

THE CSDA *Signet*

“And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO YAH” (Exodus 28:36)

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The Misuse of Prophecy

The Scriptures are filled with prophecies; prophecy is, in fact, one of the strongest evidences for the inspired nature of the Bible. When we view (for example) the predictions made by the prophet Daniel regarding the progression of Empires from Babylon through Rome, there should be little doubt that there was divine foreknowledge involved.

On the other hand, few of the predications made in Scripture contain explicit references to the exact time of their fulfillment. Isaiah spoke of a prophecy being fulfilled before the weaning of a child. (Isa 7:16) Jeremiah spoke of seventy years of Israelite captivity in Babylon. (Jer 25:11) Daniel recorded the exact year of the coming of the Messiah and the final stages of the atonement process. (Dan 8:14, 9:24) Beyond these, however, little is said of the timing of prophetic fulfillment.

The Children of Yahweh are given signs for which to watch, so that we will not be surprised by the events that take place around us. We are told, “Surely Adonai Yahweh will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7) And again, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day [of judgment] come upon you unawares.” (Luke 21:33-35)

It is apparent from the prophecies available to us that the precise date of prophetic fulfillment is far less important than the circumstances surrounding it. Of that most important prediction, the return of the Messiah at the end of the age, we are instructed, “Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so

doing [*i.e.*, being faithful]. Of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, ‘My lord delayeth his coming,’ and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” (Luke 12:43-46)

Due to the conditional nature of practically every Biblical prophecy, a topic covered extensively in our previous publications, the fulfillment of Yahweh’s promises may be delayed, (Jonah 3:4) or the intended recipients may be replaced if the originals prove chronically unworthy. (Mat 21:43) What this means is that, when it comes to interpreting the Bible’s statements about future events, we must learn to read for principle as much as for specifics. If the Scriptures warn about a flood and we, through carelessness and presumption, are careless with matches, can we honestly complain that we were unwarned of disaster if our property is consumed by fire instead of water? Are we any less ruined? The great failure of the Jewish nation was that, upon accepting the promises that Israel would not be rejected, they used that confidence as the very justification for the activities that led to their rejection.

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They did not meet the conditions – at times implied and at times openly stated – that would attend their continued spiritual prosperity.

Yahshua said, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (Matthew 4:7) Humanity is promised salvation through the life, sacrifice and subsequent ministry of the Messiah, yet Seventh-day Adventists do not believe (and rightly so) that all men will be saved; nor do we believe in the once-saved-always-saved position of some Evangelical groups. We are told of the saints by Christ in no uncertain terms: “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:29) This is an absolute truth, yet freedom is not eclipsed by salvation; there may not be a power in Heaven or on earth that can tear us out of the Father’s hand, but what force is there that prevents us from choosing to jump off? Satan’s force is employed to keep us from that hand, not to retain us there; Yahweh will not use force to secure love and loyalty... mankind is always left free to choose. This is the nature of genuine love.

Based on these factors we have been discussing, it may be therefore said that there are two errors into which one may fall when examining Bible prophecies. The first is time-setting, and the second (a related error) is the idea of holding specifics over principles.

1) Time-setting is an obvious danger. Adventists, who have the benefit of Ellen White’s writings, have long been warned of this process. She wrote, “We are not of that class who define the exact period of time that shall elapse before the coming of Jesus the second time with power and great glory. Some have set a time, and when that has passed, their presumptuous spirits have not accepted rebuke, but they have set another and another time. But many successive failures have stamped them as false prophets.” [*Last Day Events*, page 34] “Again and again have I been warned in regard to time-setting. There will *never again* be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.” [*Review and Herald*, March 22, 1892, emphasis added]

Additionally, she writes, “The more frequently a definite time is set for the second advent, and the more widely it is taught, the better it suits the purposes of Satan. After the time has passed, he excites ridicule and contempt of its advocates, and thus casts reproach upon the great Advent movement of 1843 and 1844. Those who persist in this error will at last fix upon a date too far in the future for the coming of Christ. Thus they will be led to rest in a false security, and many will not be undeceived until it is too late.” [*The Great Controversy* (1888), page 456]

These are warnings that have been persistently ignored by certain figures in Adventist circles, particularly in the independent ministries. Some have attempted to set a definite year for the Second Advent based on the feasts, based on the Jubilee year, based on any other number of factors, and they have been consistently proven wrong by the course of history, weakening their

own effectiveness and the credibility of the Three Angels’ Message. While it is certainly true that we can know various things about the time of the return of Christ – for example, from the agricultural symbolism involved, and the fact that Christ’s sacrifice took place on a literal Passover, it is *reasonable* to conclude that His return for the “harvest” of earth will take place at the end of the literal Feast of Tabernacles – we are never instructed regarding the year.

This first error, therefore, harms the cause of the saints in two ways. First, by ignoring inspired cautions and setting repeated predictions too early, the force of the message is largely lost. Second, and far more importantly, by setting the date too far in the future, the urgency of the testimony is destroyed, and men will not be prepared for the events when they *do* occur, particularly if they take place in an unexpected manner (this is dealt with in more detail below).

Time-setting of the prophecies may be compared to setting one’s alarm clock earlier than one truly wishes to awaken. “I will be roused gradually,” the individual says, “and I can use my snooze button to get a few more minutes of rest each time.” The problem with using a snooze button to get ten minute cycles is that in the case of prophecy we do not know when we are truly to awaken. Yahshua arrives, sooner than the sleeper thinks, and he is unconscious during one of his “ten minute” sessions. Knowing the signs that will arise when the return of Yahshua is near is not an excuse to lapse into Laodicean comfort until those expected signs appear.

2) The second danger is in expecting the prophecies to be fulfilled precisely as they are described, *even if the conditions that were to bring them about are not fulfilled*. This last phrase, emphasized, is most important. This idea is not at all to suggest that the prophecies of the Bible are anything less than reliable, but to point out that Yahweh is as free as any created being, and can (and has) altered the fulfillments of His promises to reflect the current spiritual state of His people. If any would doubt this, the question may be asked, “What percentage of the prophecies that were both given and fulfilled in the Scriptures were properly anticipated by God’s people?”

Were the Hebrews expecting the Babylonian exile? Were the Pharisees and Sadducees expecting Christ as He then appeared? Will the majority of Christendom be prepared for the Second Advent?

The message of the Bible is indeed simple, but this does not mean it yields its treasures without earnest study and prayer. Paul instructs Timothy, “Study [Gk: *spoudazo* – make haste, exert yourself, work hard] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2Tim 2:15) If people rely upon the messages of the past, without an eye to the current signs of the times, then they will be taken unawares. They will say, “We were promised it would take place in *this* manner,” but they will have just as little excuse as the Jewish Nation. Yes, the prophecies declared that the Messiah would come in kingly

glory, but had they been reading for principle rather than letter, they would have seen that “kingly glory” does not stand in opposition to His lowly, servant-like status. The Kingdom of Yahshua is not based upon any force of arms, as the nation had been anticipating, but authority of a different, and infinitely greater, kind.

An example of this with which Creation Seventh Day Adventists are often and intimately acquainted is the offhanded way in which our warnings about church-related lawsuits are dismissed. Warning after warning is given in the Bible, in the writings of Ellen White, in the writings of our Adventist pioneers, and finally by the messengers of this generation.

While so many are expecting (because of the letter of past testimonies) a National Sunday Law to fulfill the union of Church and state that will produce an unjust liberty-restricting law, they fail to see just such a union, and just such a law, before them even now. The time has been set so far in the future that it has indeed come to pass as we were fore-warned; Adventism by-and-large has been “led to rest in a false security, and many will not be undeceived until it is too late.”

“The Trademark law cannot be a mark of the beast,” we are told, “because Ellen White never saw any such thing.” This is a false security. The Hebrews had both the regal description of Christ *and* statements such as “thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” (Zech 9:9b) Had they taken both these things into account, they would have been better prepared for the day of their visitation. Likewise, Adventists have strong statements regarding a National Sunday Law, but they also have statements such as: “Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered.” [*I Selected Messages*, p. 57] Of the Sunday Law it was also said, “the enforcement of Sundaykeeping in the United States would be *an* enforcement of the worship of the beast and his image.” [*The Great Controversy* (1911), page 448, emphasis added]

Far from the texts indicating that a National Sunday Law is the only possible way in which the Mark of the Beast may be enforced upon the saints, we have instead a number of principles, and an example that would be “an enforcement” should it come to pass. Let us follow the counsel so that “time and place must be considered” and understand something very important: the reasons why the Trademark is not seen as an enforcement of the worship of the beast and his image may be listed in three particulars:

- a) The Seventh-day Adventist constituency, rightly understanding that the Mark of the Beast can only come about due to *apostate* Protestantism, is ignorant of its own apostasy, relying upon such testimonies as would indicate that the “ship will go through.”
- b) The Trademark law is seen as “unimportant” compared to a national law outlawing proper Sabbath observance.

- c) The conditional nature of prophecy is misunderstood, or improperly applied to the current signs of the times.

The first of these (a) is relatively easy to show if the one to whom the testimony is given makes an effort to be objective, and does not deny the facts. The word “apostate” means believing things that were once rejected, and rejecting things that were once believed. The Seventh-day Adventist church is certainly guilty of both these aspects of apostasy. The view of the Godhead has changed, the health message has largely fallen by the wayside, and (with direct relevance) the absolute abhorrence that Adventists once held toward civil lawsuits – *particularly* when it comes to protecting religious interests – has been turned right on its head. Righteousness by faith is no longer taught; and whereas it was once said that not one is to be baptized as an SDA unless he or she had “ceased to sin,” today anyone who halfway accepts the 7th day Sabbath and makes a declaration of loyalty is funneled into the congregation. Yahweh is not interested in numbers, in quantity, but in the quality of converts – the salvation of Noah’s family, compared to the multitudes who stood resolutely outside of the ark, is eloquent testimony to this fact.

The second of these (b) is also easy to counter. How many individuals knew of the crucifixion of Christ the day after it happened? A few hundred might be the most one can legitimately suggest. Yet this “small” event altered humanity’s course and destiny forever after. It is not the number of people who know about a thing that determines its importance, but the effect it has on spiritual events. The Trademark Lawsuits represent an unholy union of church and state, the use of civil government to enforce the *fiat* of an ecclesiastical institution, regardless of the efforts those involved have made to clothe this abomination in mercantile terms. Suits of this type, which force a judge operating in a secular arena to determine who a “Seventh-day Adventist” is, and to decide whether or not to restrict the very testimony these individuals are “allowed” to give under human law, is the very essence of the Beast’s image foretold in *The Great Controversy* and other Adventist books.

Were we not warned? “Our Lord teaches that matters of difficulty between Christians [NB: Not “Seventh-day Adventists,” but “Christians”] are to be settled within the church. They should not be opened before those who do not fear God.” [*Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 248] More significantly, “Whenever the church has obtained secular power, she has employed it to punish dissent from her doctrines. Protestant churches that have followed in the steps of Rome by forming alliance with worldly powers have manifested a similar desire to restrict liberty of conscience.” [*Great Controversy*, p. GC 443] Relevant to (a) above, we read, “It was *apostasy* that led the early church to seek the aid of the civil government, and this prepared the way for the development of the papacy--the beast.” [*Great Controversy*, p. 443, emphasis added] If any would protest, “The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not apostate,” we need only ask, “Has it not sought the aid of civil power?” If any would protest, “The Trademark Law is not important enough to be a fulfillment of the Mark of the Beast,”

we need only ask, “Can such a union of Church and state exist among God’s professed people without having impact on the *global* message these people were once commissioned to bear?” It may seem small to worldly minds, but precedent often begins with small acts, and then (in Satan’s careful and crafty hand) spreads like wildfire once his aim is accomplished.

The last of these (c) can be cured by education – but this, of course, requires a willing student. The love of many is indeed growing cold, and sympathy for the plight of those who are facing the unjust law is hardly to be found. As is always the case, those who would and should be brothers to the afflicted say only, “They bring this on themselves.” They are blamed for the woeful condition of the mainstream body, which was “forced” to degrading alternatives (*i.e.*, the courts of the land) to right a perceived problem, to “beat the menservants and maidens,” (Luke 12) when faith in the Creator ought to have been the only legitimate shield and the Bible the only sanctioned weapon.

The Scriptures speak plainly, and the writings of Ellen White, if seen in light of modern developments, spell out precisely the situation in which the last-day saints now find themselves. The prophecies have been fulfilled; a once-faithful church has sought the aid of civil power to protect itself and enforce its decrees. From this union was born a law that forces men to choose between loyalty to God, and submission to the decrees of men. This is indeed a “Sabbath” issue, for the Sabbath is more than just a day – it is a state of peace, and a peace of mind that is wrapped up in the “rest” Yahweh undertook after the “works” were all finished. (Heb 4:4-10) Underlying it all is the spirit of force, the “last resort of *every false religion*,” [*The Signs of the Times*, May 6, 1897, emphasis added] which Protestant Christians are honor-bound to protest.

The principles involved in the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church’s protest of the mainstream body’s Trademark Lawsuit involves far more than just the name “Seventh-day Adventist,” although it is (as stated in the Spirit of Prophecy writings) the only appropriate name the last-day saints can bear. The heart of the matter is religious freedom, and being aware of the signs of the times. Unfortunately, this is an aspect of the conflict that very few can see, due to the influence of those two great errors regarding the use of prophecy:

- Setting the clock incorrectly – The time is at hand, the oppressive law is before us, yet many await a law to come in the future, setting the date too far in the future.
- Failing to apply the principles revealed by the servants of the Most High – If the characteristics of the Sunday Law are compared with the characteristics of the Trademark Law, they are shown to be *identical* in every relevant respect: origin, (arising from a church/state union) purpose (to protect or advance the cause of that church through the use of civil force) and target (conscientious Protestant Christians who are seeking to follow the commandments of God while bearing the faith of Jesus).

It is the prayer of the CSDA Church that Adventist believers will awaken to the true impact of Ellen White’s oft-stated warnings regarding the misuse of prophecy, for the last message of mercy, like all messages from Heaven, is nothing really new. The Mark of the Beast has existed upon earth since Cain slew Abel; (Gen 4:15) and, like Satan himself, it has hidden behind many guises, bringing a test to every generation in human history. Will we wait for the once-expected specifics, as the Hebrew nation continues to await its expected Messiah? We are called instead to rise up *now*, and say, with the authority of Heaven Itself: *I protest; any work of this character comes only from Satan and the spirit of force. My name is registered in Heaven as one who opposes the use of the Lamb-like Beast to defend the interests of the Kingdom of Heaven, and I will stand against this abomination regardless of the consequences.*

May Yahweh bless those who have eyes to see the spiritual crisis, and the heart to act in accord with the directive given to the saints. - David P. Aguilar

“We are not to cringe and beg pardon of the world for telling them the truth: we should scorn concealment. Unfurl your colors to meet the cause of men and angels. Let it be understood that Seventh-day Adventists can make no compromise. In your opinions and faith there must not be the least appearance of waverings: the world has a right to know what to expect of us.”

Ellen G. White

DOES DESTROY?

Dear Ms. S,

I've taken some time to go over the chapters in the book that you sent me, "Behold your God" by Fred Wright, that seemed to be the most relevant to what we discussed on the phone; namely, the question of "Does God destroy / kill". If I've missed any points that are either not addressed here, or I raise an argument that the book addresses elsewhere, please forgive me – time does not allow for me to read the *entire* book, but if you will kindly point me to the correct references, I will make time to update my response.

Much of what I have read centers around the Egyptian conflict; as a result, I'm going to address this topic in it's own section at the very end, and build up to it with the general theme of Scripture on the topics involved.

One of the foremost problems that I have with the argument that God does not kill as set forth in the book is that it does not operate from a Scriptural basis as a standard, but rather from appealing to "human decency" as the standard. For example, the mafia analogy that you used over the phone, and that appears in the book under the name of "crime syndicate". It is not said "God cannot destroy because Thus saith the Lord...", rather it is said "God cannot destroy because if He did, well, it would be like what the mafia does. And surely God wouldn't do something like the mafia!"

This line of reasoning is one I cannot follow, and for this reason: It is purely human logic, and it sets the human idea of "good" and "bad" above God. This is the primary driving force behind this book as far as I can tell... "We don't think God would do something that seems so non-pacifistic, so therefore, we must make the Bible fit to this idea".

This is a wrong way of interpreting the Bible, however. We must allow God to instruct us as to what is right and what is wrong, and conform ourselves to what It says; not decide for ourselves what right and wrong should be, and then try to make God fit our mold. Doing so only brings about the kind of idolatry Mrs. White wrote about; those who use the name "God" and "the Lord" and yet are worshipping a false god – that of opinion – as verily as the worshippers of Baal. God is the standard of righteousness for the Christian; the mafia is not the standard of evil for the Christian. We must set our sights on the right object if we are to see clearly.

Now, I am sure you agree with what I have said so far in theory. I don't believe you are consciously thinking that you know more about right and wrong than God – you believe that the Bible bears out what you are saying.

And that is what I hope to address in this letter. But, this needs to be something agreed on by both of us – Whatever the Bible says is what is true, regardless of whether it may conflict with our current thoughts or feelings or beliefs on the topic. God is constant; we are the ones who are subjective to His Word, and not vice versa.

That having been said, let's move on to what truly matters: Not philosophies of men, not theories as to what things should be like or shouldn't be like, but the Word of God. What is written about God, and specifically, do the answers given in the book "Behold your God" as to what happened in Egypt hold water under investigation?

Your view (I assume you are holding to the same view and reasons given in the book; correct me if I am mistaken) holds that there are times when God will accept the responsibility for things that happen as a consequence of His action. For example, He will say "I hardened Pharaoh's heart" when we read elsewhere that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, God merely was the catalyst for it and allowed it to take place. Likewise, it is written that "The LORD slew Saul" when in fact a human was the one to actually draw the bow and fire the arrow, leading to Saul running himself through.

So it is then a very true, Scripturally established fact that God will, at times, take the responsibility and even be spoken of as the doer of the action, because His all-encompassing will allowed it, or caused it, to take place.

The question then becomes, is this **always** the case?

Your position, as I understand it, requires it to be so. Anytime it says God destroys or kills, for example, it must mean that He allowed it and took no active part. Yet the problem is that because the Bible speaks this way in certain circumstances, does not necessarily mean it **always** speaks in this way. If we do not apply a solid principle to how we apply "figure of speech" status to different things, we will end up spiritualizing the whole bible (or parts we don't like, as some groups do), or else making our own judgment the standard of whether the Bible means what it says. This is very dangerous as I am sure you are aware.

So, the fact is that we cannot go around saying every time the Bible talks about water it means multitudes of people, or every beast spoken of is a government. Sometimes the Bible is not speaking in parables – sometimes it is just as it is written in plain language. I submit to you that the time when we need to look a little deeper into potential meanings is only when there is an apparent contradiction with another plainly established

and plainly written passage of Scripture. Beyond this, we are to take what God has said at face value.

Again I am sure you agree with me in principle – yet you think that the Bible considers destroying in any capacity (all killing, not just murder) to be a sin, and therefore unperformable by God. So here lies our first question: Is all killing a sin?

From reading Scripture, we must conclude decidedly that it is not killing in all ways that was condemned by the commandment, but simply murder. Here are a few examples...

“If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, [there shall] no blood [be shed] for him.” (Ex. 22:2)

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death. He that sacrificeth unto [any] god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.” (Exodus 22:18-20)

“And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD **commanded** Moses.” (Numbers 15:32-36)

In all of these, which are but a few of a well-known theme, we have God instructing the Israelites on how to keep Israel pure. It is through destroying the sinner from among them. This was not a matter of hardness of heart, take note: Most of these are a mere 2 chapters after the giving of the ten commandments on Sinai. If “Thou shalt not kill” does not mean “Thou shalt not murder”, then we are forced to believe that God told the Jews not to kill, and then immediately set to task on instructing them how to be good sinners. We cannot even say that it was Him “prophesying” what would happen because of the way the Jews were, because in the last example, we find that they in fact did not **know** what to do, until it is written that the LORD *commanded* what should be done to the man!

Let us look at a few more examples of what holy men, under the inspiration of God, have done with the endorsement of Scripture, and in some places, The LORD Himself:

“And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.” (1 Kings 18:40)

“And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw [it], he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel,

and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, [even] the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.” (Numbers 25:7-13)

“And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.” (1 Samuel 15:33)

Here further, we have men acting under the inspiration of the Almighty doing things that, under the definition you have set forth, would be sin. And this is not a mere argument from silence – Phinehas was directly commended by The LORD Himself for his actions, and was said to have made an atonement for Israel.

Again, these are but a very very small portion of the possible examples, but I do not wish to overburden you. If you would like a more full treatment of any given topic at any point, please let me know and I will supply you with it.

For now, suffice it to say that Scripture leaves no doubt upon this point – God often has instructed His people to destroy for the sake of the preservation of the still holy people, much like in the flood of Noah’s day. These men are not only directly told to do so at times, but are afterwards commended for their righteous deed. There is no hint in Scripture that all killing is a sin – only murder, or needless killing.

But we have yet to address whether God **personally** does any killing. Of course, at this point this is a mere formality – is a God who tells people to “do His dirty work” as you would call it, any less “mafia-like” than a God who does it Himself? Perhaps He is even more so. Yet for the sake of thoroughness, I would like to examine, again briefly, what is said of God killing in the Scriptures.

Who is the Angel of the LORD?

“And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.” (Genesis 16:10)

“And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here [am] I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest



God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only [son] from me.” (Genesis 22:11-12)

“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush [was] not consumed.” (Exodus 3:2)

From these few passages alone we can conclude very simply – The Angel of the LORD is either God Himself, or an angel acting and speaking in His place. Adventists understand this to be Michael the Archangel, or Christ before He came to earth. Even for those who do not accept the view of Michael being Christ, there can be no question: The Angel of the LORD is no fallen being!

We find then written:

“And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they [were] all dead corpses.” (2 Kings 19:35)

And again,

“Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because [thy] way is perverse before me: And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.” (Numbers 22:31-33)

Ellen White’s commentary gives even more light on this matter; there was a reason His sword was drawn, and it was not a matter of merely “allowing” Satan to kill Balaam!

“The eyes of Balaam were now opened, and he beheld the angel of God standing with drawn sword ready to slay him.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 142)

Further,

“And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.” (2 Samuel 24:16)

And in a parallel account:

“And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the



threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders [of Israel, who were] clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, [Is it] not I [that] commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but [as for] these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father’s house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued. Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD” (1 Chron. 21:15-19)

This last scripture alone should be sufficient to disprove the concept that God only allows destruction beyond any shadow of a doubt. Are we to believe that the Angel of the LORD was Satan Himself? That further, Satan informed David via Gad how to reconcile with God, and that this information was spake “In the name of the LORD”, not Satan?

Such would be ludicrous. In every instance (I did a search) that the words “Angel of the LORD” appear, it means, if not Christ Himself in the form of Michael, an angel representing, or in the service of the LORD. To hold to the position that God does not destroy in the face of this means to reinvent the terms of the Bible to mean that Satan at times is called “The angel of the LORD” for no apparent reason, just because the action committed is that of destruction – and that this same Satanic agency goes on to instruct sinners how to reconcile to God, say that the ways of unrighteousness are “perverse before him”, and so forth and so on.

The only verse or quote I have heard advanced, in place of human reasoning and emotion, for evidence that God does not destroy is the following quote from Mrs. White:

“This case is placed on record for our benefit. Just what took place in Pharaoh’s heart will take place in every soul that neglects to cherish the light and walk promptly in its rays. God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence. When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved.” (*5 Testimonies*, page 120)

“There it is!” the proponent will shout, “God destroys no one! That seals it! We must find out some other way to explain the Bible passages now!”

But wait, there is more. Let’s look at the next paragraph:

“We want all to understand how the soul is destroyed. It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved. He

does not throw a darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and, having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. Then comes the harvest to be reaped from the seed of unbelief and resistance. Oh what a harvest of sinful indulgences is preparing for the sickle!"

Mrs. White was not writing anything even **close** to a discussion of whether or not God actively destroys sinners at times – she was writing to say that the ultimate guilt and rejection of God is not something that God causes to happen; that God does not cause some souls to be lost. In this sense, and this sense alone, she states that “God destroys no one”. We cannot separate this one statement from its proper context, and then choose to rework the entire network of other statements in the Spirit of Prophecy and the Scriptures to make them fit this one statement. No; that is backwards, that is out of order. We must look at the context to see how this **one** statement fits into the grand scheme of all the others in the channel of truth. We cannot choose something that seems to strike our fancy and try to rewrite the Bible because of it.

Now that we have addressed Mrs. White’s usage of the words “God destroys no one”, let us take some further look at the examples I gave you earlier of angels destroying on God’s behalf. Do you doubt whether these were truly holy angels?

Here is the inspired commentary on the matter:

“God’s judgments were awakened against Jericho. It was a stronghold. But the Captain of the Lord’s host Himself came from heaven to lead the armies of heaven in an attack upon the city. Angels of God laid hold of the massive walls and brought them to the ground.” (*Testimonies 3*, page 264)

“Under God the angels are all-powerful. On one occasion, in obedience to the command of Christ, they slew of the Assyrian army in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand men.” (*Desire of Ages*, page 700)

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

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

That last quote makes very plain a question set forth by the book

you gave to me; and this is where I will enter into my mentioned discussion of Egypt in particular.

You have claimed that it was Satan who was “the Destroyer” in Egypt, and who slew the firstborns. Ellen White disagrees; and states very plainly that holy angels exercise destructive power when God commands.

These are but a small selection of the many quotes that show angels visiting destruction and judgment upon sinners when so commanded. If you are interested in more, please let me know – and I would always advise you to look up the context on every one of these to make sure they are not being used wrongly.

Now that we have examined the underlying basis in Scripture for these matters, the Egyptian conflict becomes a much shorter analysis than it would have been otherwise.

You set forth a parable in your book, which captured my attention for a moment. It reads as follows:

“As the brothers [Moses and Aaron] stood before the king, the rod was held firmly in Aaron’s hand and was under his personal control. While that rod remained thus, *it never became a serpent*. Only when it passed out of his hands and control did it change and that instantly so. As long as this situation remained, it continued to be a serpent, but the moment it returned to his hand it again became a rod.

With what simple and beautiful clarity, the Lord sought to communicate to Pharaoh the vital truth that *at no time whatsoever*, while the powers of nature are still in God’s hands and under His control, *can they be agents of destruction*. *Only when out of His hands and control can they be such*.” [Fred Wright, *Behold your God*, page 232, original emphasis]

There may or may not be some amount of truth to the relevance of this; yet the same book gives the following, very important quote regarding that incident from Mrs. White:

“The magicians did not really cause their rods to become serpents; but by magic, aided by the great deceiver, they were able to produce this appearance. It was beyond the power of Satan to change the rods to living serpents. The prince of evil, though possessing all the wisdom and might of an angel fallen, has not power to create, or to give life; this is the prerogative of God alone. But all that was in Satan’s power to do, he did; he produced a counterfeit. To human sight the rods were changed to serpents. Such they were believed to be by Pharaoh and his court. There was nothing in their appearance to distinguish them from the serpent produced by Moses. Though the Lord caused the real serpent to swallow up the spurious ones, yet even this was regarded by Pharaoh, not as a work of God’s power, but as the result of a kind of magic superior to that of his servants.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 264)

While the staff did only become a serpent outside of Aaron’s

control, the critical fact is left unemphasized: It was *still* God that changed it into a snake, and caused it to devour the other snakes.

We have no other options left available to us. The only alternative is to say that yes God made the snake and gave it life, but He only “caused” it to eat Satan’s snakes in that He allowed Satan to make that happen.

Truly? Is this what we are reduced to? Satan warring against Satan to make it fit? Satan causes God’s snake to devour his own snakes to make himself look weak? Does this glorify God, deception? And it can only be deception – For Satan is not weaker than Satan, and if we are to attribute the 10 plagues to Satan’s workings, we have to say that Satan chose to look weaker than himself to make God look good.

If you do not follow my logic there, we can examine it closer: The plagues were Satan acting outside of God’s restraint, yes?

According to the quote above, the magicians were working with the powers of Satan, and this is how they made the rods turn into snakes, yes?

Let us look at the plague of lice for an important truth:

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast. Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This [is] the finger of God: and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.” (Exodus 8:16-19)

What is this? A plague is brought forth by Satan, but Satan could not reproduce it?

Let us look again at Ellen White’s writings, to be sure we are not missing something:

““When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart.” At the command of God, Aaron stretched out his hand, and the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh called upon the magicians to do the same, but they could not. The work of God was thus shown to be superior to that of Satan. The magicians themselves acknowledged, “This is the finger of God.” But the king was still unmoved.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 266)

Is the hand of Satan the finger of God? Is the work of Satan the work of God? Does Satan destroying show the power of God? Certainly not!

In conclusion, I’m going to end close to where I began, and that

is the “crime syndicate” or “mafia” issue.

You told me that if God were to say “Obey me or I will destroy you” that would be a mafia-like fear tactic; but “Obey me or I will let you be destroyed” would not be. I still do not know what the difference is in these two. I still would like it explained to me if you are willing.

The matter as I see it is not one of the method used, either active or passive; for a man who drives by a rape is no less guilty than the man doing it himself. The matter is one of how God is perceived. If you see God visiting judgment upon people as a matter of threats and coercion, you greatly misunderstand His character, and the nature of **why** He destroys.

God does not destroy simply out of anger, or frustration, or spite. **This** would be, as your book sets forth, acting as fallen men act. God **does** destroy when it is necessary for the salvation of His faithful people, or for those who are yet to be saved. In other words, for the “greater good” those who oppose that good may at times be removed by God.

There is a reason the Scriptures call this “His strange act”; it is not **normally** in the character of God to destroy, or to **allow** destruction. Yet the curse of sin has put God in an interesting position – His alternatives are often very few.

Love is not the same as the feel-good affection, hug and kiss concept that the world and many professed Christians hold to. The love of God is a love that will rebuke with breath like fire if need be; it is a love that is interested in the good of the person, and not just their comfort.

It is written, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” (Rev. 3:19)

Again it is written,

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected [us], and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened [us] after their own pleasure; but he for [our] profit, that [we] might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Hebrews 12:6-11)

The Proverbs read:

“My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son [in whom] he lighteth.” (Proverbs 3:11-12)



The love of God is not such that it shields us from correction when it is needed; and likewise, the love of God is not such that it removes judgment from the character.

Just as Christ has both a priestly and kingly role, just as He was both sacrifice and priest, He is both savior and judge, redeemer and executioner. These are not contradictions in the perfect picture of Love; they are balances, and the character of God is replete with them. There is a misconception in viewing God as a harsh judge; there is error in believing God's punishment is a threat for those around, that they had best obey "Or else God will slay them". They had best obey because it is in their best interest, and this is the lesson for those who remain.

A parent spanking child (As the Bible commands: Pro. 23:13, 29:15) for playing in the street is not doing so with the intent to beat the child into submissive fear, or to terrify the other children into obedience; despite that the same argument used to say God must be a mafia-man for destroying could be applied. If you, as a parent, understand this distinction... You understand why it is that God, at times, will do "His strange act".

Raising a child does not consist of all speaking and no discipline – raising several children, even less. If punishing the rebellious and destructive acts of one child will teach the others to not harm themselves and others by doing likewise, would you spare the child? Would you allow that child and every other one in proximity to learn to fear your word only when it is too late for them to be saved, for them to do better?

If one of your children were about to murder every other one, would you not stop it?

If even "human decency" reveals the concept of a time of necessary judgment; of there coming a time, hateful though it may be, when a child must be disciplined, for both their sake and those around them... We cannot call God that does such a thing an inhuman monster, or anything other than a Father that cares for His children – **All** of them. For those who are destroyed for the preservation of the faithful, we sorrow, as does God Himself; yet we know that it was their choice in the end that caused it to happen. Forcing the hand and mocking the authority of the Almighty is never a safe course.

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Rom. 12:19)

In Christian love,
- Lucan "Luke" Chartier

"Talk unbelief, and you will have unbelief; but talk faith, and you will have faith. According to the seed sown will be the harvest."
- Ellen G. White

Q. Is it true that there is no historical record of feast keeping in the early Church after the close of the Canon?

A. Absolutely not. Consider the following testimony of Eusebius, an early Church historian:

"But the bishops of Asia, led by Polycrates, decided to hold to the old custom handed down to them. He himself, in a letter which he addressed to Victor and the church of Rome, set forth in the following words the tradition which had come down to him: "We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter, who lived in the Holy Spirit and now rests at Ephesus; and, moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord, and, being a priest, wore the sacerdotal plate. He fell asleep at Ephesus.

And Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from Eumenia, who fell asleep in Smyrna. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr Sagaris who fell asleep in Laodicea, or the blessed Papius, or Melito, the Eunuch who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and who lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead? All these observed the fourteenth day of the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven.

I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said "We ought to obey God rather than man." Acts 5:29

He then writes of all the bishops who were present with him and thought as he did. His words are as follows:

"I could mention the bishops who were present, whom I summoned at your desire; whose names, should I write them, would constitute a great multitude. And they, beholding my littleness, gave their consent to the letter, knowing that I did not bear my gray hairs in vain, but had always governed my life by the Lord Jesus." [Eusebius of Caesarea, *History of the Church*, Book 5 Chapter 24, 1-8]

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

(1 John 2:1, 3:9, 3:6, 2 Peter 2:18, 19, Jude 24,25, 1 Peter 4:1, John 1:12, 8:34-36, 1 Cor. 15:34, Romans 6:9-11, 16)

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