

Threads From the East

by Gerald L. Finneman

Oriental religions are losing their hold on the people of the East. Leaders of those religions look toward the West for new converts and new life. In the West popular Christianity has lost its hold on the people, creating a spiritual emptiness. Thus the wisdom and salvation from the East sweeps into the vacuum.

India has apparently still a mission to fulfil, for her thought is slowly beginning to mold the thought of Europe and of America; our keenest minds are today studying her philosophy; our New Theology is founded upon the 014 old Vedanta [Hindu pantheistic philosophy based on the Vedas-the four ancient sacred books of Hinduism]. Jean Delaire, *National Review* (London), September 1908, p. 131. (Cited by W.A. Spicer, in *Our Day in the Light of Prophecy*, pp. 272, 273.

The New Age Movement with its emphasis on potentiality and with its aim of unity within the human race and also man's unity with nature are simply new views of ancient religions from the East. In the nineteenth century, along with the spread of Spiritualism dating from the "rappings" of devils with the Fox sisters of Hydesville, New York, several other spiritualistic movements began, such as Christian Science, Mormonism, the Shakers, the Swedenborg moment, and the Theosophical movement. All are Spiritualism in essence.

It was from the East that man first put away his knowledge of the true and living God. The East is the home of religious error and from there comes a flood of strange doctrines. Isaiah bears a message for the latter days regarding the faith-destroying influences of the East. He wrote of hands stretching across the gulf between God's people and spiritualism both in his, and in our, day: "They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and clasp hands with pagans." Isaiah 2:6.

Concepts of mysticism spread like wildfire in our day. They spread with a swiftness that, if it were not for the warnings in the Word of God, might surprise us. Whenever Scripture primacy is lost sight of, rationalism of eastern philosophy takes over.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss some of the threads of Oriental religious philosophy that are making their way into the fabric of Christianity in general and into Adventism in particular. I wish also to share my own experience in dealing with some of this philosophy that was presented to me shortly after becoming an Adventist.

A relatively short time after the death of Daniel the prophet, classical Hinduism began (about 500 B.C.). During the time following, the major literature of Hinduism was composed and the philosophical systems developed. Six philosophical systems are found in Hinduism. These are Mimamsa, Vendanta, Yoga, Samkhya, Vaisheshika and Nyaya. (The last four emphasize yogic practices joined with an understanding of basic principles of metaphysics and epistemology). Nyaya includes an analysis of logic. Nyaya is closely associated with Vaisheshika and these two are often grouped together. The emphasis in this system is a method of argument, particularly on the elaboration of logical theory, which is said to justify Vaisheshika metaphysics. In time Nyaya developed a variety of arguments for the existence of the Universal god as conceived by Vaisheshika.

The Vaisheshika philosophical system is thought to have been developed in the third century B.C. This system is theistic and sees God as guiding the world in accordance with the law of karma, the law of cause and effect. The law is known as the "law of justice" (especially in Theosophy, later in the West) by which man and beast are governed. Coupled with immortal soul philosophy, reincarnation is the process of human development by this law of cause and effect, according to this belief. It is the law of nature. What one sows (s)he shall reap.

While some religions of the East are theistic, others are atheistic. However, all philosophies are alike in several teachings such as pantheism, the law of karma, the immortality of the soul and reincarnation. Buddhism was founded about the same time as classical Hinduism. Siddhartha Gautama (c. 560-c. 489 B.C.), the Buddha, lived in northern India. Buddha, "the enlightened," was regarded as one in whom was embodied divine wisdom and virtue.

There are four major teachings in Buddhism, all of which are coupled with the law of karma. These are called the Four Noble Truths. "Abbreviated they are:

1. All living is painful.
2. Suffering is due to craving or desire.
3. Release from suffering comes when desire ceases.
4. The way to cessation of suffering is by the Eight-fold Path of 'right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.'" *The Story of Religion*, p. 170.

"The First Noble Truth" is suffering (duhkha). This means that all beings—gods, humans, animals, ghosts, hell-beings are governed by samsara, a cycle of rebirth. This is a maze of suffering in which their actions based on karma, the law of cause and effect keep them wandering in death and rebirth into different life forms on earth.

"The Second Noble Truth" is that all suffering has a cause in one's cravings or desires. Involved is a process governed by an unbroken chain of causation.

"The Third Noble Truth" is that this chain can be broken. Suffering can cease. This is called Nirvana. This means there can be an escape from samsara. There can be a cessation of rebirth. Through right thinking and denial of self one is able to reach the divine state of Nirvana, which releases one from misdirected desire.

"The Fourth Noble Truth" is that the way of escape from this continual suffering brought on by karma can be broken by the practice of the Eightfold Path. This is a combination of ethical and disciplinary practices, training in concentration and meditation, and the development of enlightened wisdom. ("It is essentially salvation by psychology, and Buddha was the first 'practical psychologist.'" *The Story of Religion*, p. 170).

Everything done by devotees of Hinduism and of Buddhism is intimately involved in the concept of merit-making. By performing meritorious acts, individuals, through the working of karma, can seek to assure themselves rebirth in one of the heavens or a better station in life on earth. Karma is the fundamental concept in all Indian religions, whether theistic or atheistic.

Entwined with the law of karma is the concept of pantheism. In pantheism God is reduced to a life principle working in all living things. This life principle is the law of cause and effect, the unalterable law of nature. The moral law is viewed in the same light as that of nature.

Instead of moral law being the statement of a principle of right in mandatory form by competent authority with adequate penalty for disobedience, it is changed into a common law of nature. In this scheme of things penalty for transgression of moral law is reduced from responsibility and accountability and consequent punishment on the part of the transgressor to merely the natural consequence of the law of cause and effect. God is removed as judge. He is relegated to a law of life. Or considered as Ultimate Reality, an Impersonal Being, he governs and judges by the law of karma only.

The influence of the eastern religions is observable not only in the establishment of Hinduism and Buddhism in the West, but also by their influence on certain Christians both in theory and in practice. This is observed in the two concepts concerning the justice of God and the atonement. There is an attempt to reduce the justice of God merely to the law of cause and effect—of sowing and reaping. The atonement is then viewed as a merit system not unlike that of eastern religions. You must bear your own punishment until you can break out of the cycle of sin, guilt and death. Eastern religions have influenced some in the West to look away from, and to deny, the objective atonement made by Christ on the cross and to concentrate on a subjective atonement which, to them, must be accomplished within themselves. Very little, or no, consideration is given to Jesus as Representative and Substitute. Christ as the second Adam is never an appreciation. He is considered almost wholly as an example for a subjective atonement on the part of the believer.

The threads from the East woven into the doctrinal fabric of Christianity, the basis for apostasy in our day, came by way of theosophy in the last century, a few years before the beginning of the "loud cry" in 1888. Theosophy is an amalgamation between the ancient religious philosophies of the east, namely, Brahmanism (Hinduism), Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism with Christianity. It is a mixture of rationalism, psychology, magic, cosmology, and pantheism. In the early part of this century, teachings of theosophy became very popular with numerous literary and scientific intellectuals of Western Europe and the United States. The Theosophical Society was founded in New York by Madame Helena Blavatsky and H.S. Olcott in 1875. It is common knowledge that theosophy prepared the way for today's New Age Movement.

There are three main objectives of the Theosophical Society: 1) to form the nucleus for the Universal Brotherhood of Mankind; 2) to promote the study of the ancient wisdom literature of the east in connection with the study of all world religions and science; 3) to investigate the hidden mysteries of nature, also the latent powers of the psychic and spiritual energies within mankind. (See *A Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1865*, pp. 237-239).

Those objectives are based on three fundamental and interrelated propositions: 1) Pantheism. Mankind, God and nature are all one in essence. Whether one speaks about God or nature or man s(he) speaks of them as identical entities. This is the "Unchanging" or "Ultimate Reality" of eastern religions. 2) Karma, the law of justice. This is inseparable from the first proposition. This is the law of cause and effect. Everything is governed by this law. It is the law of nature, therefore of mankind and even of God. All are under this law of justice, of sowing and reaping, of cause and effect. Coupled with the doctrine of natural immortality of the soul, the law of karma effects reincarnation endless times with the person entering into different, or same, life forms. 3) Brotherhood is a fact of nature. Since nature, God, and man are one in essence, it then follows that we (mankind) ought to love one another. These are the fundamental propositions upon which the objectives and doctrines of theosophy rest. Following is a summary statement of these three propositions:

The first postulates an omnipresent, boundless, and immutable principle that transcends human understanding. It is the one unchanging reality, or infinite potentiality, inherent in all life and covers all that humans have tried to say about God. The second deals with the universality of the law of periodicity recorded by science as found in all nature. As morning, noon, and night succeeded by morning again, so birth, youth, adulthood and death are succeeded by rebirth. Reincarnation is the process of human development, in which all growth is governed by the law of justice and karma. The third proposition declares the fundamental identity of all souls with the universal Over-Soul suggesting that brotherhood is a fact of nature, and that obligatory pilgrimage for every soul through numerous cycles of incarnation. Theosophy admits of no privileges or special gifts in humans except those won by their own effort and merit. Perfected individuals and great teachers, such as Buddha, Jesus, and the mahatmas, are universal beings, the flower of evolution. Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia, 1992. under "Theosophy."

Theosophists declare themselves to be Christian. Their main emphasis here is on love for all as taught by Jesus. The Society takes a strong stand against the Old Testament, especially the law of Moses. They claim that "Biblical people prefer the law of Moses to Christ's law of love." *A Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1865*, p. 238. One reason for their stand against the Old Testament is their aversion to the curse placed upon Canaan by Noah. The curse was that Canaan would be a servant of servants (Genesis 9:25). Theosophists do not believe in servanthood, only brotherhood and equal rights. The teaching of pantheism, of karma and of universal brotherhood in theosophism deny servanthood. Since all are of one essence no curse should be pronounced, according to this doctrine. Because karma, the law of justice, is a universal principle, all particulars must be governed by the universal law of cause and effect. This also extends to the practice of capital punishment. Love based on pantheism denies capital punishment.

Liberal philosophy of intellectuals both in religion and in politics shaped the laws and policies of Western Europe and the United States concerning the death penalty after World War Two. This philosophy has also been promoted in legislation involving environmental issues, brotherhood, peace movements, pacifism, along with civil, animal and children's rights.

Today, liberal philosophy in religion considers God's wrath from the standpoint of teachings derived from Eastern Religions. To them His wrath can be based and explained only on the basis of the law of cause and effect. This, in turn, is based on pantheism. God, man and nature are all one in essence and the law of nature is only cause and effect.

How does this impact on the atonement? If law and sin are only cause and effect, then the death of Jesus can only be of a moral influence and not a judicial necessity. According to Eastern philosophy, Christ could not have come from a position above all law to place Himself under any punitive law of condemnation such as is the clear teaching of Scripture.

Another factor involved in this is the merit system which also comes out of the Eastern Religions. You get what you deserve or earn through the law of karma. Therefore, any vicarious substitution in terms of atonement concerning Christ in place of fallen man is anathema. Pantheism, karma, and Universal Brotherhood propositions unite to deny objective atonement. One must make atonement subjectively, which is explained in terms of cause and effect. One must carry his own weight of guilt and sin. Jesus is only an example in this scheme of things. Essentially, this teaching does away with the sufferings and death of Christ for us. Spiritualism is strictly against the atonement of Christ. It is of special interest to note that one of the supreme purposes of Spiritualism is to do away with

the death of Christ as effectual in atonement. It claims that it will do away with the atoning blood of Christ when it gains the world. It boldly declares:

Spiritualism will sweep the world and make it a better place to live. When it rules over all the world, it will banish the blood of Christ. Spiritualism has a mighty mission to fulfill, and spiritists are missionaries of this new teaching of the so-called "Christ-Spirit."—*The Teachings and Phenomena of Spiritualism*, p. 72.

Spiritualism teaches also that it is directly related to the principles of the past:

Shall we come down to the plain simple truth, that the phenomenal aspects of modern spiritualism reproduce all the essential principles of the magic, witchcraft and sorcery of the past? The same powers are involved ... the same intelligences operating.—JJ. Morse [Spiritualist leader], *Practical Occultism*, 1888.

Consider what Ellen White wrote about modern spiritualism:

As spiritualism more closely imitates the nominal Christianity of the day, it has greater power to deceive and ensnare. Satan himself is converted, after the modern order of things. He will appear in the character of an angel of light. Through the agency of spiritualism, miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed and many undeniable wonders will be performed. And as the spirits will profess faith in the Bible, and manifest respect for the institutions of the church, their work will be accepted as manifestations of divine power.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

One of the main teachings of modern spiritualism is that of the love of God. But it is a counterfeit love, for it strains out any idea of personal accountability to a personal God. And it detests the doctrine of atonement, of substitution, of salvation in Christ.

Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 558.

Notwithstanding that the teaching of substitution has been misused and abused within Christianity, it remains the basis of Christianity (and of Judaism). This central teaching continues to be undermined by all the religions of the world. Some within Christianity have added their logical and emotional arguments as weapons against this clear teaching of the Bible.

We must not plunge straight back into paganism—the refined thought of the ancient philosophers who wrote and spoke of ethics and deities, but who left their followers to wander in a wilderness of darkness "without God and without hope in the world." Those philosophers were kind and cultured and very learned men, but they knew not God. Their's was the philosophy of unbelief. Today this philosophy is the philosophy of modern skepticism.

For a time, Eastern thoughts came stealing unseen throughout Christendom. Now, nearly every characteristic of antiquity is reappearing. Now the effects can be seen in the leading lines of Western thought, both politically and religiously. Eastern philosophy's chief strength lies in its intellectual attraction, both philosophically and scientifically.

At the turn of the last century, Kellogg and his close associates became enamored with sentiments from the East. Just as Satan did everything he could to sidetrack the Exodus Movement before it entered earthly Canaan, so he attempted to inject the Advent Movement with Eastern ideas. He dressed those ideas in the language of the message itself. It came clothed in religious and scientific spiritualistic sentiments representing God as an essence pervading nature.

Kellogg toyed with Eastern concepts before James White died in 1881. He discussed his notions with Ellen White before that time. He regarded his thoughts as great light. She disagreed. She counseled, "Never teach such theories in our institutions; do not present them to our people."

This subject has been kept before me for the past twenty years, yea, for more than twenty years. Before my husband's death, Dr. Kellogg came to my room to tell me that he had great light. He sat down and told me what it was. It was similar to some of the views that he has presented in *Living Temple*. I said "Those theories are wrong. I have met them before. I had to meet them when I first began to travel." ...

Ministers and people were deceived by these sophistries. They lead to making God a nonentity. We are to rebuke these theories in the name of the Lord.

As I talked about these things, laying the whole matter before Dr. Kellogg, and showing him what the outcome of receiving these theories would be, he seemed to be dazed. I said, "Never teach such theories in our institutions; do not present them to the people."—Ms 70, 1905, pp. 3, 4. ("A Message of Warning" a talk given at the General Conference of 1905). *Manuscript Releases Volume Five*, pp. 278, 279.

In 1888 Kellogg was one of those who struggled with the concepts that Jones and Waggoner taught, especially righteousness by faith. That message, when received, helped him. But he turned from it and eventually regressed into pantheism, the counterfeit. Had the message of righteousness by faith remained central to him, in heart and mind, it would have saved him from the counterfeit. Instead, he led others away from that message which was to enlighten the world with its splendor.

Kellogg apparently laid his pantheistic sentiments aside until the mid 1890's. In 1895 A.H. Lewis, a Seventh Day Baptist, editor of the *Sabbath Recorder*, went to Battle Creek and stayed in the Kellogg home. He was a pantheist and he shared his ideas with Kellogg. Two years later we have recorded for us Kellogg's first public teachings on pantheism. They are found in the *General Conference Bulletin*, 1897. He presented a series of lectures at the ministerial institute that preceded the General Conference held that year in Lincoln, Nebraska. He drew heavily upon the writings of Ellen White in an attempt to use them to establish his philosophy of the East within Adventism.

I have not read how Kellogg got his ideas originally. We do know that the Theosophy Society began in the United States in 1875 and he was thinking in theosophical categories before 1881. Ellen White linked the Kellogg teaching with theosophy. This link is found in a warning written concerning the teachings of pantheism taught to students at Battle Creek Medical College:

Let the world go into spiritualism, into theosophy, into pantheism, if they choose. We are to have nothing to do with this deceptive branch of Satan's work. The pleasing sentiments of pantheism will lead many souls into forbidden paths. God forbids his servants to leave their

fields of labor to enter into discussion of these sentiments. The last testimony published opens to our people the danger of these theories, and the testimonies published in the future will urge still more strongly the necessity of lifting up and carrying high the banner on which are inscribed the words, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." God's people are to let no one take this banner from their hands. I am instructed that false theories will be presented and that some in the medical missionary work, who have been wavering, will yield up the faith, and give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. *Testimonies to the Church Regarding our Youth Going to Battle Creek to Obtain an Education*, pp. 43, 44.

On many occasions Mrs. White warned of the inroads of theosophy. There are "pleasing sentiments" in it that attract. It is a counterfeit of the truth. But its essence is that of spiritualism. It comes in through speculation of the Scriptures along with higher criticism. There is a mysticism of Oriental religions involved in it. It is pantheistic in nature. Theosophical pantheism was evidently what Dr. Kellogg was subtly drawn into. Ellen White called it the Alpha of apostasy. And it is not out of line to believe that the Omega will be of the same substance. She wrote:

There is danger in having the least connection with theosophy, or Spiritualism. It is Spiritualism in essence, and will always lead in the same path as Spiritualism. These are the doctrines that seduce the people whom Christ has purchased with His own blood. You cannot break this spell. You have not broken it. *Manuscript Releases Volume Thirteen*, p. 1.

W.A. Spicer, newly converted from the Seventh Day Baptist church, worked at the Battle Creek Sanitarium first as a call boy, then as a secretary to Dr. J.H. Kellogg. He later (1898) went to India. Upon his return in 1901 he recognized eastern pantheism in Kellogg's teachings. The leaven of the spiritualistic philosophy was hindered within Adventism by the work of Ellen White, Spicer and others who realized what was taking place. But that leaven continues to work. The Omega will penetrate even more deeply than the Alpha.

Spiritualism from the East came into Christianity in the last days, just as Isaiah predicted. "Thou hast forsaken Thy people the house of Jacob, because they are filled with customs from the East, and are soothsayers like the Philistines." Isa. 2:6, A.R.V. The death grip tentacles of the eastern religions that were beginning to take root in the minds of the Indian philosophers in Isaiah's day were designed to grow and strengthen and choke the life out of Christianity in the last days. That design included the suffocation of the third angel of Revelation 14 also. But God raised up a prophetess in the last days to give insight into, and stop, the subtle workings of the philosophies of the East masquerading as deeper insights into the nature of God and His dealings with man.

The farther Christianity has drifted from God and the teachings of the Bible the more its adherents have suffered the loss of the power of the gospel. Shifting and sliding resulted. In the 1960's a paradigm shift took place in the thinking and practices of many young people. It was a shift in morality from basic Christianity, Jewish and Moslem ethics based on Scripture, to immorality. Whatever parents and authority stood for, many young people were against. During that time many joined what some called the "Hippie Movement." Drugs freely flowed East to West. Many of the "Rock Stars" of that time traveled to the Orient to learn at the feet of the religious philosophers and mystics of the East. These entertainers, in turn, influenced the youth of western civilization. That influence continues to grow among old and young, not merely in music and drugs, but also in the philosophy of life.

Most of the environmental issues today are based on pantheistic belief. Many Christians, including Adventists, celebrate "Earth Day" and other such celebrations unaware of pagan origins and purposes. "Mother Earth" is celebrated annually. Music scores, inspired by pantheistic notions, are written and performed in the worship of "Mother." This is simply a rerun of the ancient fertility worship of Egypt, Canaan and Babylon.

"Animal rights" activists are also closely tied to eastern philosophy. Even socialist activists are influenced by the same philosophy. Participation in the movements attempting to preserve the rain forests, and in laws relating to the ozone layer are influenced by philosophy from the East. Fears generated by unproven assumptions that the earth is warming also come from that same belief system. Leaders of these movements want everyone to return to nature. They demonstrate and lobby for laws to "protect" creatures from annihilation, such as the spotted owl in Northwestern United States. Their conclusions have been proven false, yet they were able to influence legislation that destroyed the livelihood of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lumber workers in the process. Some of the environmental activists are more interested in so-called "animal rights" than human rights. (Many activists who march for environmental rights are foremost in demonstrating for abortion "rights.") I am not denying the fact that God's people should indeed be kind to animals, nor the fact that we should help the worthy poor, and that we should positively be good stewards of the earth. But the movements on environmental issues, the social gospel and animal rights sweeping Western civilization are based not on the gospel of Christ but on the counterfeit philosophy from the East.

We can look to the East and observe their fetishes about animals and their lack of concern for fellow human beings. There, today, animals have a higher priority of life than mothers who do not give birth to male children. Some of those women are doused with flammable liquid and set on fire by their husbands and/or other members of their families. That same mentality will shape the world in its attitude toward the remnant who, conscientiously, are unable to go along with the customs of the world as revealed in Revelation twelve and thirteen.

At this juncture I would like to shift to, and share, some experiences I have had with philosophy from the East. In the late 1960's a close friend presented to me a study on "the wrath of God." Previously we had studied the writings of Jones, Waggoner and Prescott in the vault at Union College, at home, at work, and while we traveled. We spent two years together. He then moved away to work in Oklahoma and Texas. There he evidently listened to a minister who taught that God is not directly involved in punishment. My friend traveled back to Lincoln, Nebraska to share these new insights with me.

After using the Scriptures and impeccable logic he convinced me that God did not actively destroy. Toward the end of the study I jumped to my feet and exclaimed, "God CANNOT kill!" He, with his jaw resting in his hand, replied, "I wondered if you would come to the same conclusion as I did." Later, however, through study of both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy my new found belief was modified. I did find that God is credited with things He did not actively do, but simply allowed the natural law of cause and effect to work its course. At times He permitted Satan to destroy. But I could not escape the fact that God, as Governor, at times engaged in execution, either directly proceeding from Himself or by His holy angels or through His commands to His people, including prophets.

Later, during the early 1980's, I was confronted with a book written by Fred Wright, entitled, *Behold Your God*. In two churches, in two different conferences, this book was circulated and studied by some of my church members. In the first church I was asked by a

member to present a study to interested church members concerning the concepts in that book. About that time, or just before then, I began reading about the pantheistic concepts of the Eastern religions, especially the law of karma. I observed some of those same ideas in Mister Wright's book.

Let's consider some of his thoughts. Fred Wright gives three of his opinions in the Introduction to his book, *Behold Your God*. These opinions have to do with the character of God and their relationships to God and people. The third proposition has to do with what he calls a false concept of God. He writes concerning this: "Unless delivered from this and initiated into a true knowledge of God, it will be impossible to enter into a full and perfect Christian experience, and the prospects of eternal life will be endangered."

So this, to him, is very serious. No doubt this concern causes one carefully to consider what is written, especially if his eternal destiny is at stake. In his book Wright has some fairly weighty logical arguments. He also considers some "hard passages" that contradict his positions. Several of his arguments are good. Some are a bit sketched. When I came to his chapter about God and the law I realized where he desires to take the reader. Although he may not have considered his aim, the path to which he points is pantheism.

In his chapter "Magnifying The Law" he presents to us his understanding of God and the law. Ostensibly he seeks to magnify the law; in reality he reduces God to the level of His law. Wright makes no distinction between God and law. To him both are the same. He wrote:

To see one is to see the other. This means that God Christ and the law are three *identical entities*. Between them then is no difference even though it is difficult to grasp this. There is the inclination to think of God as a Being of living power with infinite possibilities of exercising His will. We tend to see the law as being a much lesser thing merely the spoken will of the supreme ruler and certainly not something which is the expression of Himself.

The mind must be re-educated away from such ideas. The law of God is to find its true level in the thinking of those through whom the Lord will finish His work. *Behold Your God*, p. 158. [Emphasis, supplied].

To hold to the belief that God is above all law, according to Wright, "is to hold a position of serious error." (*ibid.*) A corollary to this "serious error" is found on page 227 where he deals with the sixth commandment in connection with the destruction of the Egyptians in the days of Moses. Notice his thought:

As the law is the definition and limitation of righteousness, and as God's character is the transcript of the law, then all that God did must be within those principles. As the law says, "Thou shalt not kill" then God did not destroy or kill in the land of Egypt.

Any teaching or view which sees God as operating other than within these limits is erroneous, and must be rejected as such. It is not the teaching of Christ and is therefore of the devil." p. 227.

Pretty strong language here. However, he makes no distinction between execution and murder. The commandment is against murder, not execution. Laws for capital punishment are found in the next two chapters of Exodus. Ten crimes that called for the death penalty are listed, clearly illustrating that the sixth commandment is dealing with murder and not

execution. The Hebrew root term (*rasah*) used in the commandment is not the general term "kill" but a more precise meaning of "murder." Earlier in the chapter from which we quoted entitled, "God Is Not A Criminal," Wright equates destruction with sin. He has an interesting syllogism on page 221. It is this: "God has never sinned, therefore he has never destroyed." To say that God does destroy, according to this kind of logic, makes God a sinner. In another chapter, Wright goes to great lengths attempting to re-educate away from the idea that God destroyed sinners with a flood in Noah's day. He clouds that which is clear. Following is a non-obfuscating testimony from Ellen White in its straightforward manner:

As they reasoned in Noah's day they reason today, when the warning message is proclaimed to fear God and keep His commandments. The wrath of God is soon to fall on all the sinful and disobedient and they will perish in the general conflagration. Professed servants of Christ who are unfaithful, who do not reverence God and with fear prepare for the terrible future event will lull themselves to carnal security with their fallacious reasoning, as they did in Noah's day. "God is too good and too merciful [they reason] to save just a few who keep the Sabbath and believe the message of warning. The great men and the good men, the philosophers and men of wisdom would see the Sabbath and the shortness of time, if it were true." They do not believe a merciful God who made men will consume them with fire because they do not believe the warnings given. This, they reason, is not in accordance with God. ...

God's love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner. Men reason from their own low standard of right and justice. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." (Ps. 50:21). They measure God by themselves. They reason as to how they would act under the circumstances and decide God would do as they imagine they would do.

God's goodness and long forbearance, His patience and mercy exercised to His subjects, will not hinder Him from punishing the sinner who refused to be obedient to His requirements. It is not for a man—a criminal against God's holy law, pardoned only through the great sacrifice He made in giving His Son to die for the guilty because His law was changeless—to dictate to God. After all this effort on the part of God to preserve the sacred and exalted character of His law, if men, through the sophistry of the devil, turn the mercy and condescension of God into a curse, they must suffer the penalty. Because Christ died they consider they have liberty to transgress God's holy law that condemns the transgressor, and would complain of its strictness and its penalty as severe and unlike God. They are uttering the words Satan utters to millions, to quiet their conscience in rebellion against God.

In no kingdom or government is it left to the lawbreakers to say what punishment is to be executed against those who have broken the law. All we have, all the bounties of His grace which we possess, we owe to God. The aggravating character of sin against such a God cannot be estimated any more than the heavens can be measured with a span. God is a moral governor as well as a Father. He is the Lawgiver. He makes and executes His laws. Law that has no penalty is of no force.

The plea may be made that a loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God by fire while He had the power to relieve them. But God would, for the good of His subjects and for their safety, punish the transgressor. God does not work on the plan of man. He can do infinite justice that man has no right to do before his fellow man Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but God drowned the vast world. Lot would have had no right to inflict

punishment on his sons-in-law, but God would do it in strict justice."—Ms 5, 1876, pp. 1-3. *Manuscript Releases Volume Twelve*, pp. 207-209.

Having reduced God, who is above all law, to the level of law, Wright confines God's wrath to man and to nature. To him "the wrath of God is ... a perversion and derangement of the powers in man and nature into wrathful and destructive forces only awaiting the opportunity to embark on a rampage of devastation ..." *Op. cit.*, p. 394.

His opinion about God and law is uncomfortably close to pantheism from the East, but because he comes from a Christian perspective his thought is more closely identified with theosophy. Here we observe that his proposed re-education must disabuse our minds from any idea that God is not above His law. In contrast to his philosophy about God and the law being "identical entities" consider what revelation clearly teaches: "The Son of Man is ... Lord of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:28). The Sabbath is of the moral law. As Lord of the Sabbath He is also Lord of the whole law. As Lord He is above all law. Then when He became mankind's Representative and Substitute He came under its jurisdiction and its condemnation.

Following are several statements from Ellen White concerning Christ as above all law whether moral or natural. It was because He was above the moral law that He could come under it to redeem us from its just claim of eternal death.

[God] gave his beloved Son, who was above law, and one with himself to meet the penalty which his justice demanded. ST Feb. 25, 1897.

Christ was under no obligation to become man's sacrifice. He was above law. But he took upon him the form of a servant, and went without the camp, bearing our reproach. ST July 15, 1880.

The Son of God came voluntarily to accomplish the work of atonement. There was no obligatory yoke upon Him, for he was independent and above all law. The angels, as God's intelligent messengers, were under the yoke of obligation; no personal sacrifice of theirs could atone for the guilt of fallen man. Christ alone was free from the claims of the law to undertake the redemption of the sinful race. He had power to lay down His life and to take it up again. 4T 120, 121.

The men of Noah's time, in their philosophy and worldly wisdom, thought God could not destroy the world with a flood, for the waters of the ocean could not be sufficient for this. But God made the philosophy and science of men foolishness when the time had fully come to execute his word. ... [Man] found too late that his wisdom was foolishness; that the lawgiver is greater than the laws of nature. The hand of omnipotence is at no loss for ways and means to accomplish his purposes. He could reach into the bowels of the earth and call forth his weapons waters them concealed to aid in the destruction of the corrupt inhabitants of the old world. But let us all bear in mind that those who perished in that awful judgment had an offer of escape. ...

As in Noah's day, philosophers and men of science see nature's laws but cannot carry their wisdom higher and see beyond the laws nature's Lawgiver. ST Jan. 3, 1878.

The law [of nature] is never greater than the lawgiver, nor are the things created greater than the Creator. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man. As men are warned of impending judgement, thousands will say, It cannot be. They will

despise the truth, make light of prophecy, and deride the teacher of righteousness. ST Feb. 24, 1887.

Let's return now to the experience I began to relate concerning several church members who were interested in what Fred Wright wrote. We came together on a Sabbath afternoon to study the concepts. I pointed out his basic concept about God and law, but did not spend a lot of time with it per se. Instead we studied the general concept of karma of the Eastern religions.

I used syllogisms to make a point concerning the fallacy of logic over revelation in trying to find out about God. The first syllogism was "God is love; therefore love is God." I asked if this is true. After some thought most of the members said, no. The premise is true, but not the conclusion. The next equation I wrote on the board was "God is life; therefore life is God." Again there was agreement as on the first syllogism. The third equation was "God is law; therefore law is God." As we spent time on these three syllogisms we observed where each conclusion leads. The first leads into "free-lovism" which knocked for admittance into the Advent structure in formative years and again at the turn of the century under Kellogg's influential teachings. The second and third propositions lead into pantheism. All three are related to Universal Brotherhood, pantheism and the law of karma.

(Years later I read an Adventist minister's sermon who, during the 1960's, on his telecast program called the "Adventist Hour" used the above syllogisms about "love is God" and "law is God" to establish his pantheistic new light. Naturally he pictured God as One who does not judge. In time that minister lost his way. He followed his philosophy "love is God" to its logical conclusion. It became his god of fertility. A member of a family who first followed Wright out of the Adventist church, but later returned, said to me that Fred followed his conclusions to the same end as did that minister.

During that same time I read a sermon entitled "Is God a Sadist?" by another Adventist preacher. Should God destroy the wicked by fire, He would be classed as a sadist according to this minister).

Wright's book continues to have great influence among many Adventists. Others teach similar, if not identical, theories. These become all absorbing with some. Some persons have given up the doctrine of the atonement in the context of the investigative judgment as given to and by the Seventh-day Adventist church because it does not agree with their ideas of justice and mercy. Others let go the doctrine of substitutionary atonement at Calvary feeling that that was not enough to fully satisfy the penalty of sin. Somehow, according to this line of thinking the believer must make atonement by bearing the penalty of guilt for personal sins. Christ is thus reduced to a mere example. But there is no way possible for any man to bear his own guilt and punishment and thus make atonement. Christ had to take our place in this. Consider the following statements:

You are not the sin bearer. Jesus the worlds Redeemer, was able to tread the wine press alone. He bore our sin in His own body on the tree, and there is not an angel in heaven who is able to bear the sins of one soul. No human being can bear the guilt of his own sin.
Manuscript Releases Volume Twelve, p. 8.

Satan would point us to ourselves, and seek to make us feel that we must bear our own sins. How hard poor mortals strive to be sin-bearers for themselves and for others! but the only sin-bearer is Jesus Christ. He alone can be my substitute and sin-bearer. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, June 9, 1896.*

We must accept God's estimate of sin, and that is heavy indeed. Calvary alone can reveal the terrible enormity of sin. If we had to bear our own guilt, it would crush us. But the sinless One has taken our place; though undeserving, He has borne our iniquity. *The Mount of Blessings*, p. 116.

Still others turn from the everlasting gospel as commissioned by the first angel's message to a social gospel such as clothing and feeding the poor. This is similar to what Kellogg did in Chicago as he departed from the gospel commission. This is not to say that the poor should not be cared for. But the gospel of Christ is not to be side-tracked nor limited to those worthy endeavors.

Whether one preaches a social gospel or changes the substitutionary work of Christ in an attempt to bear one's own guilt and consequent punishment, the net effect is the same. Both alike are substitutes for Christ's work in our place. If the believer could possibly ever bear his own guilt and penalty for an infinitesimal period of time it would do away with the whole of Christ's substitutionary work in his behalf. Christ's work of exhausting the penalty for sin is either complete or it is nothing at all.

Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God in the gift of His only begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon. Ms 50, 1900.

Since the death penalty was exhausted by Christ, it must of necessity follow that there is no more penalty to be executed on the believer. Besides being logically valid and true, the law of justice demands this. God does not use the principle of double jeopardy.

The problem is not with the fact of Christ's substitution. The problem is the interpretation some have given to substitution. Christ's substitution is a fact of biblical record, both in type and antitype. The problem is not with Christ's objective work for us, but rather the subjective experience of the believer as interpreted by antinomians. They have substituted a superficial faith for obedience. We need to be clear as to where the difficulty is and where it is not. It is not with Christ as our Substitute-in our place. He paid the equivalent of the second death, instead of us. We can never add to that. Nor can we subtract from it. Ever!

What does one have left if he turns from the work of atonement that began on Calvary and the atoning work of Christ in the second apartment of the sanctuary in heaven? He has a covering threadbare of the gospel. In the place of the gospel is substituted another fabric stitched with threads from the East which will unravel when the preaching of the fourth angel (Revelation 18:1) swells into the "loud cry." Then, too late, will be seen that the fabric "is narrower than that he can wrap himself in" when "the Lord shall rise up" and "do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." Isa. 28:20, 21.