

Cosmic Impact of Calvary¹

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The *Conflict of the Ages* series by Ellen G. White begins and ends with the words “God is love.”² God’s love is an eternal self-existent, inner-history of reciprocal love, where the three Persons of the Godhead love each other. “‘God is love.’ 1 John 4:16. His nature, His law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be. . . . Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings.”³ The Godhead’s love overflowed into every created being, including Lucifer. All created beings were given freedom of choice. They reveled in a deepening love from the Godhead.

¹ This article is based on Scripture and insights from Ellen G. White. By contrast, the four volumes of my *Systematic Theology* are based on Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*); often referred to as (*sola-tota-prima scriptura*). While on earth, Christ “points to the Scriptures, saying, ‘They are they which testify of Me.’ And ‘beginning at Moses and all the prophets,’ He opened to His disciples ‘all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.’ John 5:39; Luke 24:27. . . . He pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, 39). Ellen G. White stated, “God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms” (*The Great Controversy*, 595). The apostle Peter stated, “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). So, my *Systematic Theology* is for all Christians, and others, because *sola scriptura* is their source. Ellen G. White’s inspired writings point readers to the Bible, and also agree with Scripture, presenting light to comprehend it’s understanding (see *Systematic Theology: The Church and the Last Things* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016), Vol. 4, chapter 15, 451-484. In this article the New King James Version (NKJV, 1982) is used throughout.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33 and *The Great Controversy*, 678.

³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33.

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This joyful experience imaged the reciprocal love in the Godhead: love to God and love for each other.

God's love knows no partiality (Mal. 2:9; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Col. 3:25; James 2:9; cf. Prov. 28:21). David said, "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." (Ps. 145:8-9). At Calvary, Christ became the substitutionary sacrifice for all mankind (John 3:16-17), "a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6a), dying for the sins of . . . "the whole world" (1 John 2:1b-2).

Unchanging Love of the Godhead

Blessings flooded Lucifer from Christ his creator, until one day this angel decided to no longer love anyone; except himself. More than that, he began to hate Christ, worked to replace Him, take control, yet cunningly pose as loyal. "The great apostasy originally began in a denial of the love of God, as it is plainly revealed in the Word."⁴ Lucifer used deception and doubt to promote his campaign for change. Pride had fully replaced love. In utter contrast, the Godhead would reveal their selfless love for all created beings. "The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, is also a demonstration of God's unchanging love."⁵ Angels and humans did change, and open rebellion, never before known, invaded the atmosphere of divine love.

But the Godhead remained unchanged in mutual love that reaches out to love every created person. "The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race [humans], and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave Themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption. In order fully, to carry out this plan, it was decided that Christ, the only-begotten Son and God, should give Himself an offering for sin. What line can measure the depth of this love? God would make it impossible for man to say that He could have done more. . . Here is love—the contemplation of which should

⁴ Ellen G. White, Letter 172, 1907, *Manuscript Releases*, 7, 195.

⁵ *Ibid*, 2.

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fill the soul with inexpressible gratitude! Oh, what love, what matchless love!”⁶

This “matchless love” involves the *omniscience of the Godhead*: (1) They fully know the future, that sin would arise and be conquered; and (2) the “humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour [Gethsemane]”⁷ and “Never was criminal treated in so inhuman a manner as was the Son of God”⁸ in His trials and on the cross. This second perspective of the cosmic controversy gives insight into the *agony of Christ’s human life*.

The Universe Watched the Agony of Christ’s Human Life

Isaiah prophesied of Christ: “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:4-6; cf. Rom. 3:23-24).

Entering Gethsemane Christ “seemed to be shut out from the light of God’s sustaining presence. Now He was numbered with the transgressors. The guilt of fallen humanity He must bear. Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us all. So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father’s love.”⁹ “Christ’s soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan’s kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God.”¹⁰

In utter agony, Christ pled three times “Oh My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will”

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Councils on Health*, 222-223 (parenthesis added). The plan of the Trinity “I call the Covenant of Redemption and Restoration” which is rooted or grounded in their “eternal reciprocal love.” Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Creation, Christ, Salvation* (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), Vol. 3, 572.

⁷ *The Desire of Ages*, 690.

⁸ *The Desire of Ages*, 710.

⁹ *The Desire of Ages*, 685.

¹⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, 687.

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(Matt. 26:39). Christ made His decision. “He will save man at any cost to Himself. . . . God suffered with His Son. Angels beheld the Saviour’s agony. They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighed down with a shuddering, mysterious dread. There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin. The worlds unfallen and the heavenly angels had watched with intense interest as the conflict drew to its close.”¹¹

“Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him” (Luke 22:43). In overflowing love for His beloved Son, the Father sent the greatest angel Gabriel to Christ “with the assurance of the Father’s love. He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant. He pointed Him to the open heavens, telling Him of the souls that would be saved as the result of His sufferings. . . . He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved. Christ’s agony did not cease, but His depression and discouragement left Him.”¹² Compare this visit of Gabriel to Christ in Gethsemane with Ellen White’s 1858 vision on the Great Controversy. “The news of man’s fall spread through heaven. Every harp was hushed. The angels cast their crowns from their heads in sorrow.”¹³

Then the universe focused on Christ’s trials and crucifixion. “All heaven suffered in Christ’s agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God.”¹⁴ Calvary wrenched the Godhead. No one loved so deeply as the three Persons in the Godhead. From eternity the love of the Godhead for each other cannot be compared to the love of created persons, whose love had a beginning. All three Persons of the Godhead suffered at Calvary way beyond the suffering of anyone else.

On the cross Christ bore the totality of all human sin, which crushed out His life in a few hours. He died to save all humans, knowing most

¹¹ *The Desire of Ages*, 693.

¹² *The Desire of Ages*, 693-694.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: The Great Controversy, Between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels* (Steam Press, Battle Creek, MI: 1858), Vols. 1-2, 21.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 263.

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would reject Him. But that's not all—sin separates (Isa. 59:2). The sins of humanity born by Christ separated Him from the other two Persons in the Godhead. God sent Gabriel to assure Christ that the Father loved Him, but “Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Savior could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. . . . With amazement angels witnessed the Saviour's despairing agony. The hosts of heaven veiled their faces from the fearful sight.”¹⁵

Cosmic Impact of Calvary

Many consider Calvary as Christ dying for us so that we can go to heaven. It is that. But there's more. The more has to do with the larger cosmic worldview of Scripture. The book of Colossians documents that Christ created all things “in heaven and that are on earth” (Col. 1:16), and that “in him all things consist” (verse 17). “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (verses 19, 20). Therefore, Christ said about His death, “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31). “The ruler of this world [Satan] is judged” (John 16:11).

Christ “created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space.”¹⁶ In what way could Calvary reconcile people throughout the universe? Given that Satan caused the death of Christ, this exposed him for what he really is—a devil. By utter contrast, because Christ allowed Himself to be crucified, the universe saw Him for who He really is—a God of love (see 1 John 4:8, 16). Calvary influenced the unfallen angels who remained in heaven and did not join in the rebellion. They perceived a deeper revelation of God's love on the cross as they witnessed Him who knew no sin becoming sin for the human race (see 2 Cor. 5:14-21).

The book of Acts documents the rapid spread of the good news of God's love geographically on a horizontal plane. The book of Ephesians

¹⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, 753.

¹⁶ *The Great Controversy*, 651.

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speaks of the impact of the church on the vertical plane. The church became a witness to the universe of the kind of God all unfallen beings serve. God's "intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10, 11).

Calvary, and what it did to the church, impacts the universe. Calvary stands revealed as far more than the price for human salvation, and the church as far more than the company of the saved. Calvary and church have a far wider impact. What took place at the cross influences the whole universe. Paul said, "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men" (1 Cor. 4:9).

Paul added: "In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. . . . that . . . He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him" (Eph. 1:7-10). Consider the following commentary on Ephesians 1:10:

"All things" (*ta panta*) is literally "the all" (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3) and includes the whole creation. Everything in heaven and on earth will be subsumed under Christ (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Phil. 2:10, 11). The verb *anakephalaioo* ("to bring together") means to sum up together again (Rom. 13:9). It is derived not from *kephale* ("a head") but from *kephalaion* ("a summary, or sum total"). When a column of figures was added up, the total was placed at the top. At the end of the age everything will be seen to add up to Christ. This recognition of his preeminence will ensure that the original harmony of the universe is restored (Rom. 8:18-21). The mission of Christ extends beyond the human race and assumes cosmic dimensions."¹⁷

Consider also the commentary on Colossians 1:20: "We should therefore understand this statement to be a reference to the cosmic

¹⁷ A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians, The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1978), Vol. 11, 26.

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significance of Christ's work."¹⁸ Clearly, Calvary was for more than this world—it was also for the cosmos. In agreement with these Scriptures and commentaries, Ellen White said: "Our little world is the lesson book of the universe."¹⁹ In the first volume of *JATS*²⁰ there is a segment "The Adventist Atonement View—A Broader Perspective" (80-83). With respect to Calvary, it includes two quotes from Ellen G. White (see 75): "Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds"²¹ "By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he [Satan] had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings."²²

"The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. . . The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb."²³

The Spring 1992 issue of *JATS* presents twelve major components of the larger view of Calvary. Of these twelve, number 7 notes: "*The larger view is cosmic in scope, contributing to the understanding of unfallen beings as well as to man. Whereas man unlike angels, needs redemption, man also with unfallen beings needs revelation. To both classes Calvary is God's response to Satan's questioning of His Word. . . Therefore the larger view of Calvary must be true to all God's Word to properly defend Him.*"²⁴ The Biblical worldview of Scripture presents the cosmic controversy

¹⁸ Curtis Vaughn, *Colossians, The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11, 186.

¹⁹ *The Desire of Ages*, 19.

²⁰ Norman R. Gulley, "Toward Understanding the Atonement," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 1, Number 1; Spring 1990, 57-89. See also "My proposal—The Substitutionary and Cosmic Atonement View" in *Systematic Theology: Creation, Christ, Salvation* (AUP, 2012), Vol. 3, 650-652.

²¹ *The Desire of Ages*, 758.

²² *Ibid*, 761, Satan added within brackets.

²³ Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889.

²⁴ Norman R. Gulley, *JATS*, Vol. 3/1 (1992), 74: See *The Desire of Ages*, 19-20 and footnote 60 in *JATS* 3/1 (1992). Note "The Great Controversy Trust-Healing Model" (GCTHM), 66.

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metanarrative which includes “a meeting of different leaders from the inhabited planets throughout the universe” and to it came Satan representing planet-earth. Scripture records two such gatherings in which Job was discussed (Job. 1:6-12; 2:1-6).²⁵

The leaders from every planet, throughout the vast universe, are called “the sons of God” (Job. 1:6); whereas the leader of the fallen planet-earth is called “Satan” (Job. 1:7) meaning “adversary.” These meetings of leaders were held outside of heaven; because Satan and his rebel angels were cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:7-9). “The whole universe must see the deceiver unmasked.”²⁶ These meetings were held to allow the Godhead to reveal the truth about Themselves, and allow Satan to expose the truth about himself. This demonstrated the freedom God gave created beings to decide about the controversy, based on evidence. This is contrary to predestination, which wrongly questions God’s love.²⁷

Final Demonstration

Satan claimed he was not in rebellion against God. Rather, his plan was to establish a better government than God’s. He pretended to be loyal, while working to replace God. “It was therefore necessary to demonstrate before the inhabitants of heaven, and of all the worlds, that God’s

²⁵ “*The Cosmic Significance of the Cross*” is a sub-heading in “The Great Controversy” #8 doctrine in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 6840 Easter Avenue NW: Washington, DC 20012, 1988), p. 105, col. 2. Norman R. Gulley, “The Larger Biblical Worldview” in *Christ is Coming! A Christ-centered Approach to Last Day Events!* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1998), 40-46; Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium” *JATS*, Vol. 11 (2000): 102-119; Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), Vol.1, “The Cosmic Controversy Metanarrative” with “Job and the Cosmic Controversy,” 430-443; quote from 431 about the meeting of leaders from all worlds; Jiri Moskala, “The God of Job and Our Adversary” *JATS*, Vol. 15/1 (Spring 2004): 104-117; compare, Norman R. Gulley and Lael Caesar, “Engaged in a Cosmic Crisis,” *Adventist Review*, August 8, 2018, 28-32; also Norman R. Gulley, “Love at War: The Cosmic Controversy” in *Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology*, edited by Martin F. Hanna, Darius W. Jankiewicz, John W. Reeve (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 19-32.

²⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 42.

²⁷ See this debate in my *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), Vol. 2, 465-627.

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government is just, His law perfect.”²⁸ Christ promised “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself” (John 12:32). All peoples of the universe will live at the same time towards the end of the millennium (Rev. 20). At that time all unfallen created beings, and all the redeemed, and all resurrected human rebels, and Satan and all fallen angels—will be present to watch a replay of Calvary.²⁹

Towards the end of the millennium, Satan claims that he resurrected all the wicked. He consults with great generals of history, and they organized a massive army. Satan states that their army will gain an easy win, because their numbers are far greater than those in the New Jerusalem. They surround the city.³⁰ Suddenly their attention is riveted above the city. The coronation of Christ as King of kings takes place. As Christ looks upon the wicked “they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. . . . Above the throne is revealed the cross. . . . And now before the swaying multitude are revealed the final scenes—the patient Sufferer treading the path to Calvary; the Prince of heaven hanging upon the cross; the haughty priests and the jeering rabble deriding His expiring agony. . . . The awful spectacle appears just as it was. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. . . . All see that their exclusion from heaven is just. By their lives they have declared: ‘We will not have this Man [Jesus] to reign over us.’ As if entranced, the wicked have looked upon the coronation of the Son of God. They see in His hands the tables of the divine law, the statutes which they have despised and transgressed. They witness the outburst of wonder, rapture, and adoration from the saved; and as the wave of melody sweeps over the multitudes without the city, all with one voice exclaim, ‘Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints’ (Revelation 15:3); and, falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of Life.”³¹

“With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare: ‘Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints’ Then in a voice that reaches the assembled

²⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 42.

²⁹ *The Great Controversy*, 666-673.

³⁰ *The Great Controversy*, 662-665.

³¹ *Ibid*, 666-669.

multitudes of the righteous and the wicked, He [Christ] declares: ‘Behold the purchase of My blood! For these I suffered, for these I died, that they might dwell in My presence throughout eternal ages.’³² All created beings respond to the crucified Creator! They agree Christ died for all. Every person had the same choice: accept or reject the greatest gift that has ever been offered.

In spite of accepting Christ’s supremacy, Satan’s “character remains unchanged. The spirit of rebellion, like a mighty torrent, again bursts forth. Filled with frenzy, he determines not to yield the great controversy.”³³ But Satan’s “power is at an end. . . [all the wicked people’s] rage is kindled against Satan”³⁴ “In his last great effort to dethrone Christ, destroy His people, and take possession of the City of God, the archdeceiver has been fully unmasked. . . He is the object of universal abhorrence. Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven.”³⁵

Calvary Assures Cosmic Peace Forever

“The science of redemption is the science of all sciences; the science that is the study of angels and all the intelligences of the unfallen worlds; the science that engages the attention of our Lord and Saviour; the science that enters into the purpose brooded in the mind of the Infinite—‘kept in silence through times eternal’ (Romans 16:25, R.V.); the science that will be the study of God’s redeemed throughout endless ages. This is the highest study in which it is possible for man to engage. As no other study can, it will quicken the mind and uplift the soul.”³⁶ Study of the cross will bring an ever-deepening love of God to all created beings, with a growing understanding of the enormous sacrifice paid to redeem humans and restore the universe. This growth from and about the Godhead is endless throughout eternity. There’s no graduation. Calvary-study will be an ever-opening and sharing of the hearts of God’s inexhaustible love.

There is no better teacher than Christ throughout eternity. “As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with

³² Ibid, 671 (Christ added).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, 672 [all the wicked peoples] added.

³⁵ Ibid, 670.

³⁶ *Education*, 126.

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more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise,”³⁷

“The cross of Christ will be the science and song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father’s face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary’s cross. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe. As the nations of the saved look upon their Redeemer and behold the eternal glory of the Father shining in His countenance; as they behold His throne, which is from everlasting to everlasting, and know that His kingdom is to have no end, they break forth in rapturous song: ‘Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His own most precious blood!’”³⁸

Norman R. Gulley was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1962, and sent to Japan Missionary College for five years teaching Theology, serving three years as chair. Next he was sent to the University of Edinburgh in Scotland to earn a Ph.D. in theology. Then the family was sent to the Philippines, where Dr. Gulley served seven years, five as Seminary Dean. This was the first Seminary outside the USA to graduate students at the M.Div. level. He taught Eschatology for Andrews University Seminary in Russia and in Puerto Rico. He taught 21 years as Professor of Theology at Southern Adventist University (SAU). He is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society and the Adventist Theological Society, serving as president of ATS. After retiring he served for 21 years as Research Professor at SAU; and praises God for His daily guidance in writing a biblical theological system of over 3,000 pages. Christ said: “without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5b).

³⁷ *The Great Controversy*, 678.

³⁸ *The Great Controversy*, 651-652.