



Tim Jennings' Response to Eugene Prewitt's Public Paper

by Timothy R. Jennings, M.D.

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About a decade ago, I became aware of a public paper by Eugene Prewitt criticizing me and what I teach. I called him at that time in hopes of resolving what I believed to be misunderstandings on his part regarding my views.

When I spoke to Mr. Prewitt, he appeared sincere, and I was hopeful we could come to an understanding, and if not agreeing on everything, then at least a mutual respect that would allow one another the freedom to present our views without the need for baseless smears and attacks, whether behind the scenes or in the public eye.

Prewitt has long made claims publicly about me and my teaching; I have not openly responded to these challenges despite errors on his part, but his paper's recent circulation to [Advent Media Connect](#) after my appearance on that podcast now requires a clear and factual response.

To be clear, my heart is sad about the need to write this rebuttal; however, I am responding directly to a public critique that Prewitt has posted online and which has been circulated to others.

Before I address his specific allegations, I want to lay out briefly the landscape upon which I understand our situation rests.

When God built His universe, He built it to operate in harmony with His own nature of love. The construction protocol upon which God built His universe is known as God's law. And this law is the law of love, an expression of His nature and character. Thus, the Bible writers expressed it like this:

- "Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).
- "The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14).
- "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (James 2:8).

Functionally, the apostle Paul describes this law as "love seeks not its own" or "love is not self-seeking" (1 Corinthians 13:5). This means that love is selfless rather than selfish. Love is giving rather than taking. And life is actually built by God to operate upon this principle of giving. As the Bible teaches, "He who pursues righteousness and **love finds life**, prosperity and honor" (Proverbs 21:21, emphasis mine).

A simple example of this law in action is respiration. With every breath we breathe, we *give* away carbon dioxide (CO₂) to the plants, and the plants *give* back oxygen to us. This is God's design for life, a perpetual circle of free giving. It is an expression of His character of love, and life is built to operate upon it.

If you break this law, this circle of giving, by tying a plastic bag over your head and selfishly hoarding your body's CO₂, you break the design protocol for life—and the result is death. “The wages [result] of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This circle of giving is the law that God constructed life to operate upon.

The Bible teaches that when Adam sinned, he corrupted his own nature and infected himself with a spirit of fear and selfishness; ever since, every person is born infected with that same corrupting spirit of fear and selfishness (Psalm 51:5; 2 Timothy 1:7).

Jesus became a real human being, descended from Adam through Mary. But the Father to Jesus' humanity is the Holy Spirit. Through the person of Jesus Christ, our humanity was saved when He was tempted in all points like us, including through powerful human emotions that tempted Him to act to save self, but Jesus only and always chose perfect selfless love (Hebrews 2:14; James 1:13–15; Luke 22:39–45; 2 Timothy 1:10). At the cross, Jesus killed, destroyed, purged, the spirit of fear and selfishness and replaced it with His perfect spirit of love and trust. Thus, the human species was saved in and by Jesus. And each of us can partake of that salvation through faith. The book *The Desire of Ages* describes this beautifully:

Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as **spiritual regeneration**. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a **new heart**. You must receive a **new life** from above before you can appreciate heavenly things. Until this change takes place, **making all things new**, it will result in no saving good for you to discuss with Me My authority or My mission (E.G. White, p. 171, emphasis mine).

This is what Paul experienced and described when he wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Paul received a new life, the life of Jesus, the spirit of love, and thereby the living law of love became the animating, motivating power in Paul, replacing the spirit of fear and selfishness that he inherited from Adam. As he told Timothy, “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV). No, the spirit of fear is the life, the spirit, we inherited from Adam, and salvation requires that this spirit be crucified and replaced with the Spirit of Jesus, via the work of the Holy Spirit. This is reality, and this is the good news the early church took to the world.

After Christ's ascension, the church taught a theology that focused on the principles of love. Christ's mission was to reveal truth (John 14:6), defeat Satan (Hebrews 2:14), destroy death (2 Timothy 1:10), and restore the law of love into humankind (1 John 3:8). This is known as the *recapitulation theory* of atonement.

Justin Martyr (AD 103–165) taught that Christ came to do three things: overthrow death, destroy Satan, and restore humanity back to God’s design, thus providing eternal life to fallen humanity.

(Christ) having been made flesh submitted to be born of the Virgin, in order that through this dispensation (1) the Serpent, who at the first had done evil, and the angels assimilated to him might be put down and (2) death might be despised.ⁱ

Robert Franks describes Justin’s theology in this way:

In fact we find in Justin clear indications of the presence to his mind of the recapitulation theory, afterwards more fully developed by Irenaeus, according to which (3) Christ becomes a new head of humanity, undoes the sin of Adam by reversing the acts and circumstances of his disobedience, and finally communicates to men immortal life.ⁱⁱ

Franks also describes Irenaeus’ (2nd Century AD–202) theology:

We come here to the famous Irenaeian doctrine of Recapitulation. The conception is that of Christ as the Second Adam, or second head of humanity, who not only undoes the consequences of Adam’s fall, but also takes up the development of humanity broken off in him, and carries it to completion, i.e. to union with God and consequent immortality.

“It was God recapitulating the ancient creation of man in Himself, that He might slay sin, and annul death, and give life to man... The Son of God, when He was incarnate and was made man, recapitulated in Himself the long line of men, giving us salvation compendiously (*in compendio*), so that what we had lost in Adam, viz. that we should be after in the image and similitude of God, this we should receive in Jesus Christ.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Amazingly, the early church understood Christ’s mission was to restore humanity back into God’s original design. They realized God’s law of love was the template upon which He built His universe, and they also rightly realized that in order to save mankind, the law upon which life is constructed to operate had to be restored into humanity. Christ’s mission was to restore mankind back into harmony with God!

But this truth was lost, and another concept of law replaced it. Romanism—imperial Rome’s concept of government and law infected Christian thought after Constantine converted. Prior to Constantine’s conversion, Christianity understood God’s law as the law of love: “Therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law**” (Romans 13:10, emphasis mine; see also Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8; Mt 12:37–40; Prov 12:28, 21:21; Ps 19:7).

But after Constantine converted, the Christian church accepted Rome’s change to God’s law. What was that change? *That God’s law is an imposed law with no inherent consequence, thus requiring the lawgiver to police breaches in the law and inflict punishment, rather than the truth that God’s law is the law of love, the design protocol upon which God created life to operate.*

Eusebius (CE 263–339), the first church historian, documented how Christianity exchanged God’s law of love for an Roman imposed-law construct:

There are no reserves in the stilted encomium [praise] with which Eusebius closes his history, no wistful regret for the blessings of persecution, no prophetic fear of imperial control of the Church. His heart is full of gratitude to God and Constantine. And it is not only his feelings that are stirred. He is ready, with a theory, indeed a theology, of the Christian Emperor. He finds a correspondence between religion and politics... **With the Roman Empire monarchy had come on earth as the image of the monarchy in heaven** ^{iv} (emphasis mine)

In his book *A History of the Reformation*, Thomas Lindsay describes this infection of Christian thought this way:

The great men who built up the Western Church were almost all trained Roman lawyers. Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Gregory the Great (whose writings form the bridge between the Latin Fathers and the Schoolmen) were all men whose early training had been that of a Roman lawyer,—a training which moulded and shaped all their thinking, whether theological or ecclesiastical. They instinctively regarded all questions as a great Roman lawyer would. They had the lawyer's craving for exact definitions. They had the lawyer's idea that the primary duty laid upon them was to enforce obedience to authority, whether that authority expressed itself in external institutions or in the precise definitions of the correct ways of thinking about spiritual truths. **No Branch of western Christendom has been able to free itself from the spell cast upon it by these Roman lawyers of the early centuries of the Christian church** (emphasis mine).^v

Christians lost sight of God’s law of love and, instead, accepted an imposed-law system modeled after human governments. After all, if they still believed God’s law was the design law of love, like the law of respiration, would they ever have thought a church committee could vote to change such a law—something, in fact, the church did vote to do! However, they could vote to change God’s law *only after* they first accepted the concept that God’s law is imposed, not a natural or design law.^{vi}

This idea of an imposed law altered the view of God held by Christians and changed how Christianity functioned. Christians went from a body of believers who lived communally, shared their possessions to help each other, and died as martyrs, to an organization of Crusades, Inquisition, burning dissenters at the stake, and active participants in genocide (e.g., certain Christians in Nazi Germany and in Rwanda etc.).

This Roman infection of an imposed law represents God as a supreme dictator who runs His universe like Nero ran Rome. This is a lie, and it is this lie from which Christianity still struggles to extricate itself.

With this in mind, I will now address some of the allegations made by Mr. Prewitt.

His Introduction — In Prewitt’s introduction, he suggests he would present his paper to me for review and response “before it is in the public eye”; however, this never happened. I wished he had done so; perhaps it would have prevented so much misunderstanding and confusion.

His Initial Summary — Next, we move from his misleading introduction to his attempts to link me to Dr. Kellogg. For what purpose? It seems for the purpose of creating bias, not on the evidence of what I teach, but on mere association with a historical figure seen as an apostate by many within Seventh-day Adventist circles. Such tactics are designed to instill fear and prejudice before the evidence can even be examined.

He states:

“... like Dr. Kellogg of yesteryear, he [Jennings] has woven into his presentations a deadly net of falsehoods that destroy the most fundamental of Christian virtues – faith.”

And his basis for this allegation? In his words, a few sentences later:

“In short, Dr. Jennings believes that God takes no initiative in causing prolonged pain during the destruction of the wicked, and that to prolong or cause punitive suffering is torture and that such a view of God (that he would cause prolonged pain as part of punishment) destroys love and trust.”

Before we examine the rest of his paper, understand that there are two different gods being presented.

I present the God that Jesus revealed: “If you’ve seen me you’ve seen the Father.” I present the God who *is* love, the God Ellen White described as:

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. **Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner**, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. **By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death** (*Selected Messages, vol. 1. p. 235, emphasis mine*).

The God I present is the Creator, the Designer, the Builder of the universe, the source of life, of goodness. Understanding reality as God created it, one understands that life can exist only in harmony with Him and His design. Deviations from God’s design are destructive to the sinner, as described above. Without divine intervention, sin results in pain, suffering, and eternal death.

Prewitt, however, presents a different god, a being who is in the image of a Roman dictator, one who imposes rules and must use his authority to police breaches in those rules and inflict pain and suffering that the deviant would not otherwise experience. This is, according to Ellen White, actually Satan’s view of God and God’s law:

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. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 761, emphasis mine).

God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression, but leaves the rejecters of his mercy to themselves to reap that which they have sown. For every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God is a seed sown which yields the unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God persistently resisted is at last withdrawn (*The Great Controversy*, p. 36, emphasis mine).

Thus, Prewitt supports the idea that originated with Satan—that God must inflict punishment on sin and, thus, the sinner.

The basic problem between Prewitt and me is that we see God's law differently; therefore, we understand reality—creation, God's character, the nature and character of sin, and God's solution (the atonement)—differently.

I view God's law, the law of love, as the Bible and EGW teach it, which is the design protocol for life:

Here is some evidence from Inspiration that the law of God is the law of love, which is the law of life:

- “Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law**” (Romans 13:10, emphasis mine).
- “The **entire law** is summed up in a single command: ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:14, emphasis mine).
- “If you really keep the **royal law** found in Scripture, ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right” (James 2:8, emphasis mine).
- Jesus replied: “‘**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself.’ **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments**” (Matthew 22:37–40, emphasis mine).
- “In the **way of righteousness there is life**; along that path is immortality” (Proverbs 12:28, emphasis mine).

- “He who pursues **righteousness and love finds life**, prosperity and honor” (Proverbs 21:21, emphasis mine).
- “The **law** of the Lord is perfect, **reviving** the soul” (Psalm 19:7, emphasis mine).
- “In living for self he has rejected that divine love which would have flowed out in mercy to his fellow men. Thus he has rejected life. **For God is love, and love is life**” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 258, emphasis mine).
- “Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is “the transgression of the law;” it is the outworking of a principle at war with **the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government** (*The Great Controversy*, p. 493, emphasis mine).
- “**The law of love being the foundation of the government of God**, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 493, emphasis mine).
- “**The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man.** ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Rom. 13:10). The character of God is righteousness and truth; such is the nature of His law. Says the psalmist: ‘Thy law is the truth’; ‘all thy commandments are righteousness’ (Ps. 119:142, 172). And the apostle Paul declares: ‘The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good’ (Rom. 7:12). **Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author** (*The Great Controversy*, p. 467, emphasis mine).
- “But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. ‘I do nothing of Myself,’ said Christ; ‘the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father.’ ‘I seek not Mine own glory,’ but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth **the great principle which is the law of life for the universe**. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father’s life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. **And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life**” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 21, emphasis mine).
- “As the Supreme Ruler of the universe, God has ordained laws for the government not only of all living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything, whether great or small, animate or inanimate, is under fixed laws which cannot be disregarded. **There are no exceptions to this rule; for nothing that the divine hand has made has been forgotten by the divine mind.** But while everything in nature is governed by natural law, man alone, as an intelligent being, capable of understanding its requirements, is amenable to moral law. To man alone, the crowning work of his creation, God has given a conscience to realize the sacred claims of the divine law, and **a heart capable of loving it as holy, just, and good**; and of man prompt and perfect obedience is required. Yet God does not compel him to obey; he is left a free moral agent (*Sighs of the Times*, April 15, 1886, par. 2, emphasis mine).

- The same power that upholds nature is working also in man. **The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws** that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, **are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds.** Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same—a **life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral,** is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin (*Education*, p. 99, emphasis mine).

Inspiration states that God's law is the law of love, and this is the foundation upon which the Creator has constructed life to operate. Deviation from this law ends life, for life is built to exist only while it is in harmony with the Creator of life.

But God has given us two other threads of evidence, in addition to Scripture, to test our interpretations. When someone quotes an inspired reference, I challenge you to check it against these other two threads. What are those other two threads?

- **Science/Laws of Nature:** "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and **divine nature**—have been clearly seen, **being understood from what has been made,** so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20, emphasis mine).
- **Experience:** "Taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psalm 34:8); "Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe'" (John 20:27).

God has given us three threads of evidence to reveal the truth about Himself to us: Scripture, science/nature, and experience. Ellen White understood this:

Jesus followed the divine plan of education. The schools of His time, with their magnifying of things small and their belittling of things great, He did not seek. His education was gained directly from the **Heaven-appointed sources; from useful work, from the study of the Scriptures and of nature, and from the experiences of life--God's lesson books,** full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart (*Education*, p. 77, emphasis mine).

When we separate the three threads, we get into trouble:

- Science by itself frequently leads to godlessness.
- Experience by itself frequently leads to mysticism.
- Scripture by itself frequently leads to confusion. According to the Center for Study of Global Christianity, in 2018 there were 41,000 different Christian groups, all claiming that the Bible supports their views. And within any denomination, there is a divergence of

understanding regarding the Scripture, because it has been cut loose from the other two threads of evidence God has provided, as described in Scripture. We must have understandings that harmonize all three.

When we use Scripture alone to discern truth, divorced from the other threads *God has provided*, we end up in confusion and frequently in error.

How do we see God's law in nature? One example amongst many is the oxygen-carbon dioxide cycle I mentioned earlier. For more examples, see my blog [The Design Laws of God](#).

And what about experience?

Dozens of studies over several decades have examined relationships between volunteer work and health-related outcomes. Most studies have shown positive volunteering-health associations. Among youth, evidence suggests that volunteer work is associated with a plethora of positive developmental outcomes, such as academic achievement, civic responsibility, and life skills that include leadership and interpersonal self-confidence (Astin & Sax 1998) (Post, S. *Altruism and Health Perspectives from Empirical Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007: p. 20, 21).

Four studies between 1996 and 2003 evaluated the effect of volunteerism and longevity in the elderly. Controlling for confounding variables, such as health when entering the study, all four studies "reported that volunteers tended to live statistically longer than those who did not volunteer" (Ibid., p. 22).

Not only do volunteers live longer, but they also live better:

Several studies have examined the relationship between volunteering and physical functioning. Moen, Dempster-McClain, and Williams (1989) studied 427 women who resided in upstate New York and were both wives and mothers in 1956. Over the next 30 years, compared to non-volunteers, women who did any volunteering had better physical functioning in 1986, after adjusting for baseline health status, level of education, and number of life roles. Similarly, Luoh and Herzog (2002) found that, compared to non-volunteers or those volunteering less than 100 hours, those who were volunteering 100 hours or more in 1998 were approximately 30% less likely to experience physical functioning limitations, even after adjusting for demographics, socioeconomic status, baseline functioning limitations, health status, paid employment, exercise, smoking and social connections. Moorow-Howell and colleagues (2003) examined data collected between 1986 and 1994 from more than 1,500 U.S. adults, finding that volunteering predicted significantly less functional disability 3 to 5 years later, after adjusting for demographics, socioeconomic status, marital status, and informal social integration (Ibid., p. 26).

Thus, we find harmony in Scripture, science, and experience that the law of giving is the foundation of life and is God's law.

How do you understand God's law—as the law of love, the principle upon which the Creator constructed life to operate, or like a Roman dictator, a list of rules with no inherent consequence, laws that are enforced through *fear* of punishment? The latter is Prewitt's position—thus, he presents a god who must use his power to inflict pain, suffering, and death, which is all based upon fear, whereas I present a God using His power to oppose an infection of sin that is the real source of pain, suffering, and death and restore us to life, which inspires love and trust. Prewitt, and others, point to God's use of imposed laws when setting up the Hebrew civil government at Sinai as evidence that God's law is imposed. Rather than realizing, as Paul later wrote, that the law was added (Galatians 3:19), it is taught that these temporary rules, added to diagnose and protect the ignorant and childlike from self-injury when breaking design law, are the way God's law functions. For the design law understanding of why God added these laws, please see my blog [The Death Penalty in Old Testament Times](#).

Mr. Prewitt alleges I teach something akin to the moral influence theory of atonement. This is incorrect, as I have written extensively demonstrating the shortcomings of that theory and documenting how what Christ achieved goes far beyond just revealing the truth, which, of course, He did reveal.

Prewitt also alleges I do not believe in “substitutionary atonement,” which is also incorrect. I call my atonement framework the “healing **substitution** model,” in which Christ becomes our substitute, taking our iniquity, infirmity, and sinfulness upon Himself, suffering in our place for the purpose of healing and restoring humanity back to harmony with God and God's original design (For a full exploration of why Christ had to die for our salvation, see my magazine [Salvation and You: What It Really Means to be Saved](#)). Prewitt, having accepted a falsehood about God's law, believes Satan's lie that sin must be punished by God. Thus, when I state Jesus did not become a substitute *to be punished by God*, Prewitt incorrectly alleges that I don't believe in substitutionary atonement.

Mr. Prewitt states regarding my presentations, “In his recorded lectures, [he] inadvertently sets individual reason above inspiration.”

However, God is the One who connects reasoning with Him with cleansing from sin: “Come let us reason together though your sins are like scarlet they shall be white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).

Jesus said, “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

Ellen White states, “Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him. By earnest attention and prayerful thought he must **learn the meaning of the words of truth**, and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles” (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 59, emphasis mine).

How are we to learn the meaning of Scripture without reasoning? Is there some way to understand God's Word without reasoning?

God **never** asks us to believe, without giving **sufficient evidence** upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by **testimony that**

appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith (*Steps to Christ*, p. 105, emphasis mine).

How are we to evaluate the evidence God has given, to understand it, value it, apply it, and embrace it, without using our God-given reasoning? Did God not reveal Himself for the purpose of enlightening and ennobling human reason?

If the point is merely to say that human reason couldn't discover the evidence for God on its own and must rely upon God to provide the evidence of Himself upon which reason is then to reflect and conclude, then simply say that. Why the need to infer some diminishment of reason or insinuate that I believe human reason supersedes Scripture?

Moreover, the diminishment of human reason is another of Satan's strategies. God is the source of truth, and truth is sensible, consistent, reliable, predictable, understandable, rational, and reasonable. But error is confusing, contradictory, and irrational. Having no truth, Satan proposes ideas for the purpose of getting people to stop thinking, stop reasoning—thus, the idea we should have faith in what the Bible says but not worry about what it actually means—don't reason it out, don't think about it, just believe. Prewitt promotes a methodology that damages the faculties of the mind and impairs truth from being assimilated into the soul, thus keeping people trapped in error and misunderstanding.

Prewitt also alleges that I “repudiate” ideas associated with the investigative judgment.

I only repudiate those ideas that are false and are based on Satan's view of God's law and character.

Sin doesn't happen in record books; sin happens in hearts and minds. God is not seeking to erase historical records; He is seeking to cleanse sinners' hearts, minds, and characters. God doesn't want to blot facts from history; He wants to blot selfishness, evil, and rebellion from the hearts and minds of His intelligent creatures. Thus, presentations that portray God working in books and *not* the hearts of His children are false, whereas presentations that portray God working in the hearts/minds/characters of His children to cleanse them from sinfulness are true. (For more on my view of the cleansing of the sanctuary, please see my presentation [Light from the Sanctuary](#), or my magazine [Heavenly Sanctuary And Investigative Judgment for the Modern World](#), or if you would like these same truths presented in another biblical framework see my magazine [The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming](#)).

Prewitt, again misunderstanding God's law as imposed rules, sees the solution as a legal one in a heavenly courtroom, occurring in some record book. I see the problem of sin being in the hearts, minds, and characters of sinners and God working in them to cleanse them from sin and “write the law on the heart and mind” (Hebrews 8:10). Thus, the records in heaven will show our sinfulness and God's work in us to cleanse us. Or as Ellen White put it:

When we submit ourselves to Christ, **the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.** Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 311, emphasis mine).

Notice, the covering of Christ's robe of righteousness is a metaphor that means an actual change in the mind, character, heart, thinking, and motives of the sinner so that we *actually become* like Christ in our inmost being (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the new life, the new spirit, that we receive through faith as described above. Prewitt would deny people of this by moving God's work out of the Spirit temple into a heavenly courtroom, out of the heart and into mere books. Such an argument fails to move past metaphor to reality. When reading a description of records being examined, sins being removed, etc., we must not fall into the trap of thinking literally, concretely, but rather we must understand the true meaning of the object lesson. When you think of heavenly records, what comes to mind? A list of deeds done? Here is what Ellen White said:

As the features of the countenance are reproduced with unerring accuracy on the polished plate of the artist, **so the character is faithfully delineated in the books above.** Yet how little solicitude is felt concerning that record which is to meet the gaze of heavenly beings (*The Great Controversy*, p. 487, emphasis mine).

Remember, your character is being daguerreotyped [photographed] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven, as minutely as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist. What do the books of heaven say in your case? Are you conforming your character to the Pattern, Jesus Christ? Are you washing your robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb? "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12 (TSB, p. 62, emphasis mine).

Just as the Bible teaches, what is written in the books of heaven are the *names* of people in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 13:8; 21:27). And names represent character, individuality, personhood.

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose **names are written in heaven** (Hebrews 12:22, 23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

God is the God of reality. We are real people with a real sin problem that need Jesus, our real Savior, who cleanses us from sin, fear, and selfishness and restores us to righteousness, in reality, in our hearts and minds.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Therefore, the cleansing of sin from the sanctuary can happen only by cleansing the hearts, minds, and characters of people from fear, distrust of God, and selfishness and writing God's living law of love in the heart and mind.

The Doctrine of Justice

Mr. Prewitt, having accepted the lie that God's law is like human law, rules imposed, rather than the Creator's design protocols upon which life is built, argues that justice is God using power to inflict pain and suffering. Thus, he argues that the last plagues, described in Revelation, are punishments from God. In his words:

These plagues are **punitive** rather than corrective. (That is, they occur after the close of human probation.) And the suffering is fair, it is just. God is "holy" who judges the wicked. That is obvious, "manifest", according to the righteous ones in Rev 15 (emphasis mine).

When we understand God's law as the design for life, we realize that any deviations result in pain and suffering and that God has been using His power to hold at bay the devastation that occurs when He lets go. Thus, the Bible describes the action of God's angels as holding back the destructive forces, and it is when they let go that the destruction of the end times happens:

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, **holding back** the four winds of the earth **to prevent** any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels **who had been given power to harm the land and the sea**: "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God" (Revelation 7:1–3).

What are the four angels actively doing? Holding back the winds. Why? To *prevent* harm. Yet they are described as having power to harm—how? By letting go—of what? Satan and his forces of evil.

And what causes them to let go? The persistent insistence of humans on the earth to be out of God's care. Our free-will choices drive God's protective agencies away. Thus, Ellen White described the end-time plagues in this way, and notice she calls them the judgments of God:

I was shown that the **judgments of God** would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but in this way;

They place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will **follow their own course**, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose** their own way, **then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them.**

It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and,

he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of (Manuscript Releases, vol. 14, p. 3, emphasis mine).

So again, we have two kinds of gods being presented. My version, the God of love who is Creator, Designer, Protector, source of life, seeking to heal and restore, whose law is the law of life, the protocols upon which life is built, and deviations from those protocols result in death. And Prewitt's version of a god who is a dictator, who imposes laws without inherent consequence, and then uses his power to inflict pain and suffering on his creatures. I believe this is Satan's view of God, as Ellen White states:

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. **Therefore he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,**--that he might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan has striven so to confuse the minds of those whom he has deceived that they would put God out of their thoughts. He would then obliterate the divine image in man, and impress upon the soul his own likeness; he would imbue men with his own spirit, and make them captives according to his will (*Review and Herald*, February 15, 1912, par. 2, emphasis mine).

Having misunderstood God's law, Prewitt also misunderstands God's wrath. Believing God's law is a list of imposed rules, he falsely concludes God's wrath is divine animosity toward sinners—or just anger or some other negative hostility coming from God and vented upon the sinner. In Prewitt's view, Christ, as our substitute, who suffered under God's wrath, rather than being abandoned by His Father was actively punished and executed by His Father.

When we come back to the truth about God as revealed by Jesus and Scripture and understand God's law as design law, then we understand correctly that wrath is God letting go His restraining hand and allowing the sinner to reap what unremedied sin does: it destroys.

Notice that biblical wrath is God letting go, giving up, stopping His interventions to hold back the destructiveness that comes from sin:

- **“My anger will flame up like fire and burn everything on earth. It will reach to the world below and consume the roots of the mountains. I will bring on them endless disasters and use all my arrows against them. ... They fail to see why they were defeated; they cannot understand what happened. Why were a thousand defeated by one, and ten thousand by only two? The LORD, their God, had abandoned them; their mighty God had given them up”** (Deuteronomy 32:22–30 GN, emphasis mine).
- **“When that happens, I will become angry with them; I will abandon them, and they will be destroyed. Many terrible disasters will come upon them, and then they will realize that these things are happening to them because I, their God, am no longer with them”** (Deuteronomy 31:17 GN, emphasis mine).
- **“I will fight against you with all my might, my anger, my wrath, and my fury. I will kill everyone living in this city; people and animals alike will die of a terrible disease. ... Anyone**

who stays in the city will be **killed in war or by starvation or disease**. ... It will be **given over** to the king of Babylonia, and **he** will burn it to the ground. I, the LORD, have spoken. ... I will set your palace on fire, and the fire will burn down everything around it. I, the LORD, have spoken” (Jeremiah 21:5–14 GN, emphasis mine).

- “The LORD **has abandoned** his people like a lion that leaves its cave. The horrors of war and the LORD’s **fierce anger** have turned the country into a desert” (Jeremiah 25:38 GN, emphasis mine)
- “The LORD, the God of Israel, told me to go and say to King Zedekiah of Judah, ‘I, the LORD, will **hand this city over** to the king of Babylonia, and **he** will burn it down’” (Jeremiah 34:2 GN, emphasis mine).
- “Very well, then, **I will give you freedom: the freedom to die by war, disease, and starvation**” (Jeremiah 34:17 GN, emphasis mine).
- “**You will feel my anger when I turn it loose on you** like a blazing fire. And **I will hand you over** to brutal men, experts at destruction” (Ezekiel 21:31 GN, emphasis mine).
- “**I will hand you over to other nations** who will rob you and plunder you” (Ezekiel 25:7 GN, emphasis mine).
- “The king killed the young men of Judah even in the Temple. He had no mercy on anyone, young or old, man or woman, sick or healthy. **God handed them all over to him**” (2 Chronicles 36:17 GN, emphasis mine).
- “**I will attack the people of Israel and Judah like a lion**. I myself will tear them to pieces and then leave them. When I drag them off, no one will be able to save them. **I will abandon** my people until they have suffered enough for their sins and come looking for me. Perhaps in their suffering they will try to find me” (Hosea 5:14, 15 GN, emphasis mine).
- “**God’s anger is revealed** from heaven against all the sin and evil of the people whose evil ways prevent the truth from being known. **God punishes them**, because what can be known about God is plain to them, for God himself made it plain. ... They say they are wise, but they are fools; instead of worshiping the immortal God, they worship images made to look like mortals or birds or animals or reptiles. **And so God has given those people over to do the filthy things their hearts desire**, and they do shameful things with each other. **They exchange the truth about God for a lie**; they worship and serve what God has created instead of the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever! Amen. Because they do this, **God has given them over** to shameful passions. ... **Because those people refuse to keep in mind the true knowledge about God, he has given them over** to corrupted minds, so that they do the things that they should not do” (Romans 1:18–28 GN, emphasis mine).

Jesus experienced God’s wrath on the cross when God “let go”—not when God actively inflicted some punishment:

- “Because of our sins he was **given over** to die” (Romans 4:25 GN, emphasis mine).

- “My God, my God, why have you **forsaken me**?” (Matthew 27:46, emphasis mine).
- “Then ‘Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ ‘My God, My God, **why hast Thou forsaken Me**?’ As the outer gloom settled about the Saviour, many voices exclaimed: The **vengeance of heaven** is upon Him. The bolts of **God's wrath** are hurled at Him, because He claimed to be the Son of God. Many who believed on Him heard His despairing cry. Hope left them. If **God had forsaken Jesus**, in what could His followers trust?” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 754, emphasis mine).
- “God bears long with the rebellion and apostasy of His subjects. Even when His mercy is despised and His love scorned and derided, He bears with men until the last resource for leading them to repentance is exhausted. But there are limits to His forbearance. **From those who to the end continue in obstinate rebellion, He removes His protecting care. Providence will no longer shield them from Satan's power.** They will have sinned away their day of grace” (*Review and Herald*, September 17, 1901, par. 7, emphasis mine).
- “**God keeps a reckoning with the nations.** Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. Those who work evil toward their fellow men, saying, How doth God know? will one day be called upon to **meet long-deferred vengeance**. In this age a more than common contempt is shown to God. Men have reached a point in insolence and disobedience which shows that their **cup of iniquity is almost full**. Many have well-nigh **passed the boundary of mercy**. Soon **God will show that He is indeed the living God**. He will say to the angels, ‘**No longer combat Satan in his efforts to destroy**. Let him work out his malignity upon the children of disobedience; for the cup of their iniquity is full. They have advanced from one degree of wickedness to another, adding daily to their lawlessness. **I will no longer interfere to prevent the destroyer from doing his work**’” (*Review and Herald*, September 17, 1901, par. 8, emphasis mine).

And from the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*:

The wrath of God. That is, the divine displeasure against sin, resulting **ultimately in the abandonment of man** to the judgment of death (see Rom. 6:23; John 3:36). The wrath of the infinite God must not be compared to human passion. God is love (1 John 4:8), and though He hates sin, He loves the sinner (SC 54). However, God does not force His love upon those who are unwilling to receive His mercy (see DA 22, 466, 759). Thus, **God's wrath against sin is exercised in the withdrawal of His presence and life-giving power** from those who choose to remain in sin and thus share in its inevitable consequences (see Gen. 6:3; cf. DA 107, 763, 764; SC 17, 18). ...

When **God's wrath** against sin fell upon Christ as our substitute, it was **the separation from His Father** that caused Him such great anguish. “This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequence of man's sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression” (DA 686). Finally, on the cross, “the wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. ... **The withdrawal of the divine countenance** from the

Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man” (DA 753).

Thus, as Paul explains in Rom. 1:24, 26, 28, God reveals His wrath by turning impenitent men over to the inevitable results of their rebellion. This persistent resistance of God’s love and mercy culminates in the **final revelation of God’s wrath on that day when the Spirit of God is at last withdrawn**. Unsheltered by divine grace, the wicked have no protection from the evil one. “As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose” (GC 614). Then fire comes down from God out of heaven, and sin and sinners are forever destroyed (Rev. 20:9; cf. Mal. 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10).

But even this final revelation of God’s wrath in the destruction of the wicked is not an act of arbitrary power. **“God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life”** (DA 764). God gives men existence for a time so that they may develop their characters. When this has been accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. **“By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire”** (ibid.; cf. GC 543) (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 477, 478. Review and Herald Publishing Association, emphasis mine).

So, again, there are two different gods being presented—the view I present is a God of love, the Creator, source of life, who is seeking to restore creation back into harmony with how He built it to operate so that His children won’t suffer and die, but who ultimately gives us freedom and sets us free, if we insist, to reap what separation from Him results in. And then there is Prewitt’s god, a being who inflicts torture, pain, and suffering as punishments on those who disobey his rules. (See also my blog [God’s Wrath versus Satan’s Wrath—What’s the Difference?](#)).

As evidence of Mr. Prewitt’s acceptance of the imposed-law construct, which is what Satan alleges about God, note his statement:

Now to me it seems perfectly rational that a loving God would nevertheless be willing to be fair even if being so was painful to himself. To inflict pain on the man that ordered torture for a humble servant of Jesus seems only just. In fact, it is when the persecutors are already dead that the blood of the martyrs calls out for God to avenge “our blood” in Revelation 6. So painful punishment seems rational to me and irrational to Jennings.

If one believes that God’s law is imposed, with no inherent consequence, then one sees justice as the infliction of pain, punishment, suffering, and death—this is Prewitt’s errant view of God. However, when one realizes God’s law is the law of love, the design protocols for life, one realizes that deviations from those protocols are damaging and that the pain and suffering that follow are inherent, the unavoidable result of being out of harmony with God’s design for life.

This struggle occurs because there are different developmental stages to our ability to comprehend right and wrong, known as moral development. Here are the seven basic stages of development in our ability to discern what is right and wrong:

1. **Reward and punishment**—the most basic level of understanding if something is right or wrong is whether we receive a reward for it or are punished. This is a slave's mentality. Nazi soldiers who put people in the gas chamber—why did they do it? They would be punished if they didn't, so it was right to do it. This was also Israel in Egypt: slaves doing what the master says to avoid punishment.
2. **Marketplace exchange**—*quid pro quo*, you do something for me in exchange for something of equal value in return. This is Israel at Sinai: "an eye for an eye and tooth for tooth." Many religions in the Middle East still practice this level.
3. **Social conformity**—at this stage, right or wrong is determined by community consensus. This is the child who says, "Everyone else is doing it." This was Israel when they wanted kings; all the other nations had kings, so it must be right.
4. **Law and order**—right and wrong at this stage is determined by a codified system of rules, external judges, and imposed punishments. Right is getting proper pay or a reward for good work, but prescribed an inflicted punishment for breaking the rules. This was Israel at the time of Christ. They had a law and accused Jesus of breaking it.
5. **Love for others**—right is seeking the best interest of others, realizing people have value in who they are, irrespective of the rules. Right is doing what is beneficial, even if it breaks a law-and-order-style rule. A person taking a loved one who is having a stroke to the ER pauses at a red light, looks both ways, flashes their lights, and honks their horn, and, seeing no other cars are coming, runs the light, realizing the life of the person (based upon design laws—laws of health) is more important than keeping a rule (imposed law—traffic law). But the police officer operating at level four will still issue a ticket because a rule was broken. This was Jesus healing on the Sabbath and the Pharisees wanting to stone Him for breaking the rule.
6. **Principle-based living**—this is realizing the reality of God's design protocols, principles upon which life is designed to operate and living in harmony with them. It is doing right because it is right. Such right doing is pleasing to God. It is not doing something because a rule says to do so. This was Jesus and the apostles. This is the God Come and Reason presents. It is understood, at this level, that God says what is right because it is right; it is actually that way in reality. It isn't right merely because God says it, but because it is in harmony with His design protocols. Level-four thinking would say, "If God said it, that makes it right." Level 6 is the future kingdom of God, where all live in harmony with God's design and appreciate His law of love.
7. **Understanding Friend of God**—at this level, one not only loves God and others, not only understands God's design laws and lives in harmony with them, but one understands and intelligently participates in God's purpose. John 15:15 says, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." At this level, we realize

God has a larger purpose than the salvation of humanity—there is a universal Great Controversy going on in which God is healing His entire universe from the damage caused by Satan’s rebellion.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Colossians 1:19, 20).

During moral development, a person is capable of comprehending only one level beyond their current level of operation. The majority of people operate at level four or below, and level-four people persecute those operating at level six and seven. Worse, they don’t comprehend levels six and seven and claim that what those at that level teach doesn’t make any sense. This was what happened between Jesus and the religious leaders of His day, and it is the problem behind Prewitt’s inability to understand what I am teaching. The Roman imposed-law construct is a level-four view.

Because God is love, He wants to reach all people at all developmental levels. And just like a parent who speaks one way to a three-year-old and another way to a college graduate, God speaks a variety of ways to help people understand at the level they are capable of comprehending. This is why there are places where God initially sounds threatening—but a more thorough reading reveals He was speaking to those at lower levels of understanding who couldn’t comprehend principle-based living. But His goal, just like a human parent, is for His children to grow up to maturity and understand reality as He created it to operate, which are levels six and seven, principle-based living and understanding friends of God. As the writer of Hebrews wrote:

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is **not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness**. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us **leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity**, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death (Hebrews 5:11–6:1 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Children don’t understand reality. They think it is wrong to play in the street because Mommy will get mad and punish them. The mature, however, know that Mom was never the problem; the problem was ignoring the laws of reality, physics, and health, and what naturally occurs when one is hit by a car. The messages of the three angels of Revelation are a call to people to go back to worshiping God as Creator, the one who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water, and to leave Babylon, that system of imposed law with imposed punishments. This requires that we reject the lie that God’s law functions like human law, to leave the childlike thinking behind and become mature people who know how reality works.

This difference in developmental level is at the root of much of the conflict in Christianity, with those who operate on the law-and-order level, seeking to enforce proper orthodoxy and persecuting as heretics those operating at levels six and seven.

Finally, Prewitt claims that I deny the “threatenings” of God, but this is also untrue. He sees the consequences of sin as coming directly from God, but I see them as the result of unremedied sin. The threats are of two types: the redemptive threats of the parent threatening discipline if the child plays in the street, and the threat of reality if the child disobeys and is hit by a car. The biblical threats of disaster and wrath are real, just as though a doctor threatened a smoker with lung disease, cancer, and a painful end if the smoker didn’t stop smoking. Prewitt’s view would suggest that if the smoker doesn’t stop smoking, the doctor is required to inflict cancer, pain, and death. My view is that the doctor, having given adequate warning, sets the patient free to reap what their choice leads to. (For more on the final end of sin and sinners and how the wicked die yet God is not the executioner, see my blog [The Truth About Hell](#)).

There are two gods being presented: one is an arbitrary dictator whose law is imposed and who, therefore, is the source of inflicted pain and death; the other is a supreme Being of love whose laws are the design protocols that govern the operations of reality and who is the source of only goodness and life, but who will set rebels free to reap the terrible and painful results of deviating from His design.

Revelation 14 calls us back to worship “Him who made the heavens, earth and seas.” It is a call to worship the Designer, the Creator. I invite you to worship the Designer and reject the dictator view of God.

ⁱ Franks, Robert S., *A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ in its Ecclesiastical Development*, vol. 1, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918, p. 21.

ⁱⁱ Ibid., p. 22.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., pp. 37, 38.

^{iv} S.L. Greenslade, *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius*, London: SCM Press, 1954.

^v Lindsay, Thomas, *A History of the Reformation*, Bibliolife, 2009, p 168.

^{vi} Compare the Catholic Ten Commandments and the Protestant Ten Commandments. The Catholic version removes number two (graven images), splits ten into two, changes the language of the Sabbath commandment, and, due to eliminating number two, the Sabbath commandment is number three in the Catholic version (number four in Protestant version). They also, in their catechism, claim to have changed the holiness of Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. I do not argue any of these points. I only use this to illustrate the acceptance of a change in God's law from a natural law to an imposed law. If theologians viewed God's law as a principle upon which life is built, like the law of gravity, thermodynamics, and respiration, they would not have voted in committee to make changes to it. The fact they have changed it reveals the acceptance of imperial Rome's concept of law.