

# THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

## Introduction

1. Compare how the Holy Spirit worked in inspiring the Bible with how He worked in guiding the writing of *Great Controversy*.
2. Why did God wait until the time of Moses to give the written Word?
3. Consider what Ellen White says about both the human and divine elements in inspiration. How did she explain her use of other literary sources?
4. What is the purpose of this book?

## Chapter 1: The Destruction of Jerusalem

1. Why did Jesus allow Jerusalem, His beloved city, to be destroyed by the Romans?
2. What promises did Jesus make to His people that were living in Jerusalem? What did He command them to do? How does God help you in times of trouble?
3. How does this chapter reinforce your faith in God considering the unknowns surrounding last-day prophetic events?

## Chapter 2: Persecution in the First Centuries

1. What connotations does being “a peculiar people” bring to your mind?
2. In Hebrews 11:36, 37, the reader is reminded of the necessity of enduring great sufferings. Why is suffering often a part of the Christian life?
3. Why do some Christians seem to suffer more than others?
4. When Satan could not destroy the church through persecution, he tempted the believers to adopt sinful practices from pagan religions. What specific steps can you take that will keep you from adopting the ways of the world?

## Chapter 3: An Era of Spiritual Darkness

1. What was the cause of “spiritual darkness” after the third century?
2. In 2 Thessalonians 2:7 Paul writes of the “mystery of iniquity.” To what is he referring?
3. Satan sometimes uses violent force and, at other times, he influences slow changes toward evil? What are God’s methods for making permanent changes toward good?
4. Why does the devil attack the Sabbath commandment in particular?

## Chapter 4: The Waldenses

1. Several early Christian groups kept the seventh-day Sabbath. Why has the Sabbath been such an important marker of the true church throughout the ages?
2. We admire the values passed from generation to generation by the Waldenses. How can we build the same values into our children in today’s culture?
3. The Waldenses faced great difficulty in acquiring and sharing the Word. Consider how the ready availability of the Bible today might cause us to take it for granted.
4. What motivated the Waldensian missionaries to go forth with deep commitment and passion?

## Chapter 5: John Wycliffe

1. What were God's providential leadings in the life of Wycliffe that made it possible for him to call attention to the truths of Scripture?
2. Much of Wycliffe's preaching was directed at the social abuses of his time, revolving around issues of power, spiritual authority, and money. Compare and contrast the moral climate in his time with the moral climate today. In what ways do the Scriptures speak to the moral failings of contemporary society as they did in Wycliffe's day?
3. Why was the translation of the Bible into English the most important work accomplished by Wycliffe?

## Chapter 6: Huss and Jerome

1. In Prague, there was a mural painted by two Englishmen that contrasted Jesus and the Pope. What was there about the painting that affected Huss so strongly and influenced his future ministry?
2. What was Huss doing that attracted the attention of the Roman papacy? Why were his actions such a threat?
3. Contrast the characters of Huss and Jerome. What can be learned from their collaboration? Why did Huss refuse to renounce his "errors"? Why was he able to sing as his body was being burned at the stake? Jerome gave in to the Council, but then changed his mind. To what authority did he appeal?
4. Huss and Jerome were talented, effective preachers of the gospel of Christ. Because of this their lives were cut short. Even so, the truth they preached lived on in Bohemia and spread to the world beyond. What does this teach you about the power of the truth found in Scriptures? See 2 Peter 1:12-21.

## Chapter 7: Luther's Separation From Rome

1. List the intellectual and spiritual characteristics of the young Luther that made him a leader of unswerving principle.
2. While ascending "Pilate's Staircase" in Rome, Luther heard the words of Romans 1:17. How do you respond to these words in your own life?
3. To what New Testament figure does Ellen White equate Tetzl? Why?
4. The church attacked, taunted, and persecuted Luther and his followers to the point of excommunication and death. How did Luther respond? How might you follow his example in defending "present truth"?

## Chapter 8: Luther Before the Diet

1. How was Luther's appearance before the Diet at Worms an immense revolution for his day?
2. Luther's statement, "Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen," is arguably one of the greatest statements in recorded human history. Consider an experience where you have stood up for the truth. What was the result?
3. Luther reflected the light God permitted to shine upon him, but new light will continue to shine to the end of the age. How should we relate to and use "new light"?

## Chapter 9: The Swiss Reformer

1. What teacher introduced Zwingli to the Bible, and to what "ancient truth" did he point?
2. In Zwingli's first position as a parish priest, "he submitted himself to the Bible as the word of God, the only sufficient, infallible rule." Why is it important to take the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice?
3. In the debate between Eck and Zwingli's representative, Oecolampadius, Eck "appealed for authority to the customs of the church," while the reformers looked to the Holy Scriptures. What is the a proper place for tradition and custom in the church?

## Chapter 10: Progress of Reform in Germany

1. What was Luther's description of a healthy church?
2. Describe Luther's rationale for nonviolence during the heat of the Reformation.
3. When God begins a good work in your church, how might Satan counteract it through fanaticism?
4. Psalm 119:130 states: "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." How does this verse help us understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the personal study of God's Word?

## Chapter 11: Protest of the Princes

1. What compromise was offered to the princes in favor of the Reformation by the Church of Rome? Why did the princes refuse it?
2. Explain the concept of religious freedom.
3. What principles, contained in the "protest of the princes," defined Protestantism? Are they still relevant?
4. How important were prayer and Bible study in the life of Luther and the princes? How does a relationship with Christ give a person courage to face everyday trials and conflicts?

## Chapter 12: The French Reformation

1. Review the account of John Calvin's conversion. How did his experience influence his reforms?
2. Did the radical attack by extremists in France advance or deter the Reformation? Why?
3. France vigorously suppressed the Reformation. What were the national results?
4. Calvin was used by God even though his doctrines and theology contained flaws. How has God used you or someone you know in spite of personal and theological imperfections?

## Chapter 13: The Netherlands and Scandinavia

1. Centuries before the Reformation in Germany, reformers had already found their way to the Netherlands and Scandinavia. Who introduced Bible teachings to this region?
2. Menno Simons, Tausen of Denmark, and others had great success in preaching the Reformed faith. What characteristics made them successful?
3. Religious authorities attempted to intimidate or silence the Reformers. Why did persecution fail to weaken or stop the Reformation?
4. Scandinavian students at Wittenberg eagerly returned to their country with Reformed views. How should Seventh-day Adventist universities and colleges train students to be reformers and missionaries?

## Chapter 14: Later English Reformers

1. The Reformers held to "the infallible authority of the Holy Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice." Who were some of the people who held to this principle? How did their commitment to the Word affect their lives and ministry?
2. Although John Wesley renounced "all dependence upon his own works for salvation," he vowed to continue his strict and self-denying life. What was the basis for his decision to continue doing good works?
3. Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament "excited great interest" in England. What can result from the influence of the Bible when people read and study it? See John 8:32.
4. What was the significance of Erasmus's Greek New Testament? In what ways can Bible scholars and theologians help in the fulfillment of the gospel commission?

5. The Christian department of the Moravians deeply impressed Wesley and led him to salvation. Have you surrendered all to Jesus so that He can make you a living testimony?

### **Chapter 15: The Bible and the French Revolution**

1. What striking parallels can you draw between France during the Revolution and Egypt during the reign of the Pharaoh of the Exodus? See Revelation 11:8.
2. Revelation 11:3 states: “The two witnesses will prophesy for 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth.” Compare the trials encountered by the Reformers in France with the challenges facing contemporary Christians in countries where witnessing is illegal.
3. Read 1 Peter 5:6-8. How can we prepare against the final onslaught of Satan in the last days?

### **Chapter 16: The Pilgrim Fathers**

1. The Pilgrim’s covenant “to walk together in all [God’s] ways made known or to be made known” was a “vital principle of Protestantism.” Have you covenanted with God to follow in all the truth He reveals?
2. “The regulation adopted by the early colonists, of permitting only members of the church to vote or to hold office in the civil government, led to most pernicious results.” What are the results of limiting political participation to a particular class of people?
3. Roger Williams believed that freedom of religion was the “right of all, whatever might be their creed.” How does Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30) shed light on this issue?
4. The Pilgrims could not practice their religion in England because “the church, being supported by the civil authority, would permit no dissent.” Yet, when they came to the New World the Pilgrims imposed the same restriction on others. What was their purpose and what was the result?

### **Chapter 17: Heralds of the Morning**

1. Read the description of the Lisbon earthquake. How does it compare to more recent natural disasters, such as the tsunami of 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in the United States? Why do people fear what is coming upon the earth? Is this an indication of the soon coming of Jesus?
2. The Dark Day of May 19, 1780 would be the subject of scientific investigation if it were to happen today. How has the world’s attitude toward God changed in the last two centuries?
3. “The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers.” Do you believe Jesus is coming soon? If so, why?

### **Chapter 18: An American Reformer**

1. What were the two foundations of William Miller’s religious experience? Are they still the doctrinal and spiritual foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
2. Miller passionately studied the Bible and discovered the remarkable fulfillment of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. Have you like Miller given diligent study to these books? Review the main aspects of the parallel prophecies in Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 9.
3. Miller’s focus was on the imminent, literal, visible, and personal Second Coming of Jesus. Describe your personal faith in this all-important event and why you believe it will happen soon.
4. How could God have been leading Miller if he was wrong about the event to occur in 1844? Are there any biblical examples of people led by God who misunderstood certain aspects of truth? See Acts 10.

## Chapter 19: Light Through Darkness

1. Read Daniel 9:25, 26. How did the disciples' preconceived ideas blind them to the message in verse 26, even while proclaiming the fulfillment of verse 25?
2. The prophets "inquired and searched diligently." What steps do you need to take in order to diligently seek out the light God has for you?
3. The 1844 disappointment was a test of faith. In your experience, does disappointment usually strengthen or weaken faith?

## Chapter 20: A Great Religious Awakening

1. When preachers in Scandinavia were silenced, God used children to proclaim the message. What does this say to you of the certain fulfillment of God's plan?
2. In Geneva, Gausson taught Christ's coming to the children. Are there children in your neighborhood to whom you can teach this great truth?
3. Why did Ellen White say that Christ could not be expected before 1798? See 2 Thessalonians 2:3.
4. Many years have passed since the Advent "religious awakening" and Christ still has not returned. What is your attitude toward this delay?

## Chapter 21: A Warning Rejected

1. What power is represented as Babylon in Revelation 17? Who are her "daughters"?
2. What union exists between Christ and His people? What can cause this union to be broken?
3. In about 1844, many thousands of Christian believers left their churches. What change took place in many Protestant churches in the United States about this time?

## Chapter 22: Prophecies Fulfilled

1. How does the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-20 parallel the experience of Millerite Adventists in 1844? What is the key point of this parable?
2. The proclamation of the "Midnight Cry" by Adventists during the summer of 1844 swept through North America. What was its effect? How was the power of God revealed?
3. Compare the experience of Adventists in the autumn of 1844 with the experience of Christ's disciples after He was crucified. In what way are they similar?
4. Even though Jesus did not return in 1844, what benefit resulted from the disappointment?

## Chapter 23: What is the Sanctuary?

1. Cite some biblical texts that support the view that the sanctuary on earth represents the heavenly sanctuary.
2. Read Hebrews 9. What does this passage tell us about the cleansing of the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries? What other evidence do you find for this teaching in the Bible?
3. What are the differences between Christ's ministry from His resurrection and ascension until 1844 A.D. and His ministry from 1844 until the close of probation?

## Chapter 24: In the Holy of Holies

1. How was the subject of the sanctuary the key that unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844?
2. How does the sanctuary message make the past, present, and future meaningful for you?

3. At the end of the 2,300 prophetic days, Jesus began His ministration in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, a process known as the investigative, or pre-advent, judgment. What are some Bible texts and passages that support this truth?

### **Chapter 25: God's Law Immutable**

1. What are some of the characteristics of the beast that has two horns like a lamb? What does this beast represent?
2. What two commandments are directly targeted when the papacy "thinks to change times and laws"?
3. If asked to demonstrate from Scripture that Saturday is still the true Sabbath, what texts would you use?

### **Chapter 26: A Work of Reform**

1. What is the seal of God's law? Where is a seal usually found?
2. There is one unerring rule by which all opinions, doctrines, and theories are to be tested. What is this rule?
3. What are some reasons people give for not keeping the Sabbath? How valid are they?

### **Chapter 27: Modern Revivals**

1. How do revivals in the church of today compare with early Christian revivals?
2. Some teach that the law was abolished when Jesus died on the cross. According to the Scriptures, is this true?
3. What is the relationship between faith and works? Explain how these interact in your own life.

### **Chapter 28: Facing Life's Record**

1. Who is first examined in the investigative judgment? See 1 Peter 4: 17.
2. Read Psalm 56:8 and Revelation 20:12. Heaven keeps a careful and complete record of every person's life. Why do you think that God records all the details of human life in His books?
3. What is the one thing we "must" do in the time of investigative judgment?

### **Chapter 29: The Origin of Evil**

1. What is the definition of "sin," according to Scripture?
2. Why did God allow Satan continue his rebellion rather than to exterminate him immediately? What is a good result that has come from God's restraint and patience?
3. According to Isaiah 14, why did Lucifer lead a revolt against God?
4. Jesus conquered sin and death through His sacrifice on the cross. How does this reality affect your day-to-day life?

### **Chapter 30: Enmity Between Man and Satan**

1. Why does Satan hate the human race?
2. When did Jesus implant enmity against Satan in the human heart? How does the "God-shaped vacuum" in the human heart give us an advantage in the presentation of the gospel?
3. What attitude makes us a mark for Satan's attacks?
4. If the tempter cannot control the will or force us to sin, then why has everyone sinned? In what way does Jesus inspire us in our battle against sin?

### Chapter 31: Agency of Evil Spirits

1. In some parts of the world, particularly in less developed areas, the ministry of angels is commonly revealed. Why is this?
2. What is the difference between an evil spirit and God's Spirit?
3. Read Psalm 34:7. If we have given our lives to Jesus, can Satan or an evil spirit harm us? Should we fear evil spirits?

### Chapter 32: Snares of Satan

1. One of Satan's snares is to "engross the mind" with distractions. What distractions keep you from devoting yourself to Bible study and prayer?
2. Satan proposes that what we believe is of "no consequence." How does postmodern thought reflect this deception of the adversary?
3. While God gives enough evidence for faith, He does not remove all cause for doubt. What is the root cause of doubt? Can we experience the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives even if we cannot explain or answer every question?
4. None of the snares of Satan can keep God's "presence from His people." Memorize the following promise: "Every temptation, every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted, 'not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts' (Zechariah 4:6)."

### Chapter 33: The First Great Deception

1. In the entire universe, our world alone fell into sin. What was the lie that Satan presented to Eve that remains one of his most successful deceptions?
2. Does the Bible teach that humans have natural immortality? Support your answer from the Bible.
3. Read Ezekiel 18:20; 33:11; Malachi 4:1; Matthew 10:28; Revelation 20:11-15. The idea of "eternal torment in hell" has led many to reject God. What is the correct Bible teaching on hell and the destruction of the wicked?
4. Universalism teaches that everyone will be saved eventually. Is this true? Are there conditions to salvation?
5. What are the attributes of God's character that cause you to love Him?

### Chapter 34: Can Our Dead Speak to Us?

1. Read Psalm 146:3, 4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; John 11:11, 14. The Bible teaches that the dead are unconscious and cannot communicate with the living. If someone who looks like a departed relative or friend appears to you, who are you actually seeing?
2. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10 and Revelation 13:13. The Bible states that the manifestation of Satan in the last days will be real and will deceive many. How can you be protected from deception when this occurs?
3. Have you been visited by spirits claiming to be a dead relative? Have you ever tampered with Ouija boards, tarot cards, horoscopes, or psychics? How does this chapter help you to deal with such encounters with the supernatural?

### Chapter 35: Liberty of Conscience Threatened

1. The issue of the Sabbath will be central in the final conflict. Why is God so concerned about something that many think is a small detail?
2. What is the connection between liberty of conscience and the true seventh-day Sabbath? Are there any

current events in your nation that may threaten liberty of conscience?

3. In what ways are Catholics and Protestants uniting today? In what way is this a fulfillment of prophecy?
4. There are many dedicated Christians within the Roman Catholic community. What are the spiritual characteristics of these children of God? What will God do to help lead them to the truth as it is in Jesus?
5. The Papacy has mingled pagan practices with Christianity. Are there ways in which we mix worldly practices with our worship of God?

### **Chapter 36: The Impending Conflict**

1. In what ways can we make God's law attractive for people to follow?
2. When trouble comes to us we too often blame God; yet who is the real cause?
3. Spiritualism will infiltrate even the church in the last days. In what ways is this happening?
4. Before Jesus comes nearly the whole world will be arrayed against God and His law. Where do you stand in relation to these events?

### **Chapter 37: The Scriptures a Safeguard**

1. God will do much to heighten spiritual awareness before the Second Coming. In light of Revelation 14:9-11, what will be the outcome for those who do not heed the message?
2. What is the place for reason and intellect in Bible study?
3. How can you increase your love of Scripture and Bible study?
4. Many Christians simply look to their ministers to interpret the Bible for them. Does this mean that one should never seek counsel from another human on Biblical interpretation? Explain.

### **Chapter 38: The Final Warning**

1. Compare and contrast the seal of God with the mark of the beast.
2. What is spiritual Babylon? Read the biblical account of the fall of literal Babylon in Daniel 5. How does this compare with the fall of spiritual Babylon?
3. Followers of the true Sabbath will be persecuted. How can we be spiritually prepared for this event?
4. Read Colossians 4:6. How does this text help us know how far we should one in "attacking the sins of the church and the nation"?

### **Chapter 39: The Time of Trouble**

1. How will the final time of trouble be different from any previous trial in human history?
2. Satan will counterfeit the Second Coming of Jesus. How might you prepare for this deception?
3. What special graces will be given to God's people so they can remain faithful to God during this time? See Daniel 12:1.

### **Chapter 40: God's People Delivered**

1. The God of Israel will interpose in the "hour of utmost extremity." Can you think of a life experience where God stepped in to deliver you at a critical moment?
2. Read Revelation 14:1-5. What makes the 144,000 a special group? Why are they the only ones who can sing the song of Moses and the Lamb?
3. As the Decalogue is revealed in the sky, the enemies of the law realize that the "Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God." What can you do to help people understand and accept the Sabbath truth?



4. The redeemed are to be welcomed into the “joy of the Lord.” Reflect upon the wonderful things you will see and experience throughout eternity.

### **Chapter 41: Desolation of the Earth**

1. When the wicked see that they are lost, they are “filled with regret.” If this is the case, why are they not spared from destruction?
2. Read Leviticus 16:18-22. What did the priests do with the scapegoat during the Atonement? How does this compare to what happens to Satan and his angels during the 1,000 years?
3. God’s people will spend the 1,000 years in heaven with God. What will they do during this time?

### **Chapter 42: The Controversy Ended**

1. What does the end of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan mean for God’s universe?
2. Satan’s character remains unchanged from the time when he first fell into sin until the present. Read Isaiah 14:13, 14. How will Satan behave when the New Jerusalem descends?
3. Malachi 4:1 says that the “wicked will be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up.” How can a God of love and mercy destroy this earth and its inhabitants?
4. The *Conflict of the Ages* series ends as it began in *Patriarchs and Prophets* with the universe clean of sin and all creation declaring that God is love. How have you come to understand the love of God better through reading this series?