37-38; 3:19; 2 Corinthians 7:10). However, humans are never justified by works of the law (Galatians 2:16) but by faith (Galatians 2:21; Rom 3:22, 24). Our salvation can only come through Christ (Acts 4:12). Adventists thus reject salvation by sacraments, rituals, or works of any kind and believe in only the atoning work of Christ. The faith response to God’s prior action does not merit salvation any more than accepting a gift from a loved one thereby earns the gift. Yet, in order to benefit from a gift one must first accept it (Ephesians 2:8-9).¹³³

Those who exercise faith in response to the initiation of God’s prior grace receive justification, that is, God forgives their sins, covering them by the atonement of Christ. Justification is thus God’s declaration of a sinner’s righteousness (i.e., forgiveness, pardon) as a result of removal of guilt (expiation) by His work. Although one may be justified instantaneously by faith, justification is not a once-for-all action but must be received repeatedly.¹³⁴ Justification (imputed righteousness) cannot be separated from sanctification (imparted righteousness), though the concepts may be distinguished (cf. 1 John 1:9). Sanctification is the process of becoming holy, growing toward fully reflecting God’s character of love. The one who is justified is not only forgiven and thus acquitted of any guilt (Romans 5:16), being accounted righteous (Romans 4:1-5, 22-24), but is also in the process of being sanctified by faith and receives the

¹³² “It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. . . . Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness.” White, *Steps to Christ*, 18.

¹³³ In this way, the Adventist worldview excludes Pelagianism and Semipelagianism. Pelagianism is the view that humans inherit a sinful nature as a result of the Fall, holding instead that humans inherit an ambivalent nature with absolute freedom to choose good or evil. Semipelagianism affirms that humans inherit a sinful nature as a result of the Fall but contend that, prior to any divine initiative, humans possess the inherent capacity to respond to God. The Adventist worldview holds, in contrast, that humans inherit a sinful nature as a result of the Fall and we only have the opportunity of salvation because God reaches out to us first and enables us to choose whether to accept God’s gracious and unmerited offer of salvation or not.

¹³⁴ The Adventist worldview thus rejects the conception of once saved always saved (see Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; 1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Cor. 15:2; Heb. 6:4-6; 2 Pet. 2:19-22; Rev. 3:5).

divine promise of a future reality of righteousness when “we will be like Him” (1 John 3:2).¹³⁵ Thus, in different senses sanctification is accomplished in the believer’s past (Hebrews 10:10, 29; Ephesians 5:25, 26; Acts 20:32), is an ongoing process in the present (1 John 3:2-3; Romans 6), and points to a final result that the believer experiences in the future (Philippians 3:12-14), being counted as perfect in Christ in the meantime (Hebrews 10:14).¹³⁶ This entire process of the human experience of salvation may be framed simply by faith, love, and hope. As a sinner, I can only be saved by faith in Christ (justification) and through His work in my life grow in love toward God and fellow humans (sanctification), also by faith, while I expectantly hope and wait for the day when I will be like Him (glorification).¹³⁷

Why Does It Matter? The Meaning and Worldview Implications of Redemption What Is the Remedy for Evil?

As the previous chapter discussed, many worldviews recognize that there is something wrong with the world. However, mere recognition of the problem is insufficient. A solution is needed. In the Adventist worldview, the effective solution is provided in the plan of redemption, where Christ’s atonement makes a way for God to deal with the problem of sin and evil once and for all, saving those who put faith in Him while at the same time upholding and demonstrating His justice and love, effectively ending the Great Controversy (see chapter 5).

Various worldviews, however, do not correctly recognize the problem and thus do not include an adequate solution. In materialistic or atheistic naturalism there is no solution to the problem of evil because nothing is really wrong nor could there be actual “wrong” since the universe is itself purposeless. Naturalism has no afterlife at all. This is all that there is and, therefore, one cannot be “saved.” At best, one can live a good life here but, as we saw in the previous chapter, aiming at a good life begs the question: what is good? Even if objective goodness were allowed, which is contrary to the worldview of atheistic naturalism, why should I be good and not simply seek my own pleasure? From this perspective, that which humans perceive as evil may be reduced to the presence of pain and the absence of pleasure. Thus, technology and/or advanced medicine may be applied in order to relieve pain and increase the pleasure of this life but, eventually, all will die and not return. From this perspective, one may devote their life to achieving merely the maximum pleasure possible in the short existence on this earth. This can lead to substance abuse and various kinds of hedonism. After all, why

¹³⁵ However, just like justification, sanctification is in no way the result of meritorious works but it is also the result of faith, meaning placing one’s full trust in God and making Him both the Savior and Lord of one’s life.

¹³⁶ While one may achieve the biblical kind of character perfection (maturity) in Christ, we will not be absolutely sinless until Christ returns and transforms us from corruptible into incorruptible, in the blink of an eye (1 Cor. 15:51-55). In the mean time we run a race without looking back, not having achieved full perfection (Phil. 3:12-14) and not now fully like Christ but looking forward to seeing Him as He is (1 John 3:2). As we await final perfection, we are nevertheless counted as perfect in Christ (cf. Heb. 10:14), as a result of God’s grace, which causes the temporary suspension of the consequences of evaluative judgment.

¹³⁷ I am indebted to my colleague, Martin Hanna, for highlighting this framework in personal discussions.

shouldn't one use whatever means necessary to resolve one's pain temporarily if there is no purpose to the universe? Over time, the progress of evolution is supposed to provide higher forms of life but ultimately, there is no redemption; evil, as all of life, is ultimately purposeless and meaningless. Perhaps scientific progress will extend the life span but will life actually get better? Will the problems of humanity be solved in the future?

Thus, naturalism provides no adequate solution to the problems of this world. It must reject or re-define the nearly universal assessment that the world has gone wrong somehow and fails to adequately explain the universal human longing for something much better.¹³⁸ Naturalism lacks an adequate response to evil because it can't actually recognize absolute evil coherently. We are and soon we will not be. One may despair or decide to enjoy the time given. It doesn't really matter either way. While naturalists may seek meaning in life and personal "redemption" through participation in good causes and may indeed live in many respects moral lives, the underpinnings of that morality are conspicuously absent for there is nothing to pin "goodness" on,¹³⁹ let alone genuine hope for the future (see chapter 5).¹⁴⁰

On the other hand, pantheism teaches that everything is God, therefore, if evil is defined as that which is in contrast to God, evil could not actually exist. Thus, many pantheistic worldviews contend that the evil we humans perceive in this earth is illusory. In Taoism, for example, good and bad are simply perceptual but not real; yin-yang is the indivisible whole of reality.¹⁴¹ The "problem" is the illusion of sensory desire and suffering associated with material existence, which can be overcome by reaching a different state of mind. Along these lines, in some Eastern religions each person suffers through various lives as the soul returns as a creature higher or lower on the scale of being (reincarnation and transmigration of the soul) dependent upon how one has acted in the past. This is called karma. If one reaches the highest plane of consciousness that person will achieve nirvana and thus be freed from the cycle of reincarnation and, accordingly, from the illusion of material existence (including evil). In various similar perspectives in this school of thought, such as certain kinds of Buddhism and Hinduism, Jainism,

¹³⁸ See Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 66-93.

¹³⁹ The Harvard psychiatrist Armand Nicholi, Jr., however, interestingly points to the fact that although "in our society, moral and ethical guidelines have become less and less clear, and people's consciences less and less discerning, nevertheless, people 'feel guilty about their behavior.'" Nicholi thus sees "the apparent persistence of an inner moral sense, a kind of universal law of right and wrong that makes one feel guilty and worthless whenever this law is transgressed." Armand Nicholi, Jr., "Hope in a Secular Age," in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 116.

¹⁴⁰ Likewise, within the panentheistic process theology worldview there is likewise no salvation or resurrection because there is no conscious afterlife. Some take solace in the notion that what we are now is taken up into something else and continues in the ongoing, never ending process. Thus, one may be impersonally immortal by "surviving" in the future via one's impact in the past. As seen in chapter 1, panentheism overlaps in some respects between tenets of pantheism and naturalism. Whereas the most prevalent naturalist worldview in North America is atheistic or agnostic there are also pantheistic naturalists who believe that all is God but that God is, in fact, nature. Panentheism is an even more sophisticated version of this.

¹⁴¹ *Taoism (or Daoism)* is pantheistic at least in the writings of its leading thinkers Lao Tzu and Zhuangzi, although it later developed elements of folk religion. See Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, 388-422.

and Sikhism, “salvation” refers to this liberation (mukti or moksha), which may be achieved by selfless action, love for a deity, cultivation of the mind via meditation, etc.¹⁴² This usually requires significant personal effort and, often, asceticism.¹⁴³ Notice that in such conceptions, the solution is a product of human effort. These perspectives stand in contrast to deterministic strains of pantheism (Stoicism, Spinozism, etc.), in which the entire world takes an inevitable course that cannot be changed.

Thus, worldviews other than theism generally either contend that the “problem” of evil can be overcome by recognizing that it is illusion or the worldview presents no solution and may simply encourage the person to live the best life that they can in the here and now, which is all that there is. Neither of these are satisfactory and either view can lead to devastating effects, the latter tends toward nihilism whereas the former can lead to a withdrawal from present reality.

The Adventist worldview, however, recognizes the reality of the problem and points to a solution, with hope for a future in which all evil will be eradicated (satisfying a universal longing) but also bringing progress in the here and now in growing closer to God and putting one’s efforts in helping others come to Him and toward relieving suffering. The Adventist worldview stands within the unique stream of Christianity where salvation may not be achieved by human works but is a result of divine action via God’s grace, amounting to a rejection of all systems of works-based salvation or liberation. Moreover, Seventh-day Adventism, like various other forms of Arminianism, contends that humans possess divinely granted freedom to accept or reject God’s saving grace, which rules out all forms of determinism. The Adventist worldview further embraces and draws from the entirety of the complexity of biblical history without in any way minimizing the glory and centrality of the cross, recognizing that each part of the canonical revelation was given to us as part of God’s purpose to help reveal His love in the midst of the complexities of the Great Controversy. The Adventist worldview of redemption then, avoids a reductionist or minimalist gospel, which often unintentionally distorts the plan of redemption, or God’s character, or both. In all this, I believe that the Adventist worldview provides the most adequate available description of the solution to the issue of evil, providing a compelling model of the reason why evil is allowed to temporarily ensue as well as the divine solution.

¹⁴² Mander, “Pantheism.” Note that Buddhism and Jainism do not emphasize a creator God but share the emphasis on liberation.

¹⁴³ In Buddhism, for example, “salvation centers on the individual, on his or her own powers, on redemption through spiritual self-discipline” based on the law of karma and rebirth” Eckman, *The Truth About Worldviews*, 41. In Eckman’s view, then, it is “a religion founded on human ethical behavior as the sole basis for attaining Nirvana.” Ibid., 42. In Theravada Buddhism the quest relies totally upon the individual rather than deities, priests, sacraments, faith, etc. The more inclusive Mahayana Buddhism, however, may allow assistance, particularly in pure land Buddhism such as Jodo Shinshu where Amida Buddha (Amitābha) creates a paradise to which one may enter upon death by accepting the gift and may in that place, easily achieve Nirvana. Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, 330-33. See also Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: a Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), xiv.

Where Did I Come From? Who Am I, Why Am I Here and Where Am I Going?

Misunderstanding where one comes from has large implications with regard to the solution to the problem of evil. According to the Adventist worldview, humans were part of God's perfect creation and would have always been so if sin had not entered this world, with suffering and death as its inevitable consequence. Despite the effects of the Fall, through Christ we may receive redemption since Jesus reverses the curse of death and suffering in Himself by overcoming sin and effectively working in us to eradicate it forever. However, if one adopts naturalistic evolution, the link between the entrance and eradication of sin is broken. If there was no perfect creation but the world is the result of billions of years of evolution, then suffering and death were not a result of the Fall but simply part of the natural order. Accordingly, the divine plan of redemption cannot overturn suffering and evil; Christ's death on the cross is of no effect. The second Adam cannot reverse the curse of sin because the first Adam never actually existed! To put it simply: No perfect creation, no Fall, no redemption.

In the Adventist worldview, however, redemption moves me toward who I am supposed to be, the person God intended me to be in love relationship with Him. My identity is not temporary, I am not an illusory individual within what is (or will be) a unity (pantheism) nor am I an insignificant yet sophisticated conglomeration of matter (materialistic naturalism). On the contrary, the Creator of the Universe counted me (even me!) to be so valuable that He gave His life so that I may enjoy eternal life with Him! Accordingly, all humans are of infinite value since they are a part of God's creation and people for whom Christ died, in contrast to worldviews where human value is contingent upon extrinsic factors. If God loves all humans so much that He gave Himself, shouldn't I love others and also value myself as a child of God?

So, who am I? As a believer, I am a redeemed child of God by faith who is growing in love and waits with the hope of future relationship with God and all of His loyal creatures. I am here because God had an original intention for me within the community of His children. This original intention was thrown off track by evil but God did not give up on us but continues to work to save us in His amazing grace. Where am I going? The rebellious fall of humanity resulted in evil and death, obscuring God's original intention for our identity in Creation. However, redemption results in forgiveness of sin (justification), partial regeneration and movement toward holiness in relationship to God (sanctification), and the eventual eradication of all sin (glorification)!¹⁴⁴ I am not yet who I was meant to be but God is not finished with me yet (see chapter 4). The closer I get to God the more clearly I see my own deficiencies. It is by looking to Christ that I not only recognize the problem but also find the solution in Him. In the meantime, I long for what I was created for (the creation ideal) and recognize that, in Christ, I am redeemed (see chapter 4) and I therefore await a future when I will be fully restored (see chapter 5).

¹⁴⁴ The following chapter outlines the Adventist perspective on this final consummation, the total restoration of God's creation ideal.

Chapter 5

The Adventist Worldview: Restoration

In 2002 the National Football League's New England Patriots won their first Super Bowl in franchise history, beating the Rams on a last-second field goal. Two years later, Tom Brady's team beat the Carolina Panthers to win their second Super Bowl. The following year, the Patriots once again took home football's top prize, prevailing over the Eagles. Three Super Bowl wins in four years. Tom Brady, the Patriot QB and two-time Super Bowl MVP, had reached the pinnacle of his sport. Yet, when he sat down for an interview on 60 Minutes in June 2005, not long after his third Super Bowl victory, Brady seemed strangely unsatisfied. "Why do I have three Super Bowl rings, and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think: . . . it's gotta be more than this. I mean this can't be what it's all cracked up to be. I mean I've done it. I'm 27. And what else is there for me?"¹⁴⁵ Even at the top of the world, by the standards of American culture, Tom Brady felt that there was something missing. Indeed, I would suggest that all the hopes and dreams of this world, the greatest successes that this world can offer, are nothing in comparison with what God desires for each of us and will accomplish if we simply accept His love. This chapter explains the biblical worldview regarding restoration and, accordingly, addresses major questions including: Where am I going? What is going to happen to me? Further, it asks who, ultimately, am I and who should I be?

What is the Adventist Worldview Regarding Restoration?

The Divine Action of Restoration: The Final Crisis and the Second Coming

God created human beings to be part of a universe of reciprocal love relationship, from both God to creatures and vice versa and creatures toward one another. In the future, atonement will be complete, bringing total reconciliation between God and humans, and the entire universe will be restored to God's original intent. Then, the perfect love that the Trinity has always enjoyed among one another will be shared throughout creation. The world to come will be infinitely better than we can imagine, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9, NKJV). Even now, Seventh-day Adventists await the soon return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which will set off a chain of events, culminating in the total eradication of evil and the re-creation of a new earth where only goodness will dwell.

¹⁴⁵ The transcript of the interview may be accessed at http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-1015331.html.

However, things on this earth will get worse before they get better.¹⁴⁶ Just as God's people have faced persecution in past ages there will be those who wish to enforce a false system of worship before Christ's return, a system that is set over and against God's law of love (Revelation 13-14). The centrality of the issue of worship, which itself strikes at the heart of whether we love God, is embedded in the first of three angels' messages, which themselves proclaim the mission of Seventh-day Adventism: "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7, NKJV). Notice the allusion to the language of creation, which closely parallels the language of the Sabbath commandment of Exodus 20:11, "in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day" (cf. Psalm 146:6).¹⁴⁷ The end-time issue of worship is thus explicitly tied to the recognition of God as the Creator.¹⁴⁸ The true worship of God includes obedience motivated by love and accordingly the same chapter identifies the remnant as those "who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12, NKJV).

Revelation contrasts the true worship of God with the system of false worship that is set up as a counterfeit, administrated by the "beast" from the sea of Revelation 13 and eventually adopted and enforced by the beast from the earth, with both beasts serving as agents of the dragon, Satan (Revelation 13). As part of this grand counterfeit, false christs and false prophets will arise, deceiving many (Matthew 24:24-27). The counterfeit will be extremely convincing. Perhaps this false christ will offer miracles, the healing of a severely ill loved one perhaps, and many will desperately want to believe him as the voices around will likely ask: "what are you going to believe, some ancient book or that which you see with your own eyes and touch with your hands?" The only safety against such strong delusions will be found in a personal love relationship with Christ that clings to His Word as the test of faith and practice, despite the appearances around us (2 Thessalonians 2:1-15). Those who love Christ will "follow the lamb wherever He goes," while the world marvels and follows the beast (Revelation 14:4; 13:3).

This final crisis over worship is directly related to the fundamental issue of creation. Those who truly love God are those who recognize Him as the Creator and are willing to surrender to Him and thus, by His power and through the mediation of Christ, obey His law of

¹⁴⁶ Importantly, that there would be a delay before Christ's return was anticipated throughout scripture. See Matt. 13:7; 24:6; 25:1-13; 2 Pet. 3:3-10.

¹⁴⁷ The parallel of God making heaven, earth, and sea is only interrupted by the mention in Rev. 14 of the "springs of water," which very likely alludes to the first major judgment, the flood, in which the "fountains [or springs] of the deep" were broken up; water flooded from below and not just above (Gen. 7:11). See Jon Paulien, "Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (1998): 179-186.

¹⁴⁸ The first angel's message of Revelation 14:7 centering on faithful worship of the Creator went out even as the evolutionary theory denied the biblical account of creation. In mid-October 1844, bookseller Robert Chambers anonymously published the widely influential bestseller *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, which offered a completely naturalistic account of the origin of the universe and life and had a large impact on public thought. Further, in the summer of 1844, Charles Darwin had written his 1844 *Sketches* and was arranging for his manuscript on origins to be published. See Art Chadwick and Ingo Sörke, "What On Earth Happened in 1844?" *Adventist Review*. October 20, 2013. <https://www.adventistreview.org/2013-1529-p16>

love. Those who refuse to worship the beast will be severely persecuted for refusing to accept the counterfeit (antichrist) worship (Revelation 13).¹⁴⁹ These, however, who hold fast to their faith in Christ in loving obedience to His commands (rather than those of humans, Acts 5:29) will be severely persecuted but finally receive the seal of God whereas those who choose to worship the beast and accept his false system receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 7:1-10; 13:15-18; 14:8-12). This final test over worship will thus bring each one on earth to a point of final decision for or against God, thus ending the current period of probation such that everyone alive just prior to Christ's coming has made their final choice for or against God: "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11, NKJV).

Before Christ's coming, the entire world will be plunged into a "time of trouble" such as the world has not yet seen (Daniel 12:1), including the seven last plagues, which are part of God's judgment on the earth (Revelation 16). However, though God's people will experience hardship during this time (Revelation 7:7-14), God does not forsake His beloved ones, who are taken care of, though they may suffer (Isaiah 33:16). Thus, Jesus proclaimed, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Finally, the real Christ will appear in the clouds and His coming will be more wonderful than can be imagined. The desire of all nations will return and the longing of human hearts will finally be met (Matthew 24:30-31). While those who have rejected Christ will die at the brightness of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10; cf. Revelation 6:15-17; Malachi 4:1), those who have accepted Christ will be caught up into the air, along with the righteous dead who will be resurrected from their sleep at Christ's coming and join Christ in the air. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, NKJV).

At Christ's coming, the salvation of humans will be completed. Those who have been justified and sanctified will finally be glorified, transformed in an instant to perfection (translation), never again to fall prey to sin, sickness, or death. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this

¹⁴⁹ The beast from the sea counterfeits Christ in a number of ways. He has a ministry that lasts forty-two months (3½ years), which corresponds to the 3½ year ministry of Christ (Rev. 13:5), receives a fatal wound and is healed—counterfeiting resurrection (Rev. 13:3), resembles the dragon (Rev. 13:1-2) even as Christ resembles the Father (John 14:9), gets authority from the dragon (Rev. 13:2) just as Christ receives His authority from the Father (Matt. 28:18), and even has his own counterfeit of a name of Christ—"who is like the beast" (Rev. 13:4) instead of "who is like God," which is the Hebrew meaning of the name Michael (Rev. 12:7). Jon Paulien, *Armageddon at the Door: Is Your Armor On?* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House, 2008), 64-66. Thus, the beast is truly antichrist, usurping His place as counterfeit ("anti" in Greek often means "instead of"). Indeed, the dragon, beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth present a counterfeit trinity. See *ibid.*, 64-69; Ranko Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009).

corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’” (1 Corinthians 15:51-55, NKJV). Then our struggle with sin and evil will be over, “when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2, NKJV). Humans who have accepted God’s free offer of salvation will not only be fully restored to God’s ideal of moral and physical perfection, but will also enjoy perpetual growth, especially in the area of learning about God, His creation, and the science of salvation, “things into which even angels long to look” (1 Peter 1:12).

The Millennium, the Post-Advent Judgment, and the Final Eradication of Evil

However, the Great Controversy is not then completely over. One process remains in order to prevent sin from every rising again. The saved will live and reign with Christ for a thousand years, and “judgment” will be “given to them” (Revelation 20:4). That is, the redeemed will have 1,000 years (the millennium) to review the records of history and evaluate the verdicts of God’s just judgment in order to see that God has demonstrated that He is love, that all He has done has always been motivated by love and He is truly good, just, and perfect (Revelation 20:1-4).¹⁵⁰ Paul refers to this post-advent judgment, which should not be confused with the pre-advent judgment discussed in the previous chapter, when he states, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? . . . Do you not know that we will judge angels?” (1 Corinthians 6:2-3; cf. 1 Corinthians 4:5).¹⁵¹

Why this post-advent judgment? No one has the authority or power to bring God into judgment but God Himself calls for us to judge Him because He desires to forever answer any question about His justice (e.g., Isaiah 5:3; Romans 3:3-5). God knows that if any hint of injustice remains, if we are wondering whether God is truly love for instance, we cannot at the same time trust Him completely. However, the universal harmony of love requires that we do trust God even when we cannot fully understand all of the reasons for His manner of government. Thus, God vindicates His own character before the universe by not only doing away with evil but opening up His own government to the review of intelligent creatures, including humans in the post-advent judgment, who will see that God has done everything he can to save every human and that His law has always been just, in accordance with His great steadfast love.

¹⁵⁰ The Adventist worldview thus adopts pre-millennialism, the view that Christ will return before the millennium (according to the sequence in Rev. 20). This contrasts with the view that Christ comes after the millennium (post-millennialism) or that the millennium does not refer to a historical period of time (amillennialism). More specifically, the Adventist perspective falls within the category of historic premillennialism, which is differentiated from the secret rapture perspective of dispensationalist premillennialism.

¹⁵¹ In the meantime, we should not be judging one another: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God” (1 Cor. 4:5, NKJV).

What more could He do (Isaiah 5:3)? There is nothing more He could have done. He has done everything that could be done in accordance with His righteous love.

After the millennium, the wicked (who had been dead during the 1,000 years) will be raised to life (the second resurrection), just as scripture proclaims: “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed” (Revelation 20:5; cf. John 5:28-29).¹⁵² Then, after the millennium, Satan leads the wicked, who had been resurrected (Revelation 20:5), against the holy city, which had come down from heaven (Revelation 21:2) in one last assault on God’s reign: “And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them” (Revelation 20:9; cf. 7-8). As the redeemed look on from the holy city, the true character of not only Satan and his angels, but all those who rejected God’s love and refuse to live under His law of love, are shown to be irredeemable due to their own stubbornness and obstinacy against God’s government. If there had been any question whether anyone who was lost might have turned around, if only given more opportunity, this forever lays it to rest.¹⁵³ Those whom God justly condemned, though it pained Him to do so, would never have been happy in God’s kingdom and, if allowed to enter there, would have ruined the happiness of all others.¹⁵⁴ Thus, God does the most loving thing that He can do for both them and the universe. They must be destroyed.

In all this, the full manifestation of God’s character in the Great Controversy, culminating in the post-advent judgment during the millennium, is not for the sake of this world alone; this world is itself a spectacle or theater to the world (1 Corinthians 4:9). That God has demonstrated both His justice and love in the plan of salvation (Romans 3:26; 5:8) will finally be recognized by all creatures in the universe; every knee will bow and every tongue will confess the Lordship of Christ and the justice and character of God (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10-11; Revelation 5:13; 15:3; 19:1-6).

Divine Wrath and Love?

However, what do we make of God’s destruction of the wicked? How can a God of love kill? In the Disney classic, *Old Yeller*, a beloved family dog is put to death by the family. Why? Because *Old Yeller* had contracted rabies. As such, the most loving and merciful thing to do was to put him down. In much the same way, the wicked who finally reject Christ are the carriers of a

¹⁵² Christ also clearly delineated a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. John 5:28-29, “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment [condemnation].” Revelation 20 further clarifies that these two resurrections are separated by the millennium period.

¹⁵³ I am not suggesting they receive a second chance at this juncture but, rather, that no second chance would matter as they have already made their final decision and grieved the Holy Spirit. “No second probation will ever be provided. If the unspeakable gift of God does not lead man to repentance, there is nothing that ever will move his heart.” Ellen White, *The Signs of the Times*, December 20, 1889. IS THERE A TITLE?

¹⁵⁴ To “bring them [those who have rejected Christ] into the company of the pure and holy would make them exceedingly miserable.” Ellen White, *The Story of Redemption*, 391.

disease that will continue to wreak havoc upon them and all with whom they come in contact. This disease is beyond cure because they have rejected God, the only antidote. This disease cannot be allowed to continue. In order to preserve the harmony of the universe and put the wicked out of their misery, God's holiness will ultimately destroy all evil once and for all, including anyone who clings to evil. This is the most loving thing He could do. For those who have rejected relationship with Him the only alternative to death is endless misery, far worse than death; they never would have been happy in heaven. Moreover, God's action in eradicating evil is a manifestation of His love toward the rest of the universe by upholding justice and not allowing pain and suffering to go on forever and ever (cf. Isaiah 28:21; Lamentations 3:32-33).

God does not subject the wicked to endless torture. There is no eternally burning hell. Rather, the fire that destroys the wicked burns here on earth, purging the earth of all evil prior to God's re-creation of the new earth. Thus, "the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" and "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:7, 10; cf. Revelation 20:10). Neither of the two words most often translated as "hell" in some versions of the NT (*gehenna* and *hades*) refer to a place of endlessly burning fire. *Gehenna* refers literally to a trash dump (the valley of Hinnom, a ravine south of Jerusalem) where refuse was burned up and is used metaphorically by Christ to refer to the final lake of fire (Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:5).¹⁵⁵ *Hades*, on the other hand, does not refer to the Greek mythological concept of a subterranean place of torture, but refers to the grave, the abode of the dead, corresponding to Hebrew *sheol* (grave), which the word *hades* translates in the Greek version of the OT (LXX).¹⁵⁶ Indeed, according to Revelation 20:14, *hades* itself will be destroyed in the lake of fire, along with death itself, and thus cannot refer to an eternally burning place (hell). Thus, "death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:13-15). In this final conflagration, Satan himself will be totally destroyed and, as such, does not continue to reign in a subterranean realm, "the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever," that is, Satan will not be destroyed immediately but will suffer for his part in all sins, until finally being destroyed (Revelation 20:10; cf. Matthew 25:41; Jude 7).

However, what is to be made of the words that are translated "forever," "everlasting," "eternal" in some texts such as Revelation 20:10 (cf. Matthew 25:46)? These terms derive from

¹⁵⁵ See "gehenna," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 190-191. I DIDN'T FIND THIS BOOK WITH "GEHENNA" IN THE TITLE. Perhaps See "Gehenna" in A Greek.... SAME FOR HADES, BELOW.

¹⁵⁶ *Hades* "is not an eternal but only a temporary place or state." See H. Bietenhard, "*hades*," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 2:207. On the meaning of *sheol* see Eriks Galenieks, "The Nature, Function, and Purpose of the Term *Sheol* in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings" (PhD Dissertation, Andrews University, 2005).

the Greek root *aion*, the basic meaning of which is “life-span” but may also refer to: (1) “a long time, duration of time, where both a specifically limited period of time as well as an unlimited period can be meant” (Luke 1:33, 55; John 6:51), (2) an age, particular unit of history (Matthew 12:32; 13:39), or (3) the world itself (Matthew 13:22; 24:3; Mark 4:19).¹⁵⁷ The meaning of this term depends upon the nature of the referent. With regard to the final execution of judgment, it does not refer to a fire that burns forever but to one that completely destroys the wicked, the lake of fire. Thus, the same Greek root is used in Jude verse 7, where “Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them . . . are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal (*aionios*) fire” (emphasis mine; cf. Philemon 15-16; 2 Peter 2:6).¹⁵⁸ Yet, Sodom and Gomorrah are not still burning today. Fire does not burn continually. Fire consumes. Elsewhere, scripture explains that the wicked “will perish; And the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures, They vanish—like smoke they vanish away” (Psalm 37:20; cf. Isaiah 47:14; Obadiah 16; Malachi 4:1, 3; Romans 6:23; Luke 13:3). Thus, the Adventist worldview adheres to annihilationism, the view that the wicked will not endure endless suffering but, in accordance with the loving mercy of God, they will finally be eradicated, that is, come to nothing (the nihil in annihilationism).

Death, the grave, and all of the forces of evil, including Satan himself, will finally be no more forever (Revelation 20:10-15; cf. Ezekiel 28:19). Sin and suffering will have come to a complete end. As it is written, God Himself “will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4, NKJV). If pain and death are themselves done away with, how could there be a continually burning dungeon of torture somewhere in the universe? Would God really enjoy all eternity if He was conscious of such endless suffering? Would we? God is just in all His ways and will not endlessly torture people for sins they committed during a relatively short life-span. He will eradicate evil, including its consequences of suffering and death.

The false doctrine of a “hell” where the wicked endure endless torture is linked to the extra-biblical mythological view of the immortal soul of humans, which stems from Greek

¹⁵⁷ See J. Guhrt, “*aion*,” in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 3:827, 829, 830. See also Edward Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment*, 3rd ed. (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2011); Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers: the Conflict of the Ages Over the Nature and Destiny of Man*, 2 vols. (Washington: Review and Herald, 1965). Likewise, the OT equivalent, ‘*olam*, often translated “forever” such as in Isa. 34:10, does not necessarily mean eternal or refer to an everlasting duration but most often refers “to a future limited duration, i.e., to conditions that will exist continuously throughout a limited period of time, often a single life span.” Anthony Tomasino, ‘*olam*,’ *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, 5 vols. THERE ARE FIVE VOLUMES OR THIS IS IN VOL. 5?(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:347). Like the equivalent NT *aion*, the meaning of ‘*olam* depends on the referent. For example, Jonah was in the fish “forever” (*olam*), referring to three days (Jonah 2:6; cf. Ex. 19:9; Deut. 15:17; 1 Sam. 1:22).

¹⁵⁸ *aionios* is the adjective that corresponds to the noun *aion*.

(Platonic) dualism.¹⁵⁹ However, the Bible proclaims that God “alone possesses immortality” (1 Timothy 6:16) and there is not a single mention of the immortality of the soul in scripture.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, the “soul” in scripture actually refers to the entire human being (Genesis 2:7).¹⁶¹ There is no such thing as a separable soul, let alone one that is immortal. In the Bible, natural death (prior to Christ’s coming) is a “sleep” (John 11:1-44; Daniel 12:2; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52) and all those who die this death are unconscious until they are resurrected (Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 146:3-4), whether in the 1st resurrection of the righteous or the 2nd resurrection of the wicked (John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:4-6). Creaturely immortality is conditional upon relationship with God (John 3:16; 6:51; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10), the one in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). With Him, there is life but without Him, there is no life—He Himself is the truth, the life, and the way (John 14:6)—the lone immortal One who can bestow immortality on those who remain connected to Him in love relationship.

It might yet be asked, why must anyone die at all? Why couldn’t God just save everyone? Despite God’s desire to save every individual, He will not causally determine His creatures to love Him. Indeed, as seen in chapter 3, by its very definition love must be freely given. Those who are destroyed have finally rejected God’s love and there is nothing more that God can do for them except give them over to their own decisions (Isaiah 5:4-6). Yet, God has “no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies” but calls all to “repent and live!” (Ezekiel 18:32; cf. Ezekiel 33:11). Finally, God does the most loving thing He could do for all, maintaining His character of righteous love in mercy toward all who allow God to transform them and carrying out justice in the final and permanent eradication of evil in preparation for the final and complete restoration of all things.

The Re-creation of the Earth

After evil is finally eradicated, God will effect a full restoration of this world, remaking it according to His original ideal, creating a “new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away” (Revelation 21:1). God has in store unimaginably marvelous blessings for His children. “Eye has not, seen nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9, NKJV). Best of all, God will dwell with His people: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He

¹⁵⁹ The Platonic tradition, with the view of an eternally pre-existing soul, heavily influenced much of Christian thought by way of Neoplatonism. Christian apologists and theologians took the predominant worldview of their age and adapted it apologetically, arriving at a concept of the afterlife that dovetailed with the predominant worldview of the day regarding the soul. For a brief discussion, see Aecio E. Cairus, “The Doctrine of Man,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 223-25. This correlates with the issue regarding the nature of God and the God-world relationship, which also stems from the adoption of Greek philosophical views of the nature of reality (ontology). See the brief discussion in chapters 1 and 6.

¹⁶⁰ Notice that the redeemed receive immortality only at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:50-54), conditioned upon their faith in Christ; “I am the living bread . . . if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever” (John 6:51).

¹⁶¹ See Cairus, “The Doctrine of Man,” 212-13. Cf. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2006).

will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3, NKJV). No pain, suffering, or death will be there (Revelation 21:4). The last enemy, death, is once and for all defeated (1 Corinthians 15:26), “death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55, NKJV). The former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4-7).

Hope is finally fulfilled in the full glorification of those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Faith is fulfilled. Love is fully restored according to God’s perfect law, to be enjoyed with all of the endless and unsurpassable bliss of love relationship with God and all other creatures. The Great Controversy is finally ended. Sin will not rise a second time (cf. Nehemiah 1:9). No one will ever again rebel; nothing will ever again mar God’s perfect creation because the question of God’s character, the problem of sin and evil, will have been dealt with once and for all. The promise that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed” will be fulfilled (Romans 8:18; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17). All will forever recognize that God is always and only good and just, the one who is love, His character and law of love vindicated beyond the shadow of a doubt. “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”¹⁶²

Why Does It Matter? The Meaning and Worldview Implications of Restoration Where Am I Going and What is Going to Happen to Me?

The destiny of human beings is inextricably bound up with the question of purpose. If humanity is the result of purposeless chance, as in Darwinian evolution, then there is no purposeful destiny. However, if human beings are the result of design, particularly design by a loving, personal Creator God, then the purpose of human beings stems from God’s intent in creation. In the naturalist worldview there is no restoration of the world; only an endless cycle of death and life which, eventually, will run out as the universe collapses upon itself (and, perhaps, re-expands to begin the cycle over again). This world is only temporary and there is nothing beyond that will provide any future existence. How then should one live? Should I maximize pleasure? “Live a “good” life? Make my mark? Spend all of my energy seeking the extension of human life and/or the human race? For some, naturalism engenders nihilism. Since there is no transcendent purpose to life and everything will pass away in the future then there is no meaning to life at all and no hope for a future. All is vanity (cf. Ecclesiastes 1:2). Some naturalists, however, take solace in the idea of non-personal immortality, where one’s impact on the world or legacy “lives on.” However, since there is no purpose according to Darwinian evolution, the

¹⁶² Ellen White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, 678.

belief or hope of progress is vacuous. Who's to say the future will be "better?" The very concept of "better" assumes an objective "best," which is itself contradictory to the worldview of materialistic naturalism. The Adventist worldview, on the other hand, contends that things are not getting better. In fact, we believe the world is in inevitable decline absent an external solution.

The pantheism of some Eastern Religions (e.g., Hinduism) contains the concept of reincarnation, where after one's death one returns in a different form (higher or lower) on a journey toward reaching the highest plane of consciousness.¹⁶³ Upon reaching this highest state, the soul will be freed from the reincarnation cycle, which had trapped the person in the illusion of bodily existence.¹⁶⁴ This process of reincarnation, then, is not a restoration unto eternal life but rather a freeing of oneself from identifying with matter, including the realization that past lives were themselves illusions, toward finally recovering one's real identity in union with the One.¹⁶⁵ This ultimate release from matter is accompanied by the feeling of infinite freedom and bliss. However, pantheism (whether of the variety that includes reincarnation or not) finally denies personal immortality. There is no individual life after death.¹⁶⁶ In some pantheistic views, there is a future restoration of persons into unity with all reality, that is, identity with God, which entails being divested of individuality.

The Adventist worldview's confident hope of restoration stands in contrast with both atheistic naturalism and pantheism, looking forward to the final restoration of all things to God's original perfect design. God will finally put an end to evil, suffering, and death once and for all and then all who have accepted His work of salvation and surrendered to Him will enjoy everlasting life in perfectly harmonious love relationship with Him and the other beings of the universe. The Adventist hope of restoration includes the belief in the biblical concept of re-creation. This world will be destroyed and thus purged of the evil that has corrupted it since the Fall but will be re-created. There is thus an important connection between the restoration aspect of the Adventist worldview and the belief in a recent creation as depicted in Genesis 1-2, in stark contrast to Darwinian evolution. Specifically, if God lacked the power to perform a special creation in the beginning of this world or perhaps even worse, elected not to create a perfect world but to create through ages of cyclical suffering and death, there would be no reason to believe that God can or will supernaturally re-create the world and restore it to perfection. Indeed, if the universe evolved, even if by some kind of divine guidance, there was no original perfection to which the world could be restored! However, if God did create the world perfect,

¹⁶³ On reincarnation in Hinduism, for example, see Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, 278-79.

¹⁶⁴ As mentioned in the previous chapter, for various perspectives of this kind of pantheism (such as varieties of Buddhism and Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism), "salvation" refers to liberation (*mukti* or *moksha*) from the illusory world. See Mander, "Pantheism."

¹⁶⁵ For further information see Sire's chapter on Eastern Pantheistic Monism, Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 149 ff. See also Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*.

¹⁶⁶ Mander, "Pantheism." In Buddhism, one's perception of the self is itself illusory. Attaining *nirvana* frees one from being deceived by this illusion since *nirvana* is not "nonbeing" but "neither is it anything that has being. It is beyond our categories of existence or thought. Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, 319.

without any evil in it, then we can have confidence that He will re-create the world and restore it to His original ideal, just as promised in scripture. The answer to where did I come from” from in chapter 1 thus sheds significant light on this question of where am I going. I have a future and a hope as long as I surrender to Christ as my Savior and Lord.

The conditional nature of salvation and restoration, requiring surrender to God’s love, rules out universalism, that all will finally be saved. While God truly desires and works toward the salvation of each one (Ezekiel 18:32; 33:11; John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9), some are finally lost because of their choice to reject God (cf. Revelation 6:15-17), which God will not overrule because to do so would remove the freedom necessary for love (see chapter 3). Yet, God’s final restoration of creation will nevertheless be total and complete such that all evil will be eradicated and only goodness will remain in the universe. There will thus be no suffering or death anywhere to mar God’s creation, in contrast to some theistic worldviews wherein God permanently banishes the wicked to eternal suffering. In those views, God’s restoration is only partial since some of God’s creatures endure infinite suffering for eternity. The Adventist worldview, on the other hand, excludes the view of endless torment and embraces annihilationism such that when God does come in glory evil is eradicated; it is not merely quarantined in a corner of the universe that is reserved for everlasting torture. No, God shall be “all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28) and evil shall be no more. Even the last enemy, death itself, will perish (1 Corinthians 15:26) and there shall be no more “death, sorrow, nor crying” and “no more pain” (Revelation 21:4). So, where am I going? If I put my confidence in Christ as Lord and Savior I will be fully restored to God’s creation ideal alongside all of God’s creation and enjoy the bliss of eternal life in His re-created earth where the harmony of love will forever endure. My present life, then, takes on inestimable significance as it looks forward to eternal life; the decisions and activities of earthly life hold eternal consequences.

Who Am I, Where Am I, and Why Am I Here?

Because God is the entirely good and righteous creator of the world He will restore the world to absolute goodness. The perfectly restored world will include each individual who has accepted God’s work of redemption, each restored to ideal humanity, foreshadowed in Christ. All those who love God will enjoy a personal and relational existence that will never end, in stark contrast to naturalistic and pantheistic worldviews within which there is no personal eternal life. We will once again see our family and loved ones who died but had placed their faith in the Lord. We will be reunited in the ultimate family with God Himself as the head. There will be no more orphans; all will have been adopted into God’s family through Christ. Thus, “who am I” cannot be adequately answered individualistically. Who I am is integrally bound up with who “we” are and will be as part of God’s family. Those who remain alive at the second coming of Christ will also be part of that final remnant who remain faithful to God despite persecution, as prophesied in Revelation 12, in the long line of those faithful to God who have been persecuted by the enemy throughout history. We are thus part of something much bigger than ourselves,

though the postmodern narrative denies this (as it does any grand metanarrative). The world, then, does not revolve around me as an individual but I can be part of something much bigger than myself collectively—the community of the family of God.

Where am I? The future expectation of our purpose should affect us now. Our final destiny gives us a grand purpose because it not only points forward but points backward to before the entrance of sin in this world, back to our ideal, back beyond all the messiness of this life to a full restoration of God's original intent for us. Therefore, what kind of people ought we to be? (2 Peter 3:11-12). First and foremost, Adventists understand that the very purpose of our existence as a denomination is to work toward the fulfillment of the gospel commission. The return of Christ is preceded by many events and signs but none more significant than the fulfillment of the gospel commission—the gospel will be preached to all the world and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14). Thus, we who await the return of our Lord are to preach the gospel, in both word and deed. Indeed, the “everlasting gospel” that lifts up Christ above all else, spoken of in the three angels' messages, including the ongoing pre-advent judgment, is to be announced to the world in preparation for the time when all people on earth will be called to make a final decision for or against Christ (Revelation 22:11). We must, then, respond to Christ's love and allow Him to continually draw us to Himself and help others to accept Him as their Savior and Lord, accepting His effective work of mediation and preparation. In all this, the Adventist worldview is inextricably bound up with mission.

Whereas Christ initiated the partial “kingdom of heaven” on earth through His church (Matthew 3:2; 4:17), its full manifestation awaits in the world to come. In the meantime, God has appointed His people the task of proclaiming the three angels' messages (Revelation 14:6-12) toward recognition of the fullness of God's love, reconciliation with God, and the final restoration of universal harmony. At the same time, we are to be conduits of God's kingdom in the midst of a world infected by evil. We are to be tirelessly working against evil. We are not to look the other way at injustice but we are to care for all those who suffer. Though the poor will always be with us (John 12:8) we have no license to neglect the poor in front of us (Deuteronomy 15:7-11). Though we cannot solve world hunger we can end the hunger of some. Though we will not overturn the injustice in the structures of the world, we can work to bring justice to those around us, in line with the continual call of the prophets to care for the widows, orphans, and the poor (Isaiah 58:5-8; Zechariah 7:9-12; Matthew 25:34-46; Luke 14:12-14; Romans 15:26; Galatians 2:10; James 1:27) and corresponding woe against those who oppress them (Isaiah 3:14-15; 10:1-2; Ezekiel 16:49; Amos 5:12). Even though the world will eventually be destroyed and re-created we are to take care of it now as God's stewards, maintaining the earth as His property (Genesis 1:26; Leviticus 25:23-24; Ezekiel 34:2-4; 17-18; Psalm 24:1; Revelation 11:18). As more and more face persecution for their beliefs, Adventists must continue to stand for liberty of religion and conscience. We will stand for biblical ethical principles without imposing our religious beliefs on others, maintaining a disposition of love and care for all human beings, even those whose worldview differs considerably from ours or who may even be hostile to us and our way of life.

In all this, although no temporal concern should be allowed to detract from our commission in spreading the everlasting gospel, we cannot be detached from this world or divested of its concerns. We are to follow Christ's method of recognizing the difference between temporary and eternal concerns without being cold to the proper concerns of our age.¹⁶⁷ That is, we are to live with an eye toward the end of the Great Controversy (which means we cannot turn a blind eye to injustice) and the restoration of universal harmony. The mission of God's people (the remnant) to proclaim the judgment hour message, which calls human beings to prepare for the coming restoration and recognize the fullness of God's love, entails more than proclamation by word alone. We should live here on earth as much as possible as we expect to live there in heaven. In doing so, we will proclaim in word and deed the kingdom of God, fulfilling our remnant mission as proclaimers of redemption and ongoing reconciliation toward the final restoration of God's kingdom and universal harmony.

In the Adventist worldview, then, we are preparing now for life there—we are to become more and more like Christ while also helping others understand the good news of a future hope. One without the other, however, leads to imbalance. We are not to retreat from the world in order to be holy and, in the process, remove ourselves from having a context within which to carry out our mission of spreading the three angels' message. On the other hand, we are not to be of the world. We are not of this world but are citizens of a new world that has not yet fully taken sway. God's kingdom has begun but it is only in seed form. We are to be a part of His kingdom before He arrives, preparing the way and planting still more seeds that might be reaped at the harvest (Luke 10:2). Accordingly, scripture exhorts us to occupy until He comes (Luke 19:13)—live the life that prepares ourselves and others for that day, a life of love.¹⁶⁸

The question of where I am will finally be answered by entrance into God's kingdom, where we were always meant to be. There we will enjoy a life of endless growth. We will have been transformed into moral perfection but will still be growing, enjoying inexhaustible learning and never-ending bliss! "What is wrong" is finally answered eschatologically by the full manifestation of God's goodness. Through the plan of salvation God has manifested His justice and His love (Romans 3:26; 5:8), all have seen once and for all that God has always been and will always be love (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:9; 6:2-3), and every tongue will confess the Lordship of Christ and the justice and character of God (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10-11; Revelation 5:13; 15:3; 19:1-6).

So, who am I? The hope of future restoration informs my self-understanding, my core personal identity. Even when things in this world often look extremely bleak, our current context cannot define us, though our current situation may sometimes depress us it cannot utterly

¹⁶⁷ "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'" Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.

¹⁶⁸ For, "the last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them." Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 415-16.

discourage us, we do not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). No matter who you are or where you come from, God has a grand purpose for you, to restore you to perfection and for you to live with Him forever as part of His family! Nothing should affect one's worldview more than this understanding of God's love for each of us, that He originally designed us for perfect love relationship with Him and will restore us to that relationship to live forever in a world of only goodness, free from suffering of any kind, filled with happiness that exceeds even our concept of happiness: ultimate and unadulterated joy. Glory to God in the highest!

Chapter 6

Why the Adventist Worldview?

One day two young boys decided to pretend they were detectives in their grandmother's attic, finding various artifacts and seeking to explain their history. A painting, depicting a young woman seated at a piano, particularly caught their attention. They quickly agreed that it was a portrait, supported by strange details such as roses, garden gloves, shears on the piano and a field hockey stick and basketball by the piano stool, which they took to refer to interests of the young woman. But who was the young woman? She looked quite a bit like a much younger version of grandma, they thought. That's it! It must have been grandma as a young lady. She does love to play the piano and baseball too. Yet, why does the young woman in the picture look like she has a second thumb on her right hand? Grandma doesn't have an extra finger. Her hands are normal. This problem took some thought but, finally, one of the boys suggested: "the artist must have been showing her prowess as a pianist. She was so good that it was as if she had six fingers!" Enthusiastically they ran to show off their detective skills to their grandma, explaining all that they had deduced from the evidence of the painting. "You are correct," she stated, "in all but one significant detail." I was born with a thumb-like appendage on my right hand but it was removed long before either of you were born.¹⁶⁹

What mistake had the young boys made in their deductions? They had assumed that the painting did not depict history based on their own experience of their grandmother's hand and their belief (based on anecdotal experience) that all hands have only five fingers. On both counts their limited experience led to false conclusions. Many have used a similar line of thought (albeit much more sophisticated) to deny the reliability and historicity of scripture and, accordingly, the revelation of God therein. I've never seen anyone rise from the dead. Have you? Skeptics popularly appeal to reason (rationalism) and/or experience (empiricism); something is real if it corresponds to my senses or makes sense to me.

The dominant worldview in North American culture seems to readily adopt these premises. Whereas other areas of life and understanding may be seen as relative, the findings of contemporary science are popularly treated as indisputable fact. Science is popularly viewed as a field of evidence, fact, and reason whereas religion is considered by many to be a field of blind faith and emotion.¹⁷⁰ This false dichotomy deserves a response that begins to address a final big question: Why should anyone accept the Adventist worldview? Now that we have seen the basic

¹⁶⁹ This illustration is a summary, slightly modified, of the example in V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 17-20.

¹⁷⁰ Accordingly, in order to reach some learners it is necessary to ground the Adventist worldview as a religious worldview that is not merely a matter of emotive preference and/or blind faith, but one grounded in a decision of faith that neither excludes reason nor elevates human reason to the exclusion of the primacy of divine revelation.

outlines of the Adventist worldview, we are in a better position to address this question of why Adventists accept this worldview.

Worldview Formation and Biblical Epistemology

The Decision of Faith

The Adventist worldview is based on the faith commitment that the Bible is divinely revealed and inspired and is therefore an authoritative and trustworthy document that is profitable for grounding one's worldview (2 Timothy 3:16). Yet, why should anyone adopt scripture as the foundation of faith commitment(s) instead of the starting points of various other worldviews? This brings us to the field of epistemology, the branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge. In short, epistemology is the study of knowledge, including the questions of how we know what we know and/or justifiably believe what we believe. How does one believe or know anything with confidence?

Every worldview or belief system rests upon decisions of faith of some kind. For example, why do you believe that Antarctica exists? Those of us that have never been to Antarctica believe that continent exists based on faith in what we consider a reliable source or sources of information. Even if I had the experience of visiting Antarctica and had thus seen it with my own eyes and felt it with my own hands (empirical evidence), my belief in the existence of Antarctica would still require a decision of faith. Specifically, I would have to believe that I did not simply dream that I visited Antarctica or that it was not merely an illusion of my imagination or, even more fundamentally, that my senses are generally reliable.

Although I believe that my senses are generally reliable, I cannot prove that they are. I cannot even prove absolutely that the world did not come into existence five minutes ago. Any "evidence" I would posit in order to prove this (or anything else about the world) would itself be based on my reason and/or senses since I cannot engage anything outside of myself without the use of my reason and senses.¹⁷¹ Thus, the attempt to ground one's worldview on one's reason (rationalism) or experience (empiricism) is unavoidably circular.¹⁷² In order to believe or "know"

¹⁷¹ It is simply impossible to prove beyond *any doubt* the reliability of one's own reasoning or one's own senses because the attempt to do so involves an inescapable circularity (sometimes spoken of as the subject-object problem, the subject being the thinker and the object being that which is thought about).

¹⁷² The father of modern philosophy, Rene Descartes (1695-1650), understood this problem and tried to rectify it by reasoning from the premise of doubting everything (methodological doubt). Though the Adventist worldview would not agree with much of Descartes' reasoning or conclusions, we learn something significant by entertaining his basic question, is there anything I know that I cannot doubt? Perhaps my senses are deceiving me or, he reasoned, it is possible that there is some supremely powerful deceiver that is deceiving him. *Discourse on Method* (1637), AT VII 25; CSM II 16–17. He attempted to resolve this problem by reasoning that because he is thinking, he must exist—"I think therefore I am" (*cogito ergo sum*)—and further appealed to the existence of an all-powerful and all-good God, who would not permit all of his faculties to be deceiving him.

anything, a decision of faith is required, regardless of the content of one's beliefs.¹⁷³ Every worldview or belief system rests upon decisions of faith of some kind. Since even empirical evidence requires a prior commitment to the premise that human senses are generally reliable, a decision of faith is required not only of religious worldviews but also of all secular worldviews, including scientific naturalism. This is widely recognized by philosophers of all stripes. Even secular systems now recognize that all worldviews rest on a decision to believe in something, whether that something is a closed universe (naturalism), a personal God (theism), or anything in between.¹⁷⁴

Do We Possess Reliable Faculties?

Human knowledge, then, is severely limited. Can we then know anything with confidence?¹⁷⁵ Can we be justified in believing anything? Must we become skeptics? Although we cannot prove that our senses are generally reliable or that our reason is basically sound, one might contend that we ought to believe in the reliability of these faculties on the basis of common sense and/or for practical reasons.¹⁷⁶ Would it not be irrational to doubt everything, not to mention impossible to actually practice? It seems to me that, absent compelling evidence to the contrary, we ought to trust that our reason and experience are, in general, not systematically deceiving us. That is, our experiences convey information about the world that is (for the most part) accurate rather than illusory and my cognitive function is somewhat successful in processing that content in coherent thought. However, if I would accept this belief regarding the general reliability of my faculties on the basis of blind faith, what would make this view preferable as opposed to the alternate claim that the world is an illusion or that we are the victims of a massive and elaborate delusion?¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ One might think they could simply test their sensory experience or reasoning against that of other humans. However, the very testing of one's own experience against the experience of others comes to one only through the filter of one's reason and experience. As Thomas Reid put it: "If a man's honesty were called into question, it would be ridiculous to refer to the man's own word, whether he be honest or not. The same absurdity there is in attempting to prove, by any kind of reasoning, probable or demonstrative, that our reason is not fallacious, since the very point in question is, whether reasoning may be trusted." Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Edinburgh: For John Bell, 1785), 592.

¹⁷⁴ See Steven B. Cowan and James S. Spiegel, *The Love of Wisdom: A Christian Introduction to Philosophy* (Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2009), 47-100.

¹⁷⁵ I specifically ask about whether we can know with confidence instead of with certainty because absolute certainty appears to be beyond the ability of humans and the failed quest for absolute certainty in modern epistemology should teach us that we should not expect certainty regarding our knowledge (or regarding the foundations or core commitments of our knowledge) but confidence.

¹⁷⁶ Absent, of course, some compelling evidence to the contrary. Indeed, some are afflicted by severe mental illness and/or significantly malfunctioning sensory experience or cognitive function.

¹⁷⁷ For instance, consider Buddhism's view regarding illusory human perception of the world. Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, 318-19.

On the one hand, if everything that we “know” is illusory then the very statement that this world is an illusion cannot itself be trusted and we arrive at an impasse where no evaluation of worldviews is possible.¹⁷⁸ Naturalism, on the other hand, posits the reality of the physical world and assumes the basic reliability of sensory experience. However, Alvin Plantinga has convincingly argued that naturalism provides no basis for the reliability of cognitive faculties (and, consequently, sensory experience). In Darwinism, “the ultimate purpose or function of our cognitive faculties, if they have one, is not to produce true beliefs, but to promote reproductive fitness. What our minds are for (if anything) is not the production of true beliefs, but the production of adaptive behavior.”¹⁷⁹ A pragmatic approach might try to salvage the naturalistic perspective by supposing that true beliefs lead to behaviors that increase survival. However, Plantinga contends that one might survive just as well by following false beliefs that accidentally lead to survival; one’s behavior could be adaptive and conducive to survival while one’s beliefs are mainly false.¹⁸⁰ Darwin himself seems to have recognized this problem of grounding the reliability of cognitive faculties, writing, “the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would anyone trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?”¹⁸¹ Darwinism thus appears to lack any basis for believing we possess the faculties required to reliably perceive and/or process accurate information about the world. That is, there appears to be no consistently Darwinian rationale for trusting one’s cognitive faculties or for believing that such faculties operate in a way that would lead to anything like true belief.

Not only does the Darwinian naturalist worldview rest on an ungrounded belief that cognitive faculties are generally reliable, the system rests on other non-provable assumptions

¹⁷⁸ “If everything is an illusion, then having the illusion is also an illusion, and the logical consequence is skepticism. But skepticism is self-refuting and unviable; no one can actually live according to the idea that there is no objective truth and that whatever we do in life is meaningless.” Ibid., 354.

¹⁷⁹ Alvin Plantinga, “The Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism,” in *Science and Religion in Dialogue*, ed. Melville Y. Steward (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 325.

¹⁸⁰ As Plantinga puts it, “Natural selection rewards adaptive behavior and penalizes maladaptive behavior, but it cares not a whit what you believe.” Ibid. Plantinga goes on, “Could we argue that beliefs are connected with behavior in such a way that false belief would produce maladaptive behavior, behavior that would tend to reduce the probability of the believer’s surviving and reproducing? No.” Ibid., 327. For example, he posits a man who encounters a tiger with severely false beliefs thereabout: “perhaps he thinks the tiger is a large, friendly, cuddly pussycat and wants to pet it; but he also believes that the best way to pet it is to run away from it. . . . This will get his body parts in the right place so far as survival is concerned, without involving much by way of true belief.” Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 225-26. Indeed, on the evolutionist’s account, the Christian edifice that they would destroy is just of this type. It has survived remarkably well despite their claim that it is false. Plantinga writes, “For example, religious belief is nearly universal across the world; even among naturalists, it is widely thought to be adaptive; yet naturalists think these beliefs are mostly false. Clearly enough false belief can produce adaptive behavior.” Plantinga, “The Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism,” 327.

¹⁸¹ Letter to William Graham, Down, July 3, 1881. In *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin Including an Autobiographical Chapter*, ed. Francis Darwin (London: John Murray, 1887), 1:315-16.

such as methodological naturalism and uniformitarianism. Methodological naturalism requires that hypotheses be explained and tested only by reference to natural causes and events.¹⁸² Uniformitarianism (the principle of analogy) contends that scientific laws and processes are constant throughout space and time.¹⁸³ Both assumptions rest on an extrapolation of limited human experience (much like that of the two boys in grandma's attic) and, as such, cannot be proven.¹⁸⁴ Accordingly, the product of any investigation based on these working presuppositions cannot provide any evidence for or against the existence and/or activity of God since the activity of God (and indeed any supernatural being) has been excluded a priori. Naturalism seeks to answer the limited question: if there is and was no supernatural causes and/or interventions, how could the data that we now experience have come to be as it is? In other words, (1) if God does not exist (or exists but does not act upon or within the world), (2) how could the world have come to be as it is? From such an approach, one cannot then properly reason (1) the world came to be this way, (2) therefore God does not exist. This line of thinking simply does not address the question as to whether God exists and/or acts in the world because it has assumed at the outset that he does not as a basic premise of investigation.

To the extent that scientific questions are properly delimited as such, the scientific method is amazingly effective with regard to the mundane processes that we find in the world. However, when this methodology is expanded to try to answer the ultimate questions of life, it falls short because of the intrinsic limitations of the methodology. Despite this reality, students are bombarded in contemporary North American culture with the elevation of scientism, the view that science holds all of the answers or at least would if we follow it rigorously and long enough.¹⁸⁵ To be sure, the Adventist worldview also holds a great deal of respect for science and

¹⁸² See Papineau, "Naturalism," <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism/#MetNat>. Note that methodological naturalism can be practiced by those who do not themselves believe in naturalism.

¹⁸³ Uniformitarianism is "the fundamental principle or doctrine that geologic processes and natural laws now operating to modify the Earth's crust have acted in the same regular manner and with essentially the same intensity throughout geologic time, and that past geologic events can be explained by phenomena and forces observable today; the classical concept that 'the present is the key to the past.'" Robert L. Bates and Julia A. Jackson, editors, *Glossary of Geology*, 2nd edition (Falls Church, Virginia: American Geological Institute, 1980), 677. This principle should not be misunderstood to exclude periodic and localized catastrophes, but even these are considered by most geologists to be the rare exception to gradualism. Further, this principle has itself been called into question within the scientific community.

¹⁸⁴ Neither of the presuppositions can be tested or proven for one cannot determine whether scientific laws and processes have remained constant without exhaustive knowledge of all time and space nor can one demonstrate the premise that only natural causes and events are material to history absent exhaustive knowledge/experience. Thus, both assumptions may be useful for present experiment but extrapolating results into deep history cannot provide any certainty, especially with regard to origins.

¹⁸⁵ Scientism is "an exaggerated trust in the efficacy of the methods of natural science applied to all areas of investigation (as in philosophy, the social sciences, and the humanities)." "Scientism," in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 2004), 1112.

the scientific method and we want our students to excel in that area as well as others.¹⁸⁶ However, we should not uncritically accept the supremacy of methodological naturalism or uniformitarianism. By definition, such an approach is incapable of addressing some of the big questions of life such as: What is the meaning of life? What is love? Why are we here? Why is there anything at all? What is my purpose? Who am I? Why do we even search for meaning? Why do we have a longing for a better world? The most profound questions and experiences of life transcend the limitations of empirical quantification and investigation. For example, my love for my wife is more than merely the chemical reactions in my brain that might be reproduced without the actual relationship within which they now take place.

In other words, the scientific method is (by definition) limited to physics rather than metaphysics. As Ronald Nash explains, “worldviews should fit” not only our knowledge of the external world but they also should “fit what we know about ourselves” such as: “I am a being who thinks, hopes, experiences pleasure and pain, believes, desires. I am also a being who is often conscious of right and wrong and who feels guilty and sinful for having failed to do what was right. I am a being who remembers the past, is conscious of the present, and anticipates the future. I can think about things that do not exist. I can plan and then execute my plans. I am able to act intentionally; instead of merely responding to stimuli, I can will to do something and then actually do it. I am a person who loves other human beings. I can empathize with others and share their sorrow and joy. I know that someday I will die, and I have faith that I will survive the death of my body. . . . I seem often to be overcome by moods and emotions that suggest that the ultimate satisfaction I seek is unattainable in this life.”¹⁸⁷

Does the Adventist Worldview Fare Better as an Explanatory Model?

However, does a theistic perspective such as that offered by the Adventist worldview fare better as an explanatory model? I believe that the theistic perspective of Adventism is the best available worldview; that is, I am convicted that it provides the best available explanation for all of reality.¹⁸⁸ It does not reject the proper results of scientific inquiry regarding nature but it also includes information regarding the supernatural, which is provided by a personal and loving God who has revealed Himself to all who are willing to listen through scripture.

Postmodern relativism has rejected metanarrative due to the perceived failure of metanarratives to work (pragmatism), correspond to reality (correspondence theory), or be

¹⁸⁶ This is in no way a criticism of the scientific method, properly viewed but it is a criticism of those who would use the scientific method outside of its proper range. Rightly understood, God’s word in the Bible and the book of nature will accord.

¹⁸⁷ Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict*, 59.

¹⁸⁸ I do not mean this in any kind of triumphalistic sense. The Adventist worldview, like all others, includes areas where significant questions remain and considerable mysteries.

internally coherent (coherence theory).¹⁸⁹ However, I believe the Adventist worldview, when properly understood, actually overcomes these objections by providing a coherent and powerful model that addresses the biggest questions of life. Specifically, the premise of a personal God who has created and continues to love human beings is a better explanation for human cognition, love, the mind-body relationship, the existence of the world, the intrinsic value of human beings, individual and collective purpose, the meaning of life, and the satisfaction of the universal longing of the human heart. This is not to say that a theistic worldview, or specifically the Adventist worldview, provides the answers to all of our questions. There is no available worldview that removes all uncertainty and leaves no room for faith.

However, in what way is the Adventist worldview preferable as an explanatory model of all reality, including the deepest questions of the human experience? In order to address this question, we must briefly return to epistemology, but this time from a theistic perspective. How can one know anything? What is truth? Many theories are offered, the most prominent being the correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories of truth.¹⁹⁰ For the correspondence theory, that which is true corresponds to the actual state of affairs. Yet, against this traditional view, the question is often raised: how does one know objective reality since we can only contact any object through our own subjectivity? The coherence theory, alternatively, contends that truth requires the coherent (complementary) relationship of elements within a whole system and only one exhaustive system is perfectly coherent. However, one cannot know all things and therefore it is possible that many systems at least appear to be coherent, leaving us with considerable ambiguity.¹⁹¹ The pragmatic theory of truth, on the other hand (which is not necessarily exclusive to the others) contends that truth is that which is effective in actual practice. That is, whatever is true must “work.” However, how should one determine whether a particular belief or beliefs “works”? In order to do evaluate this, a goal or purpose is required. But, how is the goal or purpose determined?

Might a modified theological correspondence theory of truth, which also presumes total coherence and pragmatic function (if fully understood and implemented) fare better? In this modified theological correspondence theory, what any person believes is true if and to the extent that it corresponds to God’s knowledge. If God is by definition omniscient (as scripture asserts, 1 John 3:20, and the Adventist worldview recognizes) then God is the supreme knower. As such,

¹⁸⁹ Here note that I speak of postmodern relativism not postmodernism *simpliciter*. While postmodernism provides a context that is amenable to relativism it does not require relativism. Since postmodernism does not, properly speaking, refer to any system or monolithic web of ideas but instead depicts an age after modernism (which some might be right in thinking of simply as itself late modernism), there are many various postmodern perspectives on knowledge, reality, and worldview generally.

¹⁹⁰ Two other closely related theories of truth also deserve mention here, the constructivist and consensus views, which both make truth either non-existent or relative. For the constructivist, the concept of “truth” is merely a social construct. This view inevitably leads to nihilism. The consensus theory of truth contends that truth is relative to a community. That is truth is whatever is agreed upon by some specified group. For all intents and purposes, these last two theories give up on the concept of absolute or objective truth.

¹⁹¹ Others criticize the coherence theory of truth for lacking justification in application to “real” world.

absolute truth is that which God knows. Whereas creatures do not know truth perfectly or with certainty, God Himself knows truth perfectly and immediately; indeed He is the originator of truth. As Christ said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Accordingly, the standard of truth is divine knowledge and the task of anyone who seeks true belief is to seek the knowledge of God.

Of course, this does not resolve many of the problems characteristic of human knowledge (epistemology). I will not arrive at perfect knowledge because I cannot transcend my own subjectivity. However, perfect knowledge should not be expected since that requires omniscience, which belongs only to God. I may not know perfectly but I can strive for my beliefs to correspond to that which God knows and, particularly, has revealed. Whereas other worldviews struggle to ground confidence in cognitive faculties, I can justifiably place some confidence (while avoiding a humanistic overconfidence) in my cognitive faculties if I adopt the faith position that God as Creator has bestowed generally reliable cognition.¹⁹² Moreover, if God has truly revealed Himself I can ground my entire belief system in that revelation, recognizing that my own presuppositions must be continually subjected to divine revelation. My view will always be to some extent colored by my hermeneutical lenses, as would be true in any worldview system. However, I will continually strive to come as close as possible to the worldview revealed by God in scripture.¹⁹³ While I currently "see in a mirror dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12), I can nevertheless pursue truth with confidence if scripture is revealed and inspired by God, as it claims to be and I firmly believe it to be (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Why Believe the Bible? A Christocentric Approach

But this is precisely the issue for critics of theistic worldviews. Why should we even believe in the existence of God, much less that God is personal and has revealed Himself in a way that is reliable and accessible to humans? There are many philosophical arguments for the existence of God (e.g., the moral, ontological, cosmological, teleological, noological, and

¹⁹² This is a kind of critical realism, i.e., the view that there is a real world independent of one's beliefs, about which one can have true knowledge, alongside the crucial recognition that human knowledge is fallible, theory-laden, and historically and culturally conditioned. Therefore, we can know but we know only in part (cf. 1 Cor. 13:9-12) and thus should maintain considerable humility regarding the extent and the accuracy of our knowledge without retreating from rigorous application of our God-given faculties toward knowing Him and our world as accurately as possible toward living better. Regarding the reliability of cognitive faculties on theism as opposed to naturalism see Plantinga's work as referenced earlier.

¹⁹³ This so-called hermeneutical circle (between the thinker or knower and that which is thought about or known) is a universal issue. However, a proper theological method avoids a vicious circle by implementing an approach where the back and forth between knower (interpreter) and what one seeks to know (biblical text) functions as a spiral such that one's interpretation is continually subject to, and corrected by, ongoing engagement with the biblical canon as a whole toward rigorous correspondence with all of scripture and internal coherence. On this, see Peckham, "The Analogy of Scripture Revisited: A Final Form Canonical Approach to Systematic Theology."

others).¹⁹⁴ However, none indisputably prove God's existence. Knowledge of God is given to us via special revelation.¹⁹⁵ The Adventist worldview, then, does not deduce the existence of God but requires God at its core because scripture itself presupposes the existence of God.¹⁹⁶ If scripture is God's word, as it testifies of itself, then I have an object of study to which my worldview should correspond while also maintaining internal coherence. As has been seen, any worldview must rest on some faith presuppositions (at least tentatively). The question is, then, not whether I should have faith but where I should place my faith. With the necessity of such a decision in mind, let me share an overview of a few reasons why I believe the Bible, as divinely revealed and inspired, is a proper object of faith.

In order to address the question of the reliability of scripture one must at least be willing to entertain the possibility that the God of scripture exists and acts. If a personal God who actually cares about us exists we would expect Him to reveal Himself in some reliable way.¹⁹⁷ The Bible claims to be exactly this kind of personal revelation of God. But, why should anyone believe this claim? My faith is based in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ (Messiah), who provided the ultimate historical revelation of God incarnate. In contrast, the claims of many religions are not rooted in history but appeal to a transcendent inaccessible reality. However, according to scripture, God revealed Himself in time and space, the one "who has seen [Jesus] has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead and is even now working to reconcile me to Himself. As shall be seen, if Jesus is who He claimed to be according to scripture, then the scriptures are themselves ratified as the revealed and inspired word of God.

Informed scholars no longer debate the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth and that He was crucified under the governance of Pontius Pilate, though debates continue about the details of who Jesus was and the occurrences of His life.¹⁹⁸ The primary historical question

¹⁹⁴ On these arguments see James Porter Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 463-500.

¹⁹⁵ An omnipotent being could not be experienced or known unless that being allows others to experience and/or know Him.

¹⁹⁶ Reformed epistemology argues that belief in God is a properly basic belief such that it requires no evidence (as opposed to evidentialism, for example). See Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 16-93; Kelly James Clark, "Reformed Epistemology Apologetics," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 265-313.

¹⁹⁷ By personal God I mean one with self-consciousness, rationality, will, and emotion, not merely a force or a transcendent, disinterested being.

¹⁹⁸ The extra-biblical evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth is overwhelming, including references by non-Christians such as the Jewish historian Josephus (ca. 90-95, *Antiquities*, 18:3, 20:9), the Roman historian Tacitus (ca. 115, *Annals*, 15.44), the Roman historian (and contemporary of Tacitus) Suetonius (*Claudius*, 25), the Roman official Pliny the Younger and the Emperor Trajan (ca. 112, *Letters*, 10:96-97), the Talmud (ca. 135, *Sanhedrin* 43a) and others. For a discussion of this and other evidence see Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1996), 187-228. This evidence alone is overwhelming but the evidence is exponentially greater if one allows the Christian extra-biblical witness to Christ. See *ibid.*, 229-42. Cf. Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: a Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for*

regarding Jesus is the event upon which all of Christianity and the reliability of the NT stands or falls; the resurrection. Indeed, “if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14). Is there any evidence that Christ rose from the dead?¹⁹⁹ The authorities hated Jesus so much that they had Him crucified and did everything they could to discredit Him. All it would have taken was for someone, anyone, to produce the dead body of Jesus and Christianity would have been rendered obsolete. Yet, Christ’s tomb was (and is) empty! This is confirmed by the reaction of the authorities; they made up the ridiculous story that Christ’s disciples had stolen His body, which would have been unnecessary if the tomb was not, in fact, empty (Matthew 28:13). Their explanation of the empty tomb, however, rings hollow because Christ’s tomb was heavily guarded to prevent just such an eventuality (Matthew 27:63-28:4).²⁰⁰ Can you imagine a group of Roman guards falling (and remaining) asleep all at once, despite the severe penalties for sleeping on duty, and the disciples rolling away the extremely heavy stone from the entrance of the tomb without waking up the guards? This is implausible in the extreme! The best explanation for the empty tomb of Christ is that He truly rose from the dead. “He is not here, for He has risen” (Matthew 28:6; cf. Luke 24:6).

Not only was Christ’s tomb empty, the risen Christ personally appeared to many eyewitnesses. First, a number of women met Him, then Peter, then the other disciples, and Jesus even “appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now” (1 Corinthians 15:6) and, finally, Christ appeared to Paul himself (1 Corinthians 15:8).²⁰¹ Thus,

Jesus (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 19-130. Nevertheless, there still remain some searches for the so-called historical Jesus. These do not ask whether or not Jesus existed, but rather who He was, supposing that He might be found through historical critical reconstruction. There also exist some less than reputable claims that Christianity copied from pagan mythology, which are old and long since defeated arguments that have been resurrected (pun intended) on the internet. Such claims, however, are spurious, as any even brief comparison of the supposed similarities based on primary sources shows. For an excellent response regarding these issues, see Ronald H. Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks: Did the New Testament Borrow from Pagan Thought?* 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub., 2003); J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Mislead Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 219-58.

¹⁹⁹ See Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 191-260. Numerous books have been written with far more detail than what can be described here but suffice it to say that there is good reason to believe that Christ indeed rose from the dead, just as the NT claims. See, for example, N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003); Mike Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2010); Gary R. Habermas and Mike Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004); Craig A. Evans, N. T. Wright, and Troy A. Miller, *Jesus, the Final Days: What Really Happened* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009); Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*.

²⁰⁰ As Habermas puts it, “contemporary critical scholars, whether skeptical or not, are virtually unanimous in rejecting such hypotheses. If the disciples stole the body, they would not have been willing to die, in all probability, for a known lie or fraud.” Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*: 226-27. For a further discussion, see chapter seven in *ibid*.

²⁰¹ Many have noted that the fact that the NT identifies women as the first witnesses to Christ’s resurrection is also strong evidence for the authenticity and reliability of the resurrection accounts. Why? Due to the status of women and the devaluation of the testimony of women at that time, if one was fabricating a story in a way that

since hundreds of eyewitnesses remained alive at the time Paul wrote, the claims of Christ's resurrection could have been independently verified by those coming into the faith.

How should we explain these and other independent claims of individuals and groups who met the risen Christ, including the claim of hundreds to whom Christ appeared at the same time? Such accounts cannot be explained as the product of hallucination because no two people share any precise hallucination. There is no such thing as mass hallucination, let alone repeated group hallucinations of the kind that would be necessary to account for the recurring appearances of Christ to groups of followers over a period of weeks (which included conversation, physical contact, and dining with the risen Christ).²⁰² Perhaps Christ's followers were simply lying? Yet, this explanation also falters for lack of motivation. What could they have gained from lying about the resurrection of Christ? Nothing! In fact, their reward for their faith and testimony of Jesus Christ was death. Each of the remaining eleven disciples died a martyr's death for their faith in Christ except John, who was miraculously preserved when some tried to boil him in a pot of oil.²⁰³ Certainly, people have died for false beliefs. Yet, who has died for a belief that they knew to be false and from which they or those whom they loved had nothing to gain? The apostles lived and travelled with Jesus for 3 ½ years and had every opportunity to know first-hand the truth or falsehood of His claims. The disciples were willing to be killed rather than recant their faith in Him because they were firmly convinced that Jesus was the Son of God. That brings us to the most likely conclusion that hundreds (including many authors of NT books) claimed to have met the risen Christ because He really did rise from the dead!²⁰⁴ Could there be any confirmation of the truth of Christ's testimony greater than that offered by the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead? Yet, even though one rose from the dead, humans still possess the freedom to not believe (cf. Luke 16:31).

The Manuscript Evidence

However, even given the compelling evidence that Jesus of Nazareth indeed arose from the dead, what if the New Testament (NT) text, which contains the record of Christ's resurrection, is unreliable? The NT claims to provide historically reliable and inspired eyewitness testimony of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. For example, Luke

would be compelling to contemporary hearers it would have made far more sense to depict men as the first witnesses to the resurrection.

²⁰² Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 225-43. Even less likely is the hypothesis that they were deceived by a massive conspiracy. What would have been their motivation and who would have had the means to pull it off?

²⁰³ On the martyrdom of many of the disciples see the ancient record in Eusebius, I:IX; II:XXIII; II:XXV. On the tradition regarding John, see Tertullian (ca. AD 200) in *The Prescription Against Heretics*, 36. See also Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 570.

²⁰⁴ This is but a small taste of the evidence that suggests that if we apply the standards that are applied to other accounts of ancient history to the historical accounts of Christ's resurrection, without assuming its impossibility *a priori*, we have good reasons to believe that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. The claims Jesus made can be tested historically as much as any historical claim could be.

states that he intended to write an accurate account, including the testimony of living eyewitnesses, that would lead to knowledge of “the exact truth” (Luke 1:1-4; cf. John 21:31). The gospels were written by an apostle (Matthew, John) or a close associate of an apostle (Luke, associate of Paul, and Mark, who is believed to have written Peter’s account).²⁰⁵ As mentioned earlier, we can reasonably discount the claims that the apostolic gospels were unreliable due to ignorance or falsehood.²⁰⁶ The apostles, having spent daily life with Christ for 3 ½ years, certainly would have known what they were talking about and they had nothing to gain by lying; they lost everything in this world for the sake of the gospel.²⁰⁷ It is very difficult to believe that anyone who did not truly believe in Jesus Christ would have been willing to endure the harsh persecutions of the early years of Christianity, including crucifixion and other forms of torture. The most plausible explanation of the apostolic witness to Christ, then, is that they were telling the truth.

Yet, how do we know that the text has come down to us as it was written by the apostles or their close associates? What if the text has been corrupted or has been added to over many ages?²⁰⁸ Concerns with regard to the historical reliability and/or accuracy of transmission of ancient writings might be answered by addressing three further questions: First, how close is the account to the actual events? Second, how close is the earliest manuscript we possess to the original time of writing? Third, how many manuscripts do we possess and do they agree with one another and to what extent?

The Date of Original Writing

We have good reason to believe that all four gospels were written within thirty to sixty-five years of Christ’s death in AD 31 and thus within the lifetime of many eyewitnesses.²⁰⁹ The

²⁰⁵ See D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

²⁰⁶ See Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2007).

²⁰⁷ Of course, Paul’s apostolicity presents a different case since he was not one of the twelve who but nevertheless a true apostle by virtue of meeting the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and the special calling placed upon him. However, Paul’s case itself provides a different kind of compelling evidence for he had been the persecutor of Christians, putting many to death for their faith in Christ. However, he dramatically turned around from being a persecutor of Christians to one persecuted for his own Christian convictions and, finally, himself put to death for the sake of Christ. The fact that one such as Paul was convinced by his own encounter with the risen Christ and the other apostolic testimony only strengthens the apostolic testimony collectively.

²⁰⁸ Now, I am convicted that the Bible is not like any other book, that it is reliable because the Holy Spirit revealed and inspired it and God has providentially preserved it for us. Indeed, I think the following information itself bolsters the claim of God’s own protection and vindication of scripture. However, even if one tables the claim of divine providence with regard to scripture, the gospels fare very well historically as contrasted with other ancient writings by the same historical standards.

²⁰⁹ The gospel accounts of Jesus are widely regarded to have been written within the first century AD, all by contemporaries of Jesus. For instance, see Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. There still

book of Luke is the key. Luke would not have been written later than Acts because Acts is the continuation of Luke's account. The dating of Acts is illuminated by fact that the book ends with Paul in house arrest in Rome, leaving the glaring question of what happened next. We know from extra-biblical sources that Paul was released but later executed in Rome sometime between AD 62 and 67. Why are the last few years of Paul's life and ministry, including his martyrdom, missing from Acts? Many scholars believe that the best explanation is that the book was completed before those events had occurred and, accordingly, date the writing of Acts sometime before AD 67.²¹⁰ The book of Luke shows evidence of using both Matthew and Mark as a source in his own gospel account, which would mean that both Matthew and Mark were written sometime before Luke.²¹¹ Finally, for some time critical scholars dated the book of John in the mid to late second century, ruling out apostolic authorship. Then, the earliest known NT fragment (p⁵², which contains part of John 18 and dates from ca. AD 130) was discovered, leading to the conclusion that "any date between about 55 and 95 is possible," placing its writing within sixty-five years of Christ's death at the latest.²¹²

The evidence suggests, then, that all four gospel accounts were written within the lifespan of first-generation witnesses to Jesus of Nazareth so that claims therein could be attested to or falsified by contemporaries, rendering it nearly impossible that myth or legend had crept in by the time of their writing.²¹³ Compare this to other, generally relied upon, ancient biographies,

remain skeptics regarding the date or the writing of these and other NT books, but the evidence continues to increase to favor the truly apostolic witness recorded in the NT, a claim to which no other books of ancient history are privy.

²¹⁰ Such dating would also explain the lack of mention of the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) or the death of James the brother of Jesus (ca. AD 62). Indeed, no event later than AD 62 is mentioned in the book. On this and other reasons for this view, see D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 116-17; Robert Horton Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, Fifth Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012). Some date Luke ca. 75-80 but on the basis that predictive prophecy is impossible and the book contains a "prediction" of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. "The evidence for an early date seems more convincing than that for a later time, and while it comes short of complete proof, it should be accepted." Carson, Moo, and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 117.

²¹¹ Although there are alternate theories (as is always the case with regard to historical investigation), it is "prevailing scholarly opinion that Luke used the canonical Mark as one of his key sources" and the best evidence places the writing of Mark in the late 50s, though some date it as early as the 40s and others as late as the 80s. Carson, Moo, and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 98. With regard to Matthew alone, there is an upper limit on how late the book could have been written since Ignatius (died, ca. 108) quotes from it. Moreover, the book itself suggests the temple was still standing when it was written (Matt. 5:23-24; 12:5-7; 17:24-27; 23:16-22), which would place an upper limit of AD 70. However, many critical scholars date the book from 80-100 but generally due to the presupposition that predictive prophecy (particularly regarding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70) is impossible. Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 152-56.

²¹² This moved the date of writing to sometime in the first century since it would have taken some time for the book to be copied enough and spread to where p⁵² originated. Thus, "dates in the second century are now pretty well ruled out by manuscript discoveries" including but not limited to p⁵². Carson, Moo, and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 166.

²¹³ As Craig Blomberg states, "Rabbis became famous for having the entire Old Testament committed to memory. So it would have been well within the capability of Jesus' disciples to have committed much more to memory than appears in all four gospels put together—and to have passed it along accurately." Interviewed in Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 43.

which typically were written centuries later than the events they depict.²¹⁴ Notably, even if we were to accept the later dates for the gospels given by critical scholars, the writings would still be very early in comparison to other ancient sources.

The Age and Agreement of Ancient NT Manuscripts

Yet, we do not possess the original documents so perhaps the transmission of the gospels was corrupted. In this regard, the proximity of the earliest manuscripts that we have to the original writing is amazing, especially when compared to other ancient manuscripts. We have many second and third century NT fragments, some that date from within a couple generations of the originals or earlier (such as p⁵²) and the entire NT corpus in very important 4th century codices, all of which are in astounding agreement with one another.²¹⁵ Other ancient writings, by comparison, often have five, eight, or even ten centuries between the writing of the original and the earliest surviving copy.²¹⁶

In all, we possess thousands of ancient manuscripts of the New Testament (in part or in whole), far more than any other ancient work, many of which exist in only a few ancient copies. Indeed, there are more ancient copies of the NT than any other ten ancient works combined!²¹⁷ These many NT manuscripts can be compared to see the amazing extent of agreement and variation. In fact, the NT “has not only survived in more manuscripts than any other book from antiquity, but it has survived in a much purer form than any other great book . . . a form that is

²¹⁴ One commonly cited example is that two ancient biographies of Alexander the Great exist, both written over 400 years after Alexander’s death, yet they are both considered trustworthy by historians.

²¹⁵ See Daniel B. Wallace, “The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts,” in *Understanding Scripture: an Overview of the Bible’s Origin, Reliability, and Meaning*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem, C. John Collins, and Thomas R. Schreiner (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 113; Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 55-72.

²¹⁶ “By comparison, the average classical author has no copies for more than half a millennium.” Wallace, “The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts,” 113. For instance, consider Tacitus (ca. AD 116), the Roman historian who wrote the *Annals of Imperial Rome*. His first six books exist today in only one manuscript, and it was copied about AD 850. Books 11-16 are in another manuscript from the eleventh century. Books 7-10 are lost. Or, consider Josephus, *The Jewish War* (late 1st century). We have 9 Greek manuscripts of his work from the 10-12th centuries, 1 Latin translation from the 4th century, and Russian materials from the 11th or 12th century. Or, consider Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* (50 B.C.). The earliest copy we possess is from AD 900, a 1000 year time gap. See Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 60-61.

²¹⁷ We currently possess over 5800 ancient Greek copies of the NT and over 24,000 if one includes ancient translations. On the other hand, “the copies of the average ancient Greek or Latin author’s writings number fewer than *twenty* manuscripts! Thus, the New Testament has well over one thousand times as many manuscripts as the works of the average classical author.” Wallace, “The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts,” 113. The ancient work with the second most manuscripts in existence is Homer’s *Iliad*, with fewer than 650 manuscripts, dating back to the 2nd and 3rd century AD whereas it was originally written about 800 BC. While Homer’s *Iliad* is a work of fiction the point at issue here is whether the book came down to us basically as it was written. Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 60-61.

over 99 percent pure.”²¹⁸ At this juncture, critics of scripture point to the sheer number of variations among the ancient manuscripts. Indeed, there are some 400,000 textual variants but “the large number of variants is due to the large number of manuscripts.”²¹⁹ Moreover, as Daniel Wallace, one of the pre-eminent NT textual critics, writes “the vast majority of textual alterations are accidental and trivial, and hence easy for textual critics to spot.”²²⁰ Indeed, “generally they’re inconsequential variations” such as “differences in spelling.”²²¹ Thus, 99% of the textual variants make no recognizably significant difference to the meaning of the text(s).

In all this, F.F. Bruce correctly states, “There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.”²²² Indeed, he adds, “if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond doubt.”²²³ If it is reasonable for me to believe any account of ancient history, then why wouldn’t it be reasonable for me to believe the New Testament, considering it is by far the most attested and accurately preserved historical document of antiquity?

The Historical Christ Ratifies the OT and NT Canon

If, as argued above, the NT provides an accurate account of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ then Jesus of Nazareth truly was and is the Son of God. Therefore, we ought to pay very close attention to Christ’s own claims regarding the reliability and authority of

²¹⁸ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got our Bible* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012).

²¹⁹ Wallace, “The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts,” 114. Note that the high number of variants is one byproduct of having so many texts. But just as the number of texts does not itself say anything about the veracity of text the sheer number of variants says nothing about it.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Bruce Metzger, interviewed in Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 64. Daniel Wallace has classified the 400,000 variants into four categories: (1) spelling and nonsense errors (at least 75 percent), (2) Minor changes, including synonyms and alterations, that do not affect translation (since Greek is an inflected language one can say the same thing with many different constructions), (3) Meaningful but not viable differences, and (4) Meaningful and viable differences (less than 1 percent of variants). Wallace, “The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts,” 114-18. Regarding the two classes of meaningful differences. First, meaningful but not viable differences refers to a variant that would affect the meaning of translation but where the variant is not viable because we see the variant pop up only in later manuscripts and there is not much chance that one late scribe got it right and all others were wrong (e.g., 1 John, 1 Thess. 2:9 – “gospel of Christ” in late medieval manuscript instead of “gospel of God” in all early manuscripts). That leaves only meaningful and viable differences, which are less than 1 percent and nearly all of which are minor variants.

²²² F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 3d and rev. ed. (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1963), 178.

²²³ F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 10. Daniel Wallace adds, “If one is skeptical about what the original New Testament text said, that skepticism needs to be multiplied many times over when it comes to the writings of all other ancient Greek and Latin authors.” Wallace, “The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts,” 113.

the rest of scripture, particularly the Old Testament (OT), about which Jesus proclaimed, “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). In numerous other places Christ is very clear about the authority of the OT (Matthew 5:17-18; 21:42; Matthew 22:29; Matthew 26:54, 56; Luke 24:44, 45; John 2:22; John 5:39; John 10:35; John 17:12). Likewise, the rest of the NT also testifies to the OT writings as authoritative scripture. As 2 Timothy 3:16 states, “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (cf. Acts 17:2; 18:28; Romans 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Galatians 3:8; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Yet, how do we know the OT has been accurately transmitted? The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls at Qumran in 1947 provided us with OT manuscripts from before the time of Christ, which upon comparison with other ancient manuscripts demonstrate the remarkable preservation of the OT.²²⁴ In short, the discovery of the scrolls demonstrated that the Old Testament has been transmitted with a very high degree of accuracy.²²⁵ The OT we possess is essentially the same OT that Christ himself used and to which He and the NT writers referred. We have, then, strong evidence that the OT has come down to us basically as it was at the time of Christ and that the NT has been accurately transmitted from the first generation apostles to our age. Significantly, both the OT and NT canon make claims to divine revelation, inspiration, and corresponding authority.²²⁶ Furthermore, both sections of the biblical canon are ratified by connection with Christ as divinely commissioned writings, revealed and inspired by the Holy Spirit; the OT by Christ’s direct testimony (see above) and that of His apostles and the NT as the inspired first-

²²⁴ For instance, a scroll of Isaiah from about 100 BC was found to be identical with the modern Old Testament in over 95 percent of the text. The remaining five percent consists of mostly obvious copyist errors or spelling differences, in other words very minor scribal errors. Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 1999), 78-79. See also Paul D. Wegner, "The Reliability of the Old Testament Manuscripts," in *Understanding Scripture*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem, C. John Collins, and Thomas R. Schreiner (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 101-10.

²²⁵ See Walter C. Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents: Are they Reliable & Relevant?* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 40-52. Parts of all of the sixty-six books of the OT, except for Esther, were found.

²²⁶ The OT testifies about itself in many instances. For example, God commanded Moses that His revelation be written, preserved, and passed on (Ex. 17:14; 24:4; 31:18; 34:27; Deut. 10:5; 31:9, 25-26). After Moses, other inspired writers carried on the recording of revelation including Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, among others (Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 10:25; Is. 30:8; Jer. 30:2). Later writers referred to and revered earlier scriptures (1 Kings 2:3; Ezra 3:2; Jer 26:18; Ezek. 14:14, 20; Dan. 9:2; Mic. 4:1-3, etc.).

In the NT 1 Tim 5:18 quotes directly from Luke 10:7. Peter declares the writings of Paul to be scripture along with the OT and collects them (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Moreover, the gospel is regarded as the very word of God (Acts 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 13:46; 17:13; 18:11; 19:20). Paul is clear that he does not speak on his own authority but by that of God (Rom. 15:15; 1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 3:5; 1 Thess. 2:13) and commands his letters to be read (Col 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). Finally, Revelation testifies of itself as direct revelation from God and adds that no one should change its words (Rev. 1:1; 22:18-19).

generation apostolic testimony about Christ (written by apostles or close associates of apostles).²²⁷

Archaeological Evidence

Beyond the manuscript evidence, there is an abundance of archaeological evidence supporting the authenticity and accuracy of the Bible. However, like the other evidences we've considered, archaeological evidence cannot prove the historicity of the OT, nor should we expect it to do so. Since we have only a small fraction of the total possible archaeological evidence it would be unreasonable to expect it to confirm all of the details of scripture. Nevertheless, despite the relatively small fraction of the evidence to which we are privy, biblical archaeology has provided amazing confirmations of the historicity of scripture.²²⁸

For example, it was once believed that the Hittites never existed, until their capital and records were discovered at Bogazkoy, Turkey. Some believed Sargon of Assyria, mentioned in Isaiah 20:1, never existed. But then Sargon's palace was discovered in Khorsabad, Iraq. Even recently, some scholars doubted the historical existence of King David. Then, the Tel Dan Stele was found, with an inscription testifying to the Davidic dynasty. Some thought the author of Daniel was incorrect in recording Belshazzar as the ruler of Babylon at the time of its fall to Persia until the discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder and Nabonidus Chronicle, showing that Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus and his co-regent at the time.²²⁹ Others questioned the historicity of the gospel accounts regarding Pontius Pilate, until an inscription was found at Caesarea Maritima with the words "Pontius Pilate Prefect of Judea." Of course, there remain critics who interpret some archaeological data in a way that they claim contradicts scripture.²³⁰

²²⁷ We have good reason to recognize the sixty-six-book Protestant canon as divinely revealed, inspired, and providentially preserved. However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to develop the issue of the scope of the biblical canon. However, it is important to note that the OT canon is implicitly affirmed by Christ on the road to Emmaus when He appears to refer to the three sections of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms/Writings (Luke 24:44), which correspond exactly to the thirty-nine books of the Protestant OT canon. As mentioned above, each NT book has apostolic associations. Thus one can make a strong case the OT was ratified by Christ and the NT was commissioned by Him (via His apostles). For further information on the reliability of the scope of the canon see John C. Peckham, "The Canon and Biblical Authority: A Critical Comparison of Two Models of Canonicity," *Trinity Journal* 28NS, no. 2 (2007), 229-49; John C. Peckham, "Intrinsic Canonicity and the Inadequacy of the Community Approach to Canon Determination," *Themelios* 36, no. 2 (2011), 203-15; John C. Peckham, "The Biblical Canon: Do We Have the Right Bible?" *Ministry* 80, no. 6 (2008), 16-19.

²²⁸ For an introduction, see Alfred J. Hoerth and John McRay, *Bible Archaeology: an Exploration of the History and Culture of Early Civilizations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005).

²²⁹ This is apparently why Belshazzar could only make Daniel "third highest ruler in the kingdom." (Daniel 5:16).

²³⁰ For example, there is an ongoing debate regarding how to interpret the archaeological data about Jericho. For an introductory account, see Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents: Are they Reliable & Relevant?* 109-18.

However, as Norman Geisler puts it, “no archaeological find has ever refuted a biblical claim.”²³¹

The Prophetic Witness

Beyond textual and archaeological testimony, the predictive prophecies of scripture witness to the fact that it is not merely a human book. For example, the book of Isaiah mentions Cyrus by name over 100 years before Cyrus was even born!²³² Daniel 2 and 7 provide an outline of the history of the world from the time of Babylon (when they were written) all the way down to the second coming! Indeed, because of the amazing accuracy of these prophecies some contend that they could not have been written until the 2nd century BC (the time of the Maccabees). However, if one admits the possibility of predictive prophecy, the evidence overwhelmingly favors the view that the book of Daniel was indeed written in the 6th century B.C.²³³ Moreover, the most amazing prophecy of Daniel would not be explained by the critical dating of Daniel to the 2nd century BC, since it predicts things that occurred nearly 200 years later than that. In Daniel 9:24-27, the 70 week prophecy predicts, over 500 years in advance, the precise year that Christ would be “anointed” (being baptized and beginning His ministry in AD 27, Luke 3:1, 15) and the precise year that He would be “cut off” and bring an end to sacrifice and offering, fulfilling the cultic/ceremonial law by His own once-for-all effective sacrifice (AD 31).

Many other Messianic prophecies of the OT and their amazing fulfillment also testify to the authority of the Bible. For example, scripture prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10) and a descendant of David (Isaiah 11:1-10), would bring good news and healing (Isaiah 61:1-2), be betrayed by a close friend (Psalm 41:9), numbered with transgressors (Isaiah 53:12), scourged but having no bones broken (Psalm 34:20; Isaiah 53:5), and pierced for the transgressions of others (Isaiah 53:5; cf. Psalm 22:16). Taking just these few amazing prophecies together, the probability that any one person would fulfill all of these is infinitesimally small. The most plausible explanation is that Jesus of Nazareth is and was the Son of God and the scripture that testifies to Him is reliable and authoritative for faith and practice.

²³¹ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 557.

²³² For this reason, critics state that part of Isaiah (second Isaiah) must have been written after Cyrus, since, they claim, such predictive prophecy is impossible. However, there is strong evidence that Isaiah was the author of the entire book that bears his name, not least of which is the NT witness (John 12:38-41). See Gregory A. King, "Did Isaiah Write the Book of Isaiah?" in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 59-64.

²³³ See Jiří Moskala, "Did the Prophet Daniel Write the Book of Daniel?" in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 65-71.

The Divine Authentication of scripture

Yet, none of these “evidences” for the reliability of scripture prove beyond doubt the truth claims of the Bible. If I assume that God does not exist or that predictive prophecy is impossible, I can come up with some apparently possible explanation of the evidence above. In the end a decision of faith is still required, as is the case for any worldview. If I look at the above evidence from a standpoint of faith, or even simply ask God to give me faith (Mark 9:24), there are more than enough good reasons to adopt a biblical worldview. Despite the “evidence,” as impressive as it may be, there will nevertheless remain those who doubt or refuse to believe altogether.

The apostle Thomas also found it difficult to believe that Christ had risen from the dead. Yet, Jesus did not reject Thomas for the weakness of his faith but let him feel Christ’s body and wounds, that it was really Him, thus giving Thomas a personal experience that strengthened his faith and led to the only appropriate response, Thomas fell to the ground and proclaimed, “My Lord and My God!” (John 20:28). Because Thomas saw, he believed, but “blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed” (John 20:29).

Some of the “evidences” above might help people entertain the possibility of the veracity of scripture, to open up minds that have been closed by the propaganda of our age. However, the most important testimony is that of the Holy Spirit, authenticating the Bible as God’s Word as manifest in the changed lives of Christians throughout the world and across the ages. Those of us who have experienced the living God can witness to Him by manifesting His love in all that we say and do. Individually, the greatest demonstration of scripture’s origin and nature is found in the personal experience of reading and studying scripture itself.

What is your experience in God’s Word? By personal study of scripture you will find that it is not just another book. Careful study will show the beauty and majesty of the canon, written by more than forty different authors from all walks of life over a roughly 1600-year span, yet presenting a unified picture of God and corresponding worldview that alone meets all the longings and needs of the human condition and experience.

Not only will the honest seeker of God meet the living God in scripture but true humanity is also revealed therein. In the Bible I meet God according to His perfect self-revelation in all His love and justice. There I find the real Jesus of scripture by the illumination of the Holy Spirit as well as my true self as I am and as He will transform me to be. Don’t merely take my word for it, dive into the Bible for yourself, drink deeply from its wells and you will never be left thirsty (John 4:14) and you will find rest for your soul (Matthew 11:29) for you will meet Christ, the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), the desire of all ages.

The Adventist Worldview as Best Explanatory Model

The decision of faith that Christ evokes, then, is actually quite straightforward. Either Christ is who He claims to be in scripture or He is not.²³⁴ If Christ is indeed God incarnate then the correct worldview is that which is accurately derived from the biblical revelation that He Himself ratified as divinely revealed, inspired, and preserved by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The acceptance or rejection of Christ, then, provides the foundation by which all worldviews might be judged. One needn't investigate every possible worldview in order to justifiably adopt the biblical worldview as correct. Just as the secret service recognize counterfeit money by comparing it to their extensive knowledge of the genuine, if one comes to the conclusion of faith that Jesus is and was the Son of God, all other truth claims might be judged by comparison to Christ and His teachings, which are found in the entirety of the Bible.

The historicity of the Christian faith is particularly significant when it comes to such worldview comparison. The Adventist worldview promotes a living God who acts in time and space and thus enters into the realm of human history whereas many other religions rest on claims that fall outside the bounds of history.²³⁵ Moreover, the claims of the Bible are mutually exclusive to the central claims of other religions. For example, the claim of some eastern religions that all roads lead to truth and/or God is simply not possible unless we hold contradictory views simultaneously.²³⁶ Both Christianity and Islam cannot both be correct. For one, Islam claims that the NT has been corrupted and is therefore not a reliable witness of Jesus (called Isa in the Quran). However, as seen above, the NT has in fact come down to us as it was written. Likewise, the Quran claims that Jesus did not really die on the cross and, thus, did not resurrect either and is not divine but merely a great prophet (Quran 4:156-159). This directly contradicts the central claims of Christianity. The belief systems, though they may have similarities as Abrahamic monotheistic faiths, are at their core mutually exclusive.

²³⁴ He could not merely have been a great moral teacher, as C. S. Lewis has eloquently pointed out: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 55-56.

²³⁵ "Thus, in response to Buddhism, the Christian can point to the factual grounding of Christianity in the context of first-century history. There is nothing easy about this strategy" however . . . Before Buddhists can accept the truth of Christian history, they may have to be convinced that history matters. If history does not matter, how is one to know whether Buddhism is true?" Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, 354.

²³⁶ As Ronald Nash puts it, "It would be intellectual suicide to think that all worldviews are equally plausible and worthy of belief. One of the three tests to which every worldview should be subjected is the test of reason, namely, the law of noncontradiction." Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas*, 14.

Yet, there are many, widely varying, forms of Christianity and a large diversity of corresponding worldviews among various denominational and non-denominational Christians (at times, even within the same denomination). So, why is the Adventist worldview preferable? First and foremost, I believe that the Adventist worldview is the most preferable worldview simply because I am aware of no other worldview that more accurately corresponds to the canon of scripture. This in itself is a claim that can only be tested by examining scripture for oneself and seeing if these things are so (Acts 17:11). However, beyond a text-by-text and passage-by-passage exposition of the Adventist beliefs over and against other forms of Christianity, which should not be neglected but cannot be done within the scope of this book, the preferability of the Adventist worldview might be glimpsed by reflecting upon the content of the worldview as a whole.²³⁷ Without rehashing the information laid out in previous chapters, suffice it to say that I am convicted that the Adventist worldview provides the best explanation for the world around us and the human experience (collectively and individually); providing the best answers to the biggest questions of life within the context of an internally coherent worldview that corresponds rigorously to scripture.

Especially significant is the Adventist conception of God Himself and how He relates to the world via give-and-take relationship. Whereas in some conceptions of God (both Christian and non-Christian) God is altogether timeless and impassible (that is, unable to be affected by anything outside of Himself) and thus immune to reciprocal relationship, scripture depicts a profoundly loving and personally concerned God who has willingly tied His own interests to the best interests of His creatures.²³⁸ This conception of God informs the entire Adventist worldview and has significant implications for each of the biblical doctrines specifically and for the way the Bible should be interpreted theologically.²³⁹ For example, the doctrine that God has unilaterally chosen only some to be saved and condemned others to be lost (unconditional election) traditionally stems from a conception of God as the one who is the sole cause of everything (determinism) but cannot be affected by any external causation (impassibility). Yet, such a view

²³⁷ There are many resources available to assist one in doing so. For a starting point see Dederen, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*; *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*.

²³⁸ See John C. Peckham, *The Love of God: A Canonical Model* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2015), 117-45.

²³⁹ In this regard, Fernando Canale distinguishes between three levels of hermeneutical presuppositions that affect the way we read and interpret the Bible. Most of us are most familiar with the micro-hermeneutical level, that of exegesis of individual texts/passages. However, this level of exegesis is affected by presuppositions the reader/interpreter might bring at two other levels, the meso- and macro-hermeneutical levels. The macro-hermeneutical level refers to the broad presuppositions that frame and circumscribe theological understanding and the meso-hermeneutical level is the level of theological doctrines. Whereas each of the three (macro-, meso-, and micro-hermeneutical) levels affect one another, one's macro-hermeneutical presuppositions set the parameters within which doctrines (meso-hermeneutics) and biblical texts (micro-hermeneutics) are understood. This is why it is so important to attempt to derive these macro-presuppositions regarding (among other things) the doctrine of God and the God-world relationship from the data of scripture itself. For a technical discussion of these issues, see Fernando L. Canale, "Deconstructing Evangelical Theology?" *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 44, no. 1 (2006): 103-104.

rules out freedom of humans to respond to God by faith, thereby excluding the Great Controversy as a whole and making God ultimately culpable for evil and responsible for the lost. Likewise, such a view of God entirely rejects the sanctuary doctrine, which assumes that God interacts with humans and that historical human decisions and actions actually impact divine judgment, among many other implications.²⁴⁰

This basic biblical conception of God as understood within the Great Controversy worldview provides a cogent counterargument to the caricatures of God that are often used to lead people away from faith.²⁴¹ God is the entirely good and loving Creator of the world. We are His creatures, created to enjoy love relationship with Him and reflect His love and goodness back to Him and to others. However, we are partially separated from Him by sin, which is temporarily allowed to exist within the context of the Great Controversy. For this reason, we all possess in ourselves a longing for something greater and something better—a longing for goodness and love—that this world never fully satisfies. Even the good things that we experience here leave a hunger for that everlasting goodness which will ultimately be experienced in relationship with God. There is, as it has been put elsewhere, a God-shaped hole in each of our hearts.²⁴² Humans long for far more than this world has to offer.²⁴³

Atheistic counterarguments to Christian theism, conversely, often boil down to one of two points: God should have made Himself more visible and recognizable to skeptics and/or the evil in the world rules out the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God. The Great Controversy perspective provides compelling answers to both of these points. With regard to the apparent hiddenness of God at times, we believe (as has been outlined above) that God has revealed Himself in a way that is sufficient for anyone to believe. At the same time, because God grants free will to all agents and, in the Great Controversy, the enemy is given a measure of power (see chapter 3), there is and will remain enough room for anyone to choose to doubt.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ For more on this crucial issue of God's nature and His relationship to the world see Fernando Canale, "Doctrine of God," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 105-59; John C. Peckham, "The Passible Potter and the Contingent Clay: A Theological Study of Jeremiah 18:1-10," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 18, no. 1 (2007), 130-50; Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), 163-213; John C. Peckham, *The Concept of Divine Love in the Context of the God-World Relationship* (New York: Peter Lang) 2014.

²⁴¹ One of the reasons the concept of God is so unpopular in many circles is because of the dire misconceptions of God's character. Missionally, the Adventist worldview, derived from scripture, can be used to address many of the questions that stop skeptics from even entertaining belief, such as those voiced by the so-called new atheism of Richard Dawkins and others.

²⁴² Blaise Pascal famously referred to an "infinite abyss" that humans try "in vain to fill with everything around" us but that "can be filled only . . . by God himself." *Pensees*, 10.148.

²⁴³ C. S. Lewis comments, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." *Mere Christianity*, 120.

²⁴⁴ Ellen White puts it this way, "God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our

What of evil? Some reject God because of the very existence of evil, but as has been seen in previous chapters (especially chapter 3), evil itself doesn't even make sense as a concept in naturalism, for "evil" conceptually assumes the corresponding concept of absolute goodness, which requires design and purpose. Likewise, evil must be part of God and (to some extent) permanent and/or illusory in pantheism. The Adventist worldview of the Great Controversy, on the other hand, holds the goodness and omnipotence of God supreme while providing love as the explanation for the temporary allowance of evil and pointing forward to its ultimate annihilation.

Overall, I believe the Adventist worldview of the Great Controversy provides the best explanatory model for addressing the big questions of life and is also itself an excellent argument for the starting point of scripture. The worldview, properly understood, is itself an invitation to entertaining the possibility that its epistemological basis may be sound, in light of the explanatory value, exceptional beauty, and personal fulfillment provided by the model as a whole.²⁴⁵ At the end of the day, however, one simple question must be answered by all, which will ultimately determine one's final worldview. Are you willing to believe and follow Jesus all the way? As Christ Himself states, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:17). scripture provides the content of the best explanatory model of all of the subjective and objective evidence but the worldview it provides can only be entertained and evaluated by first engaging the presuppositions of scripture itself. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith."

²⁴⁵ It is the best explanatory model not only because of its epistemological grounding in Christ but also in that it affects everything and reaches into every area of existence. So, even if one is not convinced by the rather deductive reasoning about the reliability of scripture, they still might be invited to entertain the model as a whole and its explanatory value, which might eventually lead them back to faith in scripture.