

# What Do Adventists Mean by the *Great Controversy Theme*<sup>1</sup>

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## Part One: Why We Need the Great Controversy Paradigm

Perhaps no subject is more needed in the Adventist Church at this time than an overview of what Adventists mean by the “Great Controversy Theme (GCT)”. What do we generally mean by the “great controversy”? The answers vary: 1) the last book in the Conflict of the Ages set; 2) the controversy between good and evil, sociologically, philosophically, politically; 3) The controversy between God and evil forces in this world—Jer 25:31; 4) The controversy between God and Satan, a cosmic conflict; 5) the controversy in every life between Light /Darkness, Christ/ Satan and Truth/Error.

But the GCT is all these and more.<sup>2</sup> Understanding the GCT gets more relevant by the year. Its theological ellipse would have kept our church from its major theological disputes, such as righteousness by faith in 1888, or the atonement and the humanity of Christ since 1955. Other divisive issues, such as What is the gospel, and What role do God’s loyalists play in helping God to tell His side of the great controversy, would be resolved.

The GCT is Ellen White’s distinctive theological contribution. It provides the rationale and coherency for 1) her theological system; 2) her distinctive educational philosophy; 3) her advanced health principles, as well as other areas of her thought.

All theological contributions, in order to be coherent and void of paradoxes, are built on an organizing principle. The GCT provides a new pair of glasses to look at the biblical evidence. It constructs a new paradigm with which we look at words such as faith, grace, sin, and righteousness, with dynamically fresh definitions. Why is the GCT important? Because all theologians since the Reformation have used these words, but with radically different definitions—all adding to the various divisions within Christianity.

One of the major problems in the Adventist Church today is the misuse of Ellen White, especially in theological matters. We pull her in opposite directions, even on the same

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<sup>2</sup> Three books that focus on the phrase “the great controversy” are H. L. Hastings, *The Great Controversy* (1858), Joseph Battistone, *The Great Controversy Theme in E. G. White’s Writings* (1978), and John M. Fowler, *The Cosmic Conflict Between Christ and Satan* (2001). Hastings’ theme traced the implications of Jeremiah’s announcement that the “Lord has a controversy with the nations” (Jer. 25:31) With no concept of a cosmic conflict between Satan and God and no insight as to how this cosmic conflict affected various theories of salvation, Hastings focused only on this earth’s controversy between right and wrong. Battistone’s 1978 volume is the first in print that recognized the centrality of the GCT in the writings of EGW. His method unfolded the Conflict series as it revealed how this conflict engaged men and women from Eden to the second advent. This book is a treasure-house of homiletical gems for Adventist preachers who want the GCT to inform their preaching. Fowler is the first, in book form, to develop certain aspects of the cosmic nature of the GCT which he did exceedingly well.

issues; then, to show our “scholarship” we come up with a “balanced” conclusion—and then wonder why others have depicted Ellen White with “a wax nose.”

Instead of imposing any theological paradigm on her, let’s listen to her and *discover her paradigm*. Her unfolding of the GCT highlights the organizing principle of her theological contribution.

The GCT is the key that unlocks what appears to be vague, paradoxical, even contradictory. The GCT employs the theological ellipse as the door to salvation truth. An ellipse has two foci. When one focus is pushed too far, the ellipse is gone, the machinery does not function, etc. In thought, over-emphasizing one focus automatically diminishes the other. We end up with two circles tossing verbal hand grenades—the history of philosophy and theology from earliest times – and the history of our church in the last 40 years.

All areas of thought (whether theology, philosophy, law, music, etc) have two foci. But neither focus is the totality of truth. The human need for authority and order (objectivists), on one hand, and the need for freedom, relevance, and meaning (subjectivists), on the other, outlines the basic structure that truth is meant to satisfy.

Ellen White, without formal training, saw with laser precision that: “The progress of reform depends upon a clear recognition of fundamental truth. While, on the one hand, danger lurks in a narrow philosophy and a hard, cold orthodoxy, on the other hand there is great danger in a careless liberalism. [Note the hazard of the conventional either/or standoff] *The foundation of all enduring reform is the law of God. We are to present in clear, distinct lines the need of obeying this law. Its principles must be kept before the people. They are as everlasting and inexorable as God Himself.* [Note her appeal to revelation/orthodoxy]

“One of the most deplorable effects of the original apostasy was *the loss of man’s power of self-control. Only as this power is regained can there be real progress.* [Note her appeal for responsibility as she starts to build the ellipse: “principles” joined with “self control”/responsibility]

“The body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character. Hence it is that the adversary of souls directs his temptations to the enfeebling and degrading of the physical powers. His success here means the surrender to evil of the whole being. The tendencies of our physical nature, unless under the dominion of a higher power, will surely work ruin and death. *The body is to be brought into subjection. The higher powers of the being are to rule.* The passions are to be controlled by the will, which is itself to be under the control of God. *The kingly power of reason, sanctified by divine grace, is to bear sway in our lives*” (MH 129, 130). [Note the ellipse as she appeals to “reason” in response to “divine grace”] “He [God] designs that the great subject of health reform shall be agitated, and the public mind deeply stirred to investigate; for *it is impossible for men and women, with all their sinful, health-destroying, brain-enerivating habits, to discern sacred truth, through which they are to be sanctified,*

refined, elevated, and made fit for the society of heavenly angels in the kingdom of glory” (3T:162; see also CDF:32, 33).<sup>3</sup>

Note one more use of the ellipse among many more similar uses: “To talk of Christ without the Word leads to sentimentalism. And to receive the theory of the Word without accepting and appreciating the Author makes men legal formalists. But Christ and His precious Word are in perfect harmony” (20MR 308 [1901]).

In the ellipse, truth is no longer seen as the balance between two extremes wherein we are satisfied with being “centrists.” Truth is the union of components in such a way that when one component is not connected to the other, something perilous happens to the meaning of each side of the ellipse. For example, H<sub>2</sub>O is another way of saying “water.” But hydrogen is not more important than oxygen. Without the proper emphasis on each side of the “formula” (or the ellipse), water does not exist. For example, “righteousness by faith” does not exist as a biblical truth if justification and sanctification are not correctly defined and properly joined, any more than water exists with the proper union of H and O.

## **Part Two: What We Mean By the “Great Controversy Theme”**

The central issue in the Great Controversy is over who can best run the universe, God or Satan. That issue must be resolved before the universe can be eternally secure. That is why the Christian’s highest motivation is to help clear God’s name<sup>4</sup>; the plan of salvation is God-centered, not humanity-centered. The vindication of God is vastly more important than our personal salvation.

“The plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man--the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: ‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.’ John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin” (PP 68; see also pp.78-79).

“Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated” (ST, December 22, 1914).

From the standpoint of this world’s involvement in the GC, the GCT is God’s strategy for making loyalists out of men and women who had been snared in Satan’s rebellion. The

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<sup>3</sup> All emphases are supplied.

<sup>4</sup> “Hallowed be Thy Name” (Matthew 6:9).

primary message of the GCT, the purpose of the gospel, is that God will restore whatever sin has damaged; that is, restored rebels become part of the reason for making the universe eternally secure.

“The *central theme of the Bible*, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the *restoration* in the human soul of the image of God” (Ed:125, emphasis supplied).

What is the built-in promise of the GCT? “From the first intimation of hope in the sentence pronounced in Eden to that last glorious promise of the Revelation, ‘They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads’ (Revelation 22:4), *the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme,--man's uplifting,--the power of God, ‘which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’* 1 Corinthians 15:57” (Ed:125,126, emphasis supplied).

Further, how does the GCT become an epistemological tool? “He who grasps this thought has before him an infinite field for study. He has *the key that will unlock to him the whole treasure house of God's word*” (Ed 126, emphasis added).

The key words in the GCT are “freedom”<sup>5</sup> and “restoration.”<sup>6</sup> On these two words is built the entire GCT. The key words in the everlasting gospel are *forgiveness* that leads to *restoration*—a relationship best understood within the gospel ellipse.

“The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It . . . means a heart emptied of self. . . . The glory, the fulness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life”(COL:419, 420).

“The forgiveness of sins is not the sole result of the death of Jesus. He made the infinite sacrifice, not only that sin might be removed but that human nature might be restored, rebeautified, reconstructed from its ruins, and made fit for the presence of God” (5T 537).

“To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized--this was to be the work of redemption. This is the *object of education*, the great *object of life*” (Ed 15, emphasis added).<sup>7</sup> [Note how easily EGW segued from theology into educational philosophy; the GCT determines what EGW says about any subject that has to do with getting men and women safe to save.]

**Understanding the big picture enriched by the GCT, we can more fully appreciate the teaching model of the sanctuary service.**

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<sup>5</sup>In the forthcoming book, *God At Risk*, the cost of freedom is explored, beginning with Rev. 13:8. C. S. Lewis said it well: “Free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give [created intelligences] free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having.”—*Mere Christianity*, p. 48,

<sup>6</sup>“The very essence of the gospel is restoration.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 824.

<sup>7</sup>“The teaching in our schools is not to be the same as in other colleges and seminaries. It is not to be of an inferior order; but the knowledge essential to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God is to be made the all-important them,”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 42.

“The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God’s hand had directed the great Adventist Movement, and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people. . . . Light from the sanctuary illumed the past, the present, and the future” (GC:423).

[Here, we must recognize that our understanding of salvation (the purpose of the gospel) is far different than others with their limited gospels. Understanding what Jesus is now doing for us as our High Priest highlights a distinctive feature of the GCT—the “key” to the purpose of the gospel. Most every scholar or pastor who has left our church in the last 100 years rejected this truth regarding what Jesus is doing now for His people on earth, as High Priest. Why? Because Christ’s role as High Priest, especially the significance of 1844 and thereafter, does not fit their limited understanding of the gospel. They see only one focus when they think of Christ’s work as our Redeemer—the focus of Sacrifice. They do not see the other focus in the ellipse of truth—His role as all-powerful Mediator (GC:488). They reject His role as “all-powerful Mediator” because they do not see the necessity of character transformation in their limited gospels.]

### **The GCT, the “grand central theme” of the Bible, embraces the essential questions confronting all areas of theology**

“The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to *view the word as a whole*, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its [1] *grand central theme*, of [2] God's original purpose for the world, of [3] the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand [4] the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to [5] trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy [6] enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, [7] he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found” (Ed:190, emphasis added).

The GCT (utilizing the “grand central theme” of the Bible) saves even biblical scholars from the tyranny of limited focus. Bible study may be inspirational and intriguing but unless pursued within the GCT, so much remains undiscovered and unconnected.

No matter how much one is skilled in biblical linguistics, archeology, biblical studies of a particular book or prophetic interpretation, “but of infinitely wider scope, of infinitely greater value, are they [all biblically-related studies] when viewed *in their relation to the grand central thought*. Viewed in the light of this thought, every topic has a *new significance*” (Ed:125, emphasis added).

### **The GCT embraces the elements of a distinctive Adventist educational philosophy as well as the framework for a coherent Adventist theology.**

“In order to understand what is comprehended in the work of education, we need to consider both [1] the nature of human beings and [2] the purpose of God in creating them.

We need to consider also [3] the change in their condition through a knowledge of evil, and [4] God's plan for fulfilling His glorious purpose in the education of the human race" (Ed:14, 15).

[Again, we see how Ellen keeps the larger view of "redemption" in mind: the GCT is focused primarily on God's vindication—the same focus that should motivate our lives so that we keep our minds primarily on God's honor and not on an egocentric concern for personal salvation. That is, our eyes should be focused on how God is completing the finishing of the great controversy in the Most Holy Place with Jesus as our "all-powerful Mediator"—thus, lifting our eyes off our self-absorbing burdens. The larger view of the gospel keeps Jesus in front as our Saviour and Example (ellipse) and not in our rear view mirror as a scowling traffic cop. Above our self-centeredness, we focus on how we can honor God—where the controversy has centered since Satan first maligned the character and name of God.]

**The main accusations that Satan leveled against God in heaven are essentially the same charges that men and women have continued to repeat. Knowing what the charges are helps us to understand more clearly *why Jesus came the way He did and why He died*. Only the GCT breaks us out of the box of conventional theology to see the big picture**

Hard for us to believe today, but one of Satan's chief charges against God was that He was *basically selfish*, that God was the Divine Paramour and Cosmic Dictator who wanted the adoration and submission of everyone—but for basically selfish reasons: "From the beginning of the great controversy he [Satan] has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish" (Ed:154).

To further justify his terrible charges, Satan pictured God (and still does) as "*severe and unforgiving*"—a "being whose chief attribute is *stern justice*, —one who is a *severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor*" (SC:10, 11; see also PK:311; 5T:738; 18MR:331).

Satan takes delight in suggesting reasons why created intelligences *should mistrust God*, to "doubt His willingness and power to save us," that, in some way "the Lord will do us harm by His providences." He seeks to picture "the religious life as one of gloom. He desires it to appear toilsome and difficult; and when the Christian presents in his own life this view of religion, he is, through his unbelief, seconding the falsehood of Satan" (SC:116).

Satan argued "from the first . . . that God was *unjust*, that *his law was faulty*, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed" (PP:69; see also PK:311; GC:x).

As one would expect, Satan included in his attack that *God is "the author of sin, and suffering, and death"* (PP:311).

Another one of "Satan's most successful devices to *cast reproach upon purity and truth*" has been his amazing skill in getting even Christians to misunderstand the nature of holiness. This surely must be one of his crowning deceptions: "Counterfeit holiness, spurious sanctification, is still doing its work of deception. Under various forms it exhibits

the same spirit as in the days of Luther, diverting minds from the Scriptures, and leading men to follow their own feelings and impressions rather than to yield obedience to the law of God” (GC:193).

As part of his charge that created beings did not really have freedom, and in his response to God’s appeal for loyalty, Satan charged that “*self-denial was impossible* with God and therefore not essential in the human family.” [Of course, Christ’s life and death “broke forever the accusing power of Satan over the universe” on this and other accusations (1SM:341).]

Probably one of the most amazing charges Satan made against God’s character and government has been echoing since humans began to ask questions: *If God were really fair and good, He would never have “permitted man to transgress His law”* and thus “to sin, and bring in misery and death.” This “rebellious complaint against God” fails to understand that “to deprive man of the freedom of choice would be to rob him of his prerogative as an intelligent being, and make him a mere automaton” (PP:331).

Another charge that Satan has succeeded in getting men and women through the millennia to accept is that *created beings can’t keep the laws of God*, thus making the Lawmaker unfair in His dealings with created intelligences: “In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned” (DA:761).<sup>8</sup>

**God’s two main “laboratories” in which He planned to tell His side of the controversy have been the 1) the creation of humanity and 2) the incarnation of Jesus.**

### ***Creation of Humanity:***

So we ask, why does this “new and distinct order” of creation become a part of God’s answer to Satan’s charges? Ellen White suggests that one of God’s purposes in creating human beings was “that the longer man lived, the more fully he should reveal this image [Genesis 1:27],—the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. . . . Throughout eternal ages he would have continued to gain new treasures of knowledge, to discover fresh springs of happiness, and to obtain clearer . . . conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. More and more fully would he have fulfilled the object of his creation, . . . more fully have reflected the Creator’s glory” (Ed:15).

Further, God planned that in the development of the human race He would “put it in our co-operation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end” (*Ibid*:264). [This thought

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<sup>8</sup>“Satan represents God’s law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24; see pp. 117, 309. “Since the fall of Adam, men in every age have excused themselves for sinning, charging God with their sin, saying that they could not keep His commandments. This is the insinuation Satan cast at God in heaven.”—*Review and Herald*, May 28, 1901.

should make us pause and consider how we are helping God to bring “this scene of misery to an end.” Or, if we are frustrating God’s plan to bring all this to an end. Soon.]

It may be useful to ask how the creation of men and women is truly a “new and distinct order” in the universe. What is there about men and women being created “in the image of God” that becomes a lesson book to the universe revealing how fair, trustworthy, and loving God and His principles really are?

We could begin by asking why God made men and women with the responsibilities of procreation. Could it be that men and women through marriage and family relations provide insight into the character of God that angels could not?<sup>9</sup> Is there any clue in watching parents love children—especially when they disobey? Note the hurt of parents when young children and teenagers say No—parents who offer nothing but sound reason and patience and love! Note how parents try various ways to help children “grow up.” Then think of how God relates to us? Is there not something significant in this “new and distinct order”—this human laboratory of parents and children, from the standpoint of parental love and patience— that could not be observed otherwise, anywhere else in the universe?

Other earthly venues besides family relationships shed light on the government of God. This planet has seen many noble (and not so noble) plans for the general welfare—in neighborhoods, in larger communities, and in nations covering broad territories. Freedom and order, how is that balance worked out best? Over the centuries, the whole universe has seen more clearly how satanic principles of government produce self-destructive systems in home, neighborhoods, or nations. Painful laboratory experiments of either totalitarian dictatorships or anarchic democracies prove Satan wrong regarding how best to run the universe. When at times we find groups trying to live under the rule of law governed by Christian principles, the universe can see, perhaps only faintly, how wise God’s rule of law really can be.<sup>10</sup>

God surely was taking a risk when He put so much of His own future on the line in creating this “new and distinct order” of beings who could just as easily rebel as did one-third of the bright, intelligent angels! How long would it take for the universe to see God’s purpose in this creation of a “new and distinct order” work out? One generation? One thousand years? Seven thousand years? One million years?

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<sup>9</sup>“The doctrine that children will be born in the new earth is not a part of the ‘sure word of prophecy’ (1 Peter 1:19). The words of Christ are too plain to be misunderstood. They should forever settle the question of marriages and births in the new earth. . . . They will be as the angels of God, members of the royal family.”—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, pp. 172, 173.

<sup>10</sup> Probably the “last great hope” for a political system that would offer “freedom and order” has been the American experiment, beginning with the Declaration of Independence (1776) and its Constitution (1787). John Adams, one of the driving forces for both documents, considered the conceptual framer of both, wrote to his son John Quincy, Ambassador to Russia, at the time of the death of his granddaughter (after the death of other children and many friends): The universe “was inscrutable and incomprehensible. . . . While you and I believe that the whole system is under the constant and vigilant direction of a wisdom infinitely more discerning than ours and a benevolence to the whole and to us in particular greater even than our own self love, we have the highest consolation that reason can suggest or imagination conceive. . . . Sorrow can make no alternative, afford no relief to the departed, to survivors or to ourselves.”—McCulloch, *John Adams*, (New York: Simon & Schuster. 2001), p. 611.

After all, God has made it very plain that His government, His character, would not and could not force the respect and loyalty of His created intelligences. He made them for His “glory” (Isa. 43:7) and there would be no glory (that is, no reflection of His character) or joy in His relationship with them if they were robots or puppets. See SC:43, 45.

### **Christ’s Incarnation:**

Jesus had two missions: 1) He came to tell us what God was really like, that He was not the person Satan had made Him out to be; and 2) He came to tell us what men and women should be like.

*First:* He is from the beginning of beginnings, the Creator of all things (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17). He became the God-man, reflecting the glory of God through His life and works (Hebrews 1:1-3). Jesus said of Himself that whoever “has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9); that whoever truly knows Him as Saviour will have “eternal life” (John 17:3). He told Pilate that the chief reason for coming to this world was to “bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37).

“The only way in which He could set and keep men right was to make Himself visible and familiar to their eyes. That men might have salvation He came directly to man and became a partaker of his nature. The Father was revealed in Christ as altogether a different being from that which Satan had represented Him to be.”—*Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890. [This paragraph needs to be read and reread often, for in these few words we have the rationale for what theologians call “justification” and “sanctification.” The only way we can be justified (“set men right”) and sanctified (“keep them right”) is to keep our focus on why Jesus came to earth. Note the ellipse of truth.]

*Second:* Jesus came to be our “Great Teacher” and we are His students. “The Great Teacher came into our world, not only to atone for sin, but to be a teacher both by precept and example.” What did He teach us? “He came to show man how to keep the law in humanity, so that man might have no excuse for following his own defective judgment. We see Christ’s obedience. His life was without sin. His lifelong obedience is a reproach to disobedient humanity. The obedience of Christ is not to be put aside as altogether different from the obedience He requires of us individually. Christ has shown us that it is possible for all humanity to obey the laws of God.”<sup>11</sup> What a Teacher and what a lesson plan!

### ***How did Jesus do His part in shutting Satan’s mouth?***

*He silenced Satan’s accusations that God was unfair to make laws that created beings could not keep.*

“Satan had claimed that it was impossible for man to obey God’s commandments; and in our own strength it is true that we can not obey them. But Christ came in the form of

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<sup>11</sup> *Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 135; “The Great Teacher came to our world to stand at the head of humanity, to thus elevate and sanctify humanity by His holy obedience to all of God’s requirements, showing it is possible to obey all the commandments of God. He has demonstrated that a lifelong obedience is possible.”—Manuscript 1, 1892, cited in *Ibid.* p. 139.

humanity [“in every respect,” (Heb 2:14. 17)], and by His perfect obedience He proved that fallen humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God's precepts.”<sup>12</sup>

How did Jesus respond to the *charge that God had demanded “self-denial”* from His created beings but would not exercise such unselfishness toward His created beings? “The whole universe saw that “His death had answered the question whether the Father and the Son had sufficient love for man to exercise self-denial and a spirit of sacrifice. Satan had revealed his true character as a liar and a murder” (PP:70).<sup>13</sup>

What about the charge *that God was severe, exacting, and harsh?* Jesus came “to remove this dark shadow by revealing to the world the infinite love of God. . . . He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by Satan. . . . He took man's nature, that He might reach man's wants. He exercised the greatest tact, and thoughtful, kind attention, in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness . . . . He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. . . . His life was one of self-denial and thoughtful care for others. . . . Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. This is the character of God.”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus proved that God was fair in His pronouncement that sinners will die, fair in His declaration that sin has terrible consequences (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23)—contrary, of course, to Satan's big lie that “you shall not surely die” (Genesis 5:4).

In becoming a human being, our Lord's life and death fully satisfied justice (which Satan had made a core issue in the Great Controversy) when He offered “the gift of . . . eternal life in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:23). His life proved that God was *fair and just* in the face of Satan's charges that God had made laws that were unfair and could not be kept.<sup>15</sup>

How did He do it? He became “sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21); that is, He took our place, that place where our sins would have led us if those sins could not be forgiven and overcome. That place is called the second death, the only real death (Revelation 20:13-

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<sup>12</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 314. “By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762; see also p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 70. “The victory gained at His death on Calvary broke forever the accusing power of Satan over the universe and silenced his charges that self-denial was impossible with God and therefore not essential in the human family.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 34. “Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name. It was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity. And all who accept this principle are to be workers together with Him in demonstrating it in practical life”—*Education*, p. 154.

<sup>14</sup> *Steps to Christ*, pp. 11, 12

<sup>15</sup> “By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p.762. Here is made plain what it meant for Jesus to satisfy “justice.”

15). In other words, Jesus went to “that place” where all sinners would go in reaping the inevitable consequence of self-destructive sins. In other words, Jesus is the only Person in the universe who has really died! (Those now in their graves are, in biblical language, only sleeping.<sup>16</sup>)

Paul, in more theological terms, spelled out the eternal implications of the death of Jesus: “God offered him, so that by his sacrificial death he should become the means by which people’s sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous. In the past he was patient and overlooked people’s sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate his righteousness. In this way God shows that he himself is righteous and that he puts right everyone who believes [has faith] in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26, TEV). This is probably Mt. Everest in Holy Scripture!

In Gethsemane and on the Cross, we may reverently observe what it means to die the sinner’s death. In the Garden He experienced (not vicariously) what it means to be “separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequences of sin” (DA: 686).

“It was not the dread of death that weighed upon Him. It was not the pain and ignominy of the cross that caused His inexpressible agony. . . . His suffering was from a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that through familiarity with evil, man had become blinded to its enormity. . . countenance . . . pierced . Now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father’s reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. . . . Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race” (DA:752.753).

If one wants to get a picture of the agony of spirit that everyone will feel dying the second death, the final death, watch Jesus die! If one wants to measure the wages of sin, watch Jesus die! If one wants to measure the depth of love God has for his rebel children on Planet Earth, watch Jesus die!<sup>17</sup> In all this, Jesus demonstrated the fairness of God, His ultimate justice, in dealing with created intelligences. Justice was satisfied and mercy was on full display.

### ***How did the way Jesus became a man have much to do with proving Satan wrong?***

He became a human being, facing the same risks of failure that all baby boys face at birth, knowing that He would “fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss” (DA:49).<sup>18</sup> To put it another way, why did Jesus have to be

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<sup>16</sup> See John 11:11-14

<sup>17</sup> “Jesus, by the law of sympathetic love, bore our sins, took our punishment, and drank the cup of the wrath of God apportioned to the transgressor. . . . He bore the cross of self-denial and self-sacrifice for us, that we might have life, eternal life. Will we bear the cross for Jesus?”—*Mind, Character,, and Personality*, vol.1, p. 248.

<sup>18</sup> Again, how human was He: “It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors.

made like human beings “in all things” (Hebrews 2:17; “in every respect,” RSV)? For two reasons:

He became like us “in every respect” so that He could face Satan as any other human being must face him, and prove him a liar! With the same powers available to all other human beings He would prove that “life-long obedience” was possible.”<sup>19</sup>.

In every sense of the word, He had to become like men and women “in every respect” (not merely “like them” in the sense he was not like a zebra or a dog), so that He could become our High Priest *because* “he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).<sup>20</sup>

After saying all this, it should be apparent that the GCT provides the framework for answering the questions concerning the nature of Christ’s humanity: All one has to do is answer one question: Why did Jesus come to earth? And the answer is twofold: to shut Satan’s mouth about 1) the character of God and about 2) his lies concerning the ability of created intelligences (even sinners) to keep/obey the laws of God. This twin answer demonstrates the fairness and trustworthiness of God, precisely the issues that have unsettled the universe.

**Another outflow of the GCT (as it clarifies the reasons why Jesus became man) is a larger understanding of the “atonement.”**

Limited ideas of the character and purposes of God (i.e., GCT) lead to limited ideas of the atonement. Monumental arguments have arisen throughout Christian history because the disputants did not understand the issues involved in the Great Controversy, especially in their limited understanding of why Jesus became man and the purpose of the gospel..

Ellen White was led to see the results of “limited views of the atonement” (2T:213). Some of these results of "limited views" include:

1. A limited sense of what Christ suffered on Calvary, linking His agony to physical pain only—*ibid*.
2. A limited sense of how the Father was involved in the agony of Calvary, not sensing that God's “wrath” expressed in His withdrawal of His immediate presence was the ultimate cost of sin, not the penalizing wrath of retributive justice—*ibid.*, pp. 213, 214.
3. A limited sense of how far-reaching was Christ's atonement. Many Christians still do not believe that Christ died every person's second death. The limited view was caused

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He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life. Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners. Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 10.

<sup>20</sup> On Calvary, “Jesus was earning the right to become the advocate of men in the Father’s presence.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p, 745.

by the presupposition that God's sovereignty has chosen only the special "elect" to be redeemed—*Ibid.*

4. limited sense of how Christ's life and death together were "earning the right" for Jesus to become humanity's High Priest.<sup>21</sup>
5. A limited sense of the "cost" of what God "gave" (John 3:16) in the death of Jesus by not recognizing that Jesus did not resume all of His former prerogatives, that He indeed "gave" Himself to the human race, to forever identify as a human with the human race—He was forever limited to time and space.<sup>22</sup>
6. A limited sense of what Christ "satisfied"—not that He died so that obedience to God's law was no longer necessary "but that [believers] may return to their loyalty and keep God's commandments."<sup>23</sup>
7. A limited sense of the "atonement" in that it "is not a more skillful way to have our sins pardoned" but "it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health" not sensing that "it is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters."<sup>24</sup>
8. A limited sense of the depth in Christ's cry, "My God, my God, why. . .?" Anyone believing in the immortal soul error, can not grasp that Christ's hour of death was that which all sinners will experience in their "second" death after the judgment. Jesus felt the agony of sinners who finally realize what they have rejected—life will end and forever.<sup>25</sup>
9. A limited sense of sin in that most Christians have no idea of the universal impact of sin on this earth and how it affects the well-being of the universe.<sup>26</sup>
10. A limited sense of how God plans, because of the atonement, to "place things on an eternal basis of security," a plan that involves an executive review prior to the Second Advent of all people who have ever lived and then the peer review conducted by the redeemed between the two resurrections (John 5:29).<sup>27</sup>

### **The GCT transcends the either-or arguments in crucial theological areas which have divided Christians for centuries.**

In these following examples, note the ellipse of truth that joins twin truths as securely as hydrogen bonds with oxygen to make water—that, without the bonding, there is neither

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<sup>21</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 745.

<sup>22</sup> *Review and Herald*, December 22, 1891; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 925; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, p.134; *Review and Herald*, January 25, 1898, September, 17, 1901.

<sup>24</sup> Letter 406, 1906, cited in *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074.

<sup>25</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1149; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 752, 753; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 668, 671; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p.:429; *Selected Messages*, bk.1, p. 340.

<sup>26</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 68, 78-9; *Signs of the Times*, December 22, 1914.

<sup>27</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 759; *Selected Messages*, bk 1, p. 341; *Signs of the Times*, December, 30, 1889 cited in *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1132.

water nor truth; the truth about the "atonement" is not in either the cross alone or in the heavenly sanctuary alone anymore than water is in either H or O. [The following order does not suggest an order of importance—each example is as important as the other.]

*The relationship between Christ's work on the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit:* "The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. . . . It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer" (DA:671).

*The relationship between the law and the gospel:* "No man can rightly present the law of God without the gospel, or the gospel without the law. The law is the gospel embodied, and the gospel is the law unfolded. The law is the root, the gospel is the fragrant blossom and fruit which it bear" (COL:128).<sup>28</sup>

*The relationship between Christ as Redeemer and as Ruler:* "Let this point be fully settled in every mind: If we accept Christ as a Redeemer, we must accept Him as a Ruler. We cannot have the assurance and perfect confiding trust in Christ as our Saviour until we acknowledge Him as our King, and are obedient to His commandments. Thus we evidence our allegiance to God. We have the genuine ring in our faith, for it is a working faith. It works by love" (FW:16).

*The relationship between objective authority and subjective responsibility in the faith experience:* "Faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer calls for an acknowledgment of the enlightened intellect, controlled by a heart that can discern and appreciate the heavenly treasure. This faith is inseparable from repentance and transformation of character. To have faith means to find and accept the gospel treasure, with all the obligations which it impose" (COL:112).<sup>29</sup>

*The relationship between God's work and man's work in the salvation process:* "God works and cooperates with the gifts He has imparted to man, and man, by being a partaker of the divine nature and doing the work of Christ, may be an overcomer and win eternal life. The Lord does not propose to do the work He has given man powers to do. Man's part must be done. He must be a laborer together with God, yoking up with Christ. . . . God is the all-controlling power. He bestows the gifts; man receives them and acts with the power of the

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<sup>28</sup> "There is perfect harmony between the law of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. 'I and My Father are one,' says the Great Teacher. The gospel of Christ is the good news of grace, or favor, by which man may be released from the condemnation of sin, and enabled to render obedience to the law of God. The gospel points to the moral code as a rule of life. That law, by its demands for undeviating obedience, is continually pointing the sinner to the gospel for pardon and peace. . . . God has given a complete rule of life in His law. Obeyed, he shall live by it, through the merits of Christ. Transgressed, it has power to condemn. The law sends men to Christ, and Christ points them back to the law."—*Review and Herald*, Sept. 20, 1881.

<sup>29</sup> "A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith cannot receive blessing from God. It is not enough to believe *about* Christ; we must believe *in* Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

grace of Christ as a living agent. . . . Divine power and the human agency combined will be a complete success, for Christ's righteousness accomplishes everything.”(FW:26-27).

*The relationship between imputed and imparted righteousness:* “Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought out by His Spirit working in and through us”(SC:63).

*The relationship between forgiveness of sin and a transformed life in defining genuine Christianity:* “The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ, revealed in the life, testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour” (COL:419-420).<sup>30</sup> .

*The relationship between the prayer for pardon and the prayer for divine help to resist sin:* To show how simple theology, rightly put, can be understood by the general public, note Ellen White's report of a sermon in Basle, Switzerland: “All listened with the deepest interest, and at the close of the discourse an invitation was given for all who desired to be Christians, and all who felt that they had not a living connection with God, to come forward, and we would unite our prayers with theirs for the pardon of sin, and for grace to resist temptation.”<sup>31</sup>

*The relationship between Christ's role as Sacrifice/Saviour and as High Priest/Mediator:* “Satan invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds, that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted. The archdeceiver hates the great truths that bring to view an atoning sacrifice and an all-powerful mediator. He knows that with him everything depends on his diverting minds from Jesus and His truth” (GC:488).

*The relationship between the new birth and obedience to God's law:* “In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty” (GC:468).

*The relationship between repentance and reformation:* “No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven” (DA:555-556; see also PP:92).

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<sup>30</sup> “The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters.”--Letter 406, 1906 cited in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074

<sup>31</sup> Review and Herald, November 3, 1885.

*The relationship between the work of Christ without and the work of the Spirit within:* “I call upon every one who claims to be a son of God, never to forget this great truth, that we need the Spirit of God within us in order to reach heaven, and the work of Christ without us in order to give us a title to the immortal inheritance”(TM:442)<sup>32</sup>.

*The relationship between faith and works:* “Abraham's faith was made manifest by his works. . . . There are many who fail to understand the relation of faith and works. They say, 'Only believe in Christ and you are safe. You have nothing to do with keeping the law.' But genuine faith will be manifest in obedience” (PP:153,154).

*The relationship between believing in Christ and abiding in Him:* “It is not enough that the sinner *believe* in Christ for the pardon of sin; he must, by faith and obedience, *abide* in Him”(PP:517).

*The relationship between Christ's free gift of remission of sins and His free gift of His attributes in the development of the Christian's character:* “His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. *More than this*, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can ‘be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus ( Rom. 3:26)’” (DA:762, emphasis added).

### **The 1888 General Conference offers us a case study of how the GCT theme and the ellipse of truth could have made a monumental contribution to the future of the SDA Church regarding RXF**

Because EGW grasped the big picture, she was able to transcend the objectivism (undue emphasis on doctrinal correctness) and subjectivism (undue emphasis on feeling or human autonomy) that prevailed in conventional nineteenth-century theologies and which surfaced dramatically in the 1888 General Conference. Note her implicit use of the ellipse:

“While one class [subjectivists] pervert the doctrine of justification by faith and neglect to comply with the conditions laid down in the Word of God—'*If ye love Me, keep My commandments*'—there is fully as great an error on the part of those [objectivists] who claim to believe and obey the commandments of God but who place themselves in opposition to the precious rays of light—new to them—reflected from the cross of Calvary. The first class [subjectivists] do not see the wondrous things in the law of God for all who are doers of His Word. The others [objectivists] cavil over trivialities and neglect the weightier matters, mercy, and the love of God.

“Many have lost very much in that they have not opened the eyes of their understanding to discern the wondrous things in the law of God. On the other hand, religionists [subjectivists] generally have divorced the law and the gospel, while we [objectivists] have, on the other hand, almost done the same from another standpoint. We have not held up

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<sup>32</sup> “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.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 35; see also *Review and Herald*, June 4, 1895.

before the people the righteousness of Christ and the full significance of His great plan of redemption. We have left out Christ and His matchless love, brought in theories and reasonings, and preached argumentative discourses”—(FW:15, 16).

EGW summarized the basic message that she, A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner were emphasizing:

“The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Jones and Waggoner. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited, the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure” (TM:91, 92, emphasis supplied). Note again the implicit use of the ellipse.

During the 1890 ministerial institutes in Battle Creek, a little more than a year after Minneapolis, the battles were still raging (in fact, for many, the issues were never settled—they just went underground), EGW wrote Manuscript 36, 1890, a portion of which said: “Let this point be fully settled in every mind: If we accept Christ as a Redeemer, we must accept Him as a Ruler. We cannot have the assurance and perfect confiding trust in Christ as our Saviour until we acknowledge Him as our King, and are obedient to His commandments. Thus we evidence our allegiance to God. We have the genuine ring in our faith, for it is a working faith. It works by love” (FW:16). Note the implicit ellipse.

EGW transcended the fears on both sides by making it clear that the everlasting gospel is the joining of law and grace, of pardon and power, of forgiveness and cleansing. Instead of the either/or antithesis that has plagued all philosophy and theology from time immemorial, she introduced the holy “and.” She could not have done this so seamlessly if she did not have the big picture of the GCT. In other words, if she did not understand the fullness of the gospel and the purpose of the salvation plan, she would have been a hopeless observer in 1888. And the Conflict of the Ages set could never have been written as it was.

**The GCT embraces a cluster of inter-related doctrines that too often are considered separately, as one would view pearls on a necklace, rather than limbs integrated into a developing oak tree. Another case study—*Eschatology***

No other church looks at the Second Advent as the SDA Church does. How come? The distinctly Adventist view is formed by a “mutually supportive cluster”<sup>33</sup> of ideas, including conditional immortality, a premillennial historicist eschatology, health message, gift of prophecy, latter rain and loud cry symbolism, world-wide focus on seventh-day Sabbath, closing of Christ’s work as Mediator, etc.

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<sup>33</sup> A borrowed phrase, delightful in its succinctness. I think I first heard it from Russell Staples.

This “cluster” of biblical concepts exists today because of the writings of EGW. But they exist only as unconnected beliefs (with some rarely defined in contemporary SDA thought) if they are not all seen as connected, integrated, inherent, and subsumed in the GCT.

Every last-day concept forming this distinctive “cluster” of doctrines unfolds out of the GCT. When the purpose of the gospel and the plan of salvation is kept clear and up front, each concept in the “cluster” is seen as inherently connected with each other concept.

For example: The gospel purpose is restoration (Ed:125), preparing a people to meet the Lord and to be safe to save. Thus sanctification is a significant component of this last-day “cluster:”

*The concept of character transformation* interacts with the Adventist health emphasis—not merely to live ten years longer but to prepare the mind to detect right from wrong quickly and as a habit, so that truth can settle in (so deeply imbedded in neural pathways) that it will never again be moved to say No to God.

*The concept of character transformation* interacts with such concepts as “latter rain” and “loud cry”—that God waits until He has people He can trust with His power, people that won’t embarrass Him with power without His character.

*The concept of character transformation* interacts with the world-wide gospel proclamation (Matthew 24:14); Those described in Revelation 14:12 will be living witnesses to the power of the “everlasting gospel” that has been too long limited in its definition (that is, by those who skew the ellipse of salvation by making faith into either mental assent or emotional experience).

This dynamic cluster of concepts needs the integration of them all—or each becomes independently sterile. The emphasis heard a century ago becomes a logical challenge: the SDA message is primarily concerned with preparing people to be translated, as well as preparing them to die.

EGW is most explicit, on many occasions, in unfolding the purpose of the gospel within her eschatological grasp of the end-times. Here is one example:

“When He comes, He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time. . . . Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification and honor, will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. But those who are unjust, unsanctified, and filthy, will remain so forever. No work will then be done for them to remove their defects and give them holy characters. The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is *now* [sic] that this work is to be accomplished for us.

“We embrace the truth of God with our different organizations, and as we come under the influence of that truth, it will accomplish the work for us which is necessary to give us a

moral fitness for the kingdom of glory, and for the society of the heavenly angels. We are now in God's work-shop. Many of us are rough stones from the quarry. But as we lay hold upon the truth of God, its influence affects us. It elevates us, and removes from us imperfection and sin, of whatever nature. Thus we are prepared to see the King in His beauty. . . . And what is the work that we are to undertake here just previous to receiving immortality? It is to preserve our bodies holy, our spirits pure, that we may stand forth unstained amid the corruptions teeming around us in these last days. And if this work is accomplished, we need to engage in it at once, heartily and understandingly" (2T:355, 356; see also 505, 705; LDE:295).

This principle of the gospel reflected in last-day Christians is pervasive throughout EGW's writings. For instance: "Character can not be changed when Jesus comes, nor just as a man is about to die. Character building must be done in this life" (TM:430).

**Wherever one goes in the writings of EGW, the GCT is there—organizing, integrating, and specifying the truth amidst the accretions of errors piled up through the centuries**

What one believes about Righteousness by Faith, or the Atonement, or Christology, or Eschatology, all affect what one believes regarding the other concepts. Everything in truth is interconnected and flows out of one basic principle of the GCT: restoration of sinners into people safe to save.

The GCT not only saves us from the errors of the centuries, it provides the church and the world with a message that makes sense to those seeking mental certainty and emotional certitude. The GCT is not a notion that anyone thought up; it is old truth that became "present truth" entrusted by God to a humble, obedient woman, His messenger for these end-times.