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**CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD - NUMBER NINE**  
***THERE IS NO NEED TO BE AFRAID OF GOD***

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Number Nine: "**There Is No Need To Be Afraid of God,**"--another look at freedom--in the larger setting of the great controversy over God's character and government.

To be afraid of our Heavenly Father is to deny what He paid such a price to reveal. Though infinite in majesty and power, God values nothing higher than the freedom of His intelligent creatures, that their love and trust may be freely given. He gave His life to make this eternally clear. Surely such a God is worthy of our deepest reverence and willingness to listen and obey.

If God were the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be--arbitrary, vengeful and severe--there could be no real freedom, and our worship and obedience would be tarnished with our fears. Sadly, millions have been turned away from God by Satan's perversion of the truth. But Jesus came to bring the truth that sets us free, the truth about God that even makes it possible for us mere mortals to be His friends.

Welcome to the ninth of our twenty conversations about God--another look at our Heavenly Father in the larger setting of the great controversy over His character and government. This conversation is entitled "**There is no Need to be Afraid of God**". I believe that to be afraid of God is to misunderstand, even to deny, what He paid such a price to reveal. Though God is infinite in majesty and power, He values nothing higher than the freedom of His intelligent creatures, that their love, their worship, their trust, their willingness to listen may be freely given. I understand that God desires our trust to be freely given, not because He simply prefers it that way, as any parent would, but He knows that if our love and trust are not freely given, then there really is no freedom in His family. God would rather die than preside over a universe that is not free.

Besides, He also knows, as He sought to explain to us at such cost, that the obedience that springs from fear will actually turn His children into rebels (see EGW ref. below). Rebelliousness is the very essence of sin. God sent His Son to deal with sin. He sent His Son to do away with sin, you recall, in Romans 8. But in order to do away with rebelliousness and distrust, first He must do away with fear, because it is fear that has turned so many away from God. It is fear that has inspired rebelliousness even in the hearts of those who seek to obey Him, but do not know Him well. As I understand it from our discussion last time, God gave His life to make it eternally clear that there is no need for His children to be afraid of Him. Surely a God who would go to such lengths to indicate that, though He is infinite in power there is no need for us to be afraid, is worthy of our love, our reverence, our worship, and our willingness to listen and obey.

If God really were the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be, arbitrary, vengeful and severe; then obviously there would be no freedom under such a government. Any professions of love and trust on our part would be tarnished and compromised with our fears. How could God be satisfied with expressions of love from children who are afraid? Would you parents be satisfied from such expressions of love from your own children? But no wonder so many millions have turned away from God, when you consider Satan's perversion of the truth in this matter.

When you consider Satan's picture of God and His threats to His children, the adversary has made God look even more cruel than old King Nebuchadnezzar and his burning fiery furnace. You recall how in the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar built that very large idol and issued an

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order that everyone was to get down on his knees at the given signal and worship his god. Anyone who refused to worship the image was to be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. You remember what happened to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. We recoil in horror at such cruel tyranny. "You either submit to my god or I will throw you into the burning fiery furnace." Yet somehow, many of us find it possible to accept a God who is described as doing the very same thing.

Would God ever say to us, "On your knees, worship Me, or I'll throw you into the burning fiery furnace?" But it is even worse than that. God does not want what Nebuchadnezzar was willing to settle for. Nebuchadnezzar simply demanded submission: "on your knees". God asks for our love and our trust. Then He is caricatured as saying, "But if you will not love and trust Me, then I will throw you into the burning fiery furnace. And I won't burn you as briefly as Nebuchadnezzar did. I will burn you forever and forever." Does it make sense? Is it acceptable? I love Ellen White's words. "Such thoughts destroy human reason."

Surely, gentle Jesus wouldn't say such a thing, would He? Is it the Father who is the fearsome one who would issue such a threat? If the Father is the fearsome Member of the Trinity, is that why the Son came to die--to assuage, and appease, and propitiate the wrath of the offended Member of the Trinity? I hope no one is believing what I am saying! Is this why Jesus had to go up quickly on resurrection Sunday--to begin to intercede with the fearsome Member of the Trinity, who could never find it in His own heart to forgive His unbelieving children, unless He were begged to, by the more sympathetic Member of the Three? How one's understanding of the death of the wicked affects one's picture of God and one's understanding of the plan of salvation! I am convinced that there is no need to be afraid of God.

Yet, as you look at several Bible texts, doesn't the Bible emphasize,--even make it very plain--that we are supposed to fear God and be His God-fearing people? Look at Revelation 14:7 (RSV). (You recognize that this is the message of the first of the three angels). "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come." It even gives a good reason why we should fear Him. But one needs to understand the word fear. If you forgive the use of the Greek, it is pronounced **phobos**, from which we get phobia. But it doesn't always mean terror. Sometimes it means respect. It means reverence. Look for example at Psalm 128:1,2 (KJV), "Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord...(You mean, blessed is everyone who is terrified of God? Well, read on.) You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you." (Parentheses supplied.) Surely the Psalmist isn't saying, "Happy is everyone who is scared of God." This is the other meaning that the word may have. Blessed is everyone who **reveres** and **respects** the Lord. You shall be happy and it will be well with you.

Note, for example, Proverbs 9:10 (KJV), "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Does this mean that to be terrified of God is the beginning of wisdom and learning? No, there again the context determines the meaning of the word. So the translation in the Good News Bible is to be preferred. "To be wise you must first have reverence for the Lord." Where there is no respect, there is no reverence, and very little learning can take place.

Think of all the lengths to which our God has gone through the centuries to gain the respect of His people and hold it long enough to tell them some more of the truth about Himself. Perhaps the most famous example is the one provided at Mt. Sinai. God came down to speak to His people. Did they all line up quietly to listen? They were noisy. They were complaining. They were fussing about the food and the water. There was no respect for God. So God could not speak to them softly that day. Instead there was thunder and lightning, fire and smoke and earthquake. And God said to Moses, "You put a fence around that mountain. Don't let the people come too close to me." (see Ex. 19:12,13) **Now** we sing "Nearer, Still Nearer", but not

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that day. The people were so terrified that they said to Moses what is in Exodus 20:18-20 (RSV), "The people were afraid and trembled; (In fact, God had said that if anyone came near the fence, he was to be stoned or shot. If anyone broke through the fence, He would burst forth and consume him. No wonder the people were afraid and trembled.) and they stood afar off, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die.' And Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear; (There is no need to be afraid.) for God has come to prove you, (or to test you) and that the fear of him may be before your eyes, that you may not sin.'" (parentheses supplied)

Notice the use of the word fear in both meanings. You see, "Do not fear" means do not be afraid, but "That the fear of Him may be before you" is the word "reverence". So the very same word carries both meanings in the same passage, as you can see. But don't you love it that Moses could stand in the middle of the earthquake and the fire, and say that there is no need to be afraid, because he knew God and he knew why God was raising His voice on that occasion?

We might ask, "why didn't God speak more softly?" We know He prefers to, and He **has** many times when talking to His friends, as in the still, small voice with Elijah at the mouth of the cave. But when people are hard of hearing, God will raise His voice. How grateful we should be that He is willing to raise His voice. Now did He speak too loudly? Did He terrify them too much? What were they doing forty days later when the fire, the earthquake, the lightning and the thunder died away? They were dancing drunk around a golden calf in a fertility cult ritual.

Surely those of us who have taught little ones or have children of our own, know how difficult it is to gain proper respect in order that learning might occur, yet without fear. What a delicate thing it is to accomplish both! Whenever God raised His voice He got reverence, but there would be fear. When He talked softly they would despise Him as they despised gentle Jesus. Back and forth God has had to go through history.

But imagine that you were a grade school teacher of long experience. You are in your fortieth year. Think of it! You have never raised your voice in forty years to your little pupils. It is the last day of fall quarter, and there is a rap on the door. The principle says, "The building is on fire. Please line up the pupils and get them out the door." So you step back into the room with your usual dignity and in your usual quiet voice, you say, "Students, the building is on fire. Please line up and we will go out that door." But it is the last day before Christmas vacation, and maybe it is the period after recess, and you know how there can be tumult in the room. The little ones don't see you there. Would you say, "Well, I am not going to sully my reputation by shouting for the first time in forty years. I have given them a chance. At least I will go home and save myself." Or would you be willing for the first time, dignified you, to shout to the students? What if, to your horror, they still don't see you there? Would you be willing to climb up on the desk, throw the chalk and some erasers, and in terror the children finally see you there and they slip into their seats and you slip into yours. You say, "Children, don't go home and tell your mothers I am angry with you. I am not angry with you. I love you and I don't want you to be hurt. But see, the building is on fire. In this little quiet moment while I have your attention, please will you line up quickly as we practiced and go out that door." Which shows greater love? Not to terrify them briefly, not to raise your voice? Or is it better to run the risk of being momentarily feared and obeyed for the wrong reason? It seems to me that God has done this over and over in Scripture. We should be prepared to say, "Thank you God, for raising your voice so many times."

Now the first angel of Revelation 14 suggests a most serious reason why we might do well to be afraid. He says that the hour of God's judgement has come. Those are awesome words. How thoroughly will we be judged? How much does God know about us. Look at Hebrews 4:13 (GNB), "There is nothing that can be hid from God; everything in all creation is exposed and lies

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open before his eyes. And it is to him that we must all give an account of ourselves." Then you recall the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:14 (GNB), "God is going to judge everything we do, whether good or bad, even things done in secret."

How would it be possible to face such a judgment at the hands of someone so well informed and still be unafraid? Well, unafraid of what and unafraid of whom? The same John who warned us in that first angel's message that the hour of the judgment has come, is the one who explains how it is possible to face the judgment without fear. Look at 1 John 4:16-18 (GNB). "God is love, and whoever lives in love lives in union with God and God lives in union with him. Love is made perfect in us in order that we may have courage on the Judgment Day...There is no fear in love; (Now that is not the word reverence this time. It is terror.) Perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment." (parenthesis supplied)

So John's point is surely crystal clear. If we really know the truth about God and if we like what we know, then there is no need to be afraid even of the final judgment. Or is this only speaking of gentle Jesus, the Son? Some derive comfort from the thought - and the fact, as the Bible says - that God has given all judgment to the Son. Look at John 5:22 (RSV). "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son." Many find that much more comforting, because you are much more likely to receive merciful treatment at the hand of the Son than of the Father? Is that true?

I have heard some say with real gratitude, "I have no fear of the judgment because I know I have a Friend in court."

I ask, "Who is that Friend?"

Then comes the warm response, "Why, Jesus, of course."

"You mean the Father is no Friend of yours?"

"Oh, I didn't mean that."

"Then what did you mean when you said that you were happy to have a Friend in court and Jesus is your Friend?" Is the Father no Friend? What of the Holy Spirit?

You remember Jesus' words to Philip in John 14:7-9 (RSV). "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also...He who has seen me has seen the Father." If you knew this to be true, you would never say, "I am grateful that I have a Friend in court and I mean Jesus and not the Father." You couldn't say that, could you?

Some derive comfort from the thought, as they face the final judgment at the hands of One who knows us in such detail, that when their cases come up for consideration, Jesus will be there interceding with the Father in our behalf. Does that mean that because gentle Jesus is pleading with the Father, we are more likely to receive merciful treatment? Think what that implies about the Father! Is the Father less loving and less forgiving than the Son? Who says that He is exacting, unforgiving, and severe? Are we even going to, in expressing our doctrines, seem to support Satan's charges against our God?

Remember Jesus' words in John 16:26 (Phillips) "I need make no promise to plead to the Father for you, (Or, as we read previously, Goodspeed's translation says that there is no need for me to intercede with the Father for you. Why not?) for the Father himself loves you." (Parentheses supplied) The Son does not love us more than the Father or understand us better than the Father. He is not more sympathetic than the Father. If we have seen the Son we have seen the Father.

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According to Romans 8 all three members of the Godhead are for us--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Who is the one who is against us? Against whose charges do we need to be defended? You see, whether we are judged by Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, we have no need to be afraid of God. Now further than this, understanding how the judgment is conducted and what determines whether we are saved or lost gives us further evidence as to why we have no need to be afraid.

The Bible makes it plain that there is nothing arbitrary about the judgment. There is no arbitrary standard by which we are measured. There are no arbitrary decisions made. Look at John 3:19 (RSV). "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." You see, if we have turned down the truth, we have not been won to trust and a willingness to listen. Therefore, God has not been able to help us and to heal us. There are no new hearts and right spirits. We are not the kind of people who would be safe to admit to the hereafter. There is nothing arbitrary about that.

Look also at John 12:47,48 (RSV) "If any one hears my sayings (this truth and light that I brought) and does not keep them, I do not judge him....(I thought all judgment had been given to Him?) He says that "actually I don't judge him." It works this way.) He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day." (Parentheses supplied). You see, we are judged by the truth. God's judgment is a matter of simply diagnosing our condition. It is a consequence. It is a result. There is nothing arbitrary about it at all.

Furthermore, what God does to those who have turned down the truth, so He has not been able to heal them, is not arbitrary. For what does God do to those who reject the priceless truth? What else can He do in a free universe but sadly give them up. As we read previously, look again at Romans 1:25,28 (RSV) "Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie.... God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct." He sadly gave them up to what they chose to do anyway. **In the end, even God simply recognizes, diagnoses, and announces the results.** In those awesome words of Revelation 22:11 (NIV), as He looks at his people in the end--some who have rejoiced in the truth and some who have turned it down, He says, "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy." Just go on doing what you are doing. Go on being what you are. There is nothing arbitrary. There is no need to fear God in this. We have made our choice and we are reaping the results either good or bad.

But doesn't the Bible warn also that the sinner will experience God's wrath and be burned forever? Look in Revelation 14:10 (RSV) "He also shall drink of the wine of God's wrath...and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone...for ever and ever." We are back to Nebuchadnezzar, it would seem. No, the proceeding 65 books of Scripture have prepared us to understand these awesome terms. **God's wrath - remember in Romans and Hosea - is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choice.** As He lets them go, He cries, "How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" (See Hos. 11:8)

Then the word "forever?" How long is "forever?" Look at Jude 7 (RSV) "Sodom and Gomorrah...serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire (or forever fire)." That fire went out millenia ago. We understand that term. Also in Exodus 21:6 (KJV), the reference to the servant. "He shall serve (his master) forever." That might mean only a very brief period - until the next jubilee. Until, at most, as long as life shall last. So we understand the meaning of that term. There is no Biblical support for the eternally burning fires of hell.

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What about the fire? How many times in the Bible, God's glory, the brilliance that surrounds His divine person is described as having the appearance of fire. Look at Exodus 24:17 (RSV). "Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain." It **wasn't** devouring fire. It just looked like it. There are many other places in Scripture. This glory that surrounds our God is life-giving glory. Adam and Eve could live in it. Lucifer used to live in it as he walked among the stones of fire. It is energizing, life-giving. It is only because we are, by our own choice, out of harmony with God that what should be life-giving is destructive. God would heal us if He could. He doesn't want to lose anyone.

Someday every one of us will come face-to-face with God. Whether we are saved or lost, at either the second coming or at the third coming. Do you think we should be afraid? Do you **anticipate** being afraid? What if we should be among the lost? We would look up and see Christ there in His human form. Will He be angry with us, or will He be crying, "Why will you die? How can I give you up? How can I let you go?"

Like a physician, God is there, eager and ready to heal. But He cannot force us to be well. If we do not trust Him, if we are not willing to listen, He cannot heal the damage done. What else can God do if we have come to the place where we persistently have resisted and rejected His offers and refused to listen? If we have refused to trust, we have refused to let Him help us. What else can He do but sadly give us up as He gave up His Son, and we will die? But even then there is no need to be afraid of God Himself.

Now, many are afraid to die because they are afraid of God. They know that when they die, they will come face-to-face with some great unseen, even unknown, Power. They have heard of Him vaguely, perhaps...an awesome Thing to meet, this Person called God. Would it be possible to die unafraid of God? Look at Hebrews 2:15 (NIV) where the apostle speaks of "freeing those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." I believe the fear of death is the fear of God, the fear of the judgment. Is it possible to know God well enough that one can die unafraid? Look at John 8:32 (GNB) "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." It is the truth about God that makes it possible to die unafraid. Every patient in our hospital deserves that. If we could just take the truth to them and lead them to believe it, they could die unafraid, knowing that at the next moment of consciousness they would rise in the presence of the kind of God we so much admire.

Before Jesus, Himself went out to die, He offered the clearest evidence. Just before that demonstration in words and in His treatment of the twelve He tried to sum up the ideal quality of the relationship God desires to have with His children. He said that God wishes to deal with us as His friends. Look at John 15:15 (RSV) "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing;" (it is none of his business. He just has the bumper sticker--My master has said it, and I believe it, and that is all there is to it! That is the relationship of a servant.) "But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (Parentheses supplied). My Father and I want you to understand, to know what Our purposes are; what We are trying to accomplish in the universe.

God has had a few such friends through the years. One of the most notable was Moses. Look at Exodus 33:11 (RSV) "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face-to-face, as a man speaks to his friend." That is why we feel confident that God would welcome us to have these conversations about Him that we are having. He would welcome us to have conversations **with** Him. In my imagination, I can see Him seated on this other chair. We know He is the Infinite One who has but to speak and He can hang the whole vast universe in space. The One who is worshiped with awe by all the brilliant angels. Yet as He sits there, He values nothing higher than our freedom. He invites our inquiries. He does not want us to be afraid. Surely such a God

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deserves our deepest reverence and awe and wonder and worship. Surely He deserves to be believed when He says, "There is no need to be afraid."

E G White Reference

3 ST 400 - A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul.

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Venden: We were so committed to getting through all these questions, we're going to go ahead with these four that we didn't get to, and then one other one that was handed to me right during the meeting.

"How do you find God being loving as He orders the Israelites to kill so many as they found their way to the promised land?"

Maxwell: Yes. That's one of the dominant questions when we go through book-by-book - all the killing - and especially with children. During the last, oh, it's been seventeen years since the church appointed a committee, an advisory committee, on Bible teaching to review the teaching of Bible kindergarten through seminary. And I got especially involved with the kindergarten through eighth grade. And as the books were prepared, maybe you've noticed they're new Bible books where the stories are directed toward the question about God. The stories are not so much about David and Bathsheba, as they are about God.

Well, during the summers we met with teachers all over the North American Division in two-week conferences. And I would ask the teachers to list the questions that the children raised about the stories in the Bible, that were a bit of a problem to them. And then the second week of the conference, we would discuss these.

Well, each time I got about two-thousand questions; but at each conference it was usually about the same two-thousand questions. And it turned out that one of the dominant questions asked by the children, is about all the killing. Especially when it involved children. When parents were killed, that didn't seem to disturb the youngsters quite so much [laughter] as when the children were killed, it seemed so unfair.

So I think it is very important on their way through to note that when God took them out of Egypt, He didn't tell them to fight. He didn't organize an army at the first. He said, "Mine angel will go ahead of you, and take you into Canaan." Or, "I'll send the hornet ahead" as a symbol of the forces of nature. And they [were] never designed to fight. They didn't fight the Egyptians, did they? He took care of it all. The Red Sea took care of the Egyptian army.

And it would have been that way all along if only they had trusted God enough to let Him do things His way. And it would have been much better if God had put His own sinful children to sleep in the land of Canaan. And He would resurrect them at the appropriate time in the future. But instead, they wound up doing their own fighting; as they wound up doing most things on their own.

And He blessed them. And He helped them. But you can tell what God's idea still was. For in times of extreme emergency when they couldn't look after themselves, and they really besought the Lord, He took care of them. Like the 185,000 Assyrians, you remember? And on several other occasions, God indicated what He would liked to have done all the time.

And a real indication that God— though He may help His people fight that, is not the ideal— David was one of the best warriors He ever had. And when David came to the end of his life and wanted to make one last grand gesture, he said, "Lord, let me build You a temple."

And Nathan said, "That's a great idea." Later Nathan came back and said, "That's not such a great idea." (Good thing Ellen White didn't do that; she'd be in trouble. It's OK for Nathan.) He came back and said, "No, the Lord has told me that you may not do it, because you have been a man of blood." Now, that is not God's ideal. It's true, a courageous warrior may stand higher in Heaven's records than some vacillating, willy-nilly professed believer, who has never done

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anything very bad; and also has never done anything very good. David really did things; when he fought, he was a tremendous warrior.

But God said, "That's not the ideal. I'd rather have a man of peace build My temple." Though Solomon wasn't as good a man as his father, God did go on record there, I think, as to the ideal. He did not like the fighting. Now, if I can quote Ellen White, she says it never was God's design that they fight their way into Canaan. It never was. But they didn't trust Him enough to let Him lead them in His own way. And I would agree with her.

Venden: This one ties right in with that. You mentioned some Bible stories that we tell children, that are inappropriate. You were -- I remember that night you made that point, how we tell the children the stories, when we need to grapple with them as adults, and give the children the message.

How do you feel the Bible should be presented to children? Maybe you want to say just a bit more on that.

Maxwell: If we present it aright, there's nothing inappropriate. And I think the children are better able to handle these things sometimes than maybe we are. And their candor is so disarming. I may have mentioned to you, that we have had several sessions with children, going through the Bible. And you should hear their comments and their questions and observations. I'll never forget one night. We were seated in the group; and the question came up about "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." And yet Jesus said to "turn the other cheek." And I asked the children, What would you do if somebody knocked your tooth out?

And one very bright little eight year-old boy thought a lot. And he said, "Well, if somebody knocked my tooth, first I'd knock his out, and then I'd turn the other cheek." Which may be a very practical solution, you know. He wanted him to get the message. And we just had an extraordinarily good time.

A little while ago we did Samuel— the stories in Samuel. And we came to Hannah's bigamy. You know, Elkanah had two wives; how could God bless Hannah with baby Samuel until the bigamy had been cleared up?

So I asked the children: What do you call it when a man lives with two wives?"

And then answer came back immediately: "Illegal." [laughter] I was expecting "bigamy." But I find they can handle any story. When we did Judges, I wondered if anybody would bring up the Levite and his concubine. Sure enough, it came up; and it was not that serious a problem.

Children are very experienced for one thing these days. From television, and the newspapers. It's like the little boy who was told by his father that the time had come to study the facts of life. And so they went to the father's study and sat down. And the boy said, "All right, Daddy, what do you need to know?" [laughter]

Well, some of us old folks really are fuddy-duddies to our children. Haven't you noticed that?

I think if we present the Bible as a whole; and it's about God; and we don't dwell on the lurid details just for the details' sake — it's rather, presenting sin very candidly in the setting of the remedy - the children, are wonderfully able, I think, to handle it.

We used to, when we were preparing these Bible books, wonder when to tell the story of Hosea, asking the prophet to marry a woman of dubious reputation. At which grade level were the children ready? And during the years I was on the committee, the levels moved down steadily each year; we thought they could handle it quite well.

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Venden: "Why in David's case, when he sinned with Bathsheba, was not only David punished but the whole nation?" I think this individual has another incident in mind, rather than David and Bathsheba. But this person goes on to ask, "Should we consider solidarity with our leaders' sins?" It was the numbering of Israel, as I recall Graham. I looked those references up: II Samuel 24, and I Chronicles 21.

Maxwell: Interesting apparent contradiction there, too.

Venden: Yes there is! I am very anxious to hear you comment on it. II Samuel says, "God stirred David up to do this." And in Chronicles it says Satan did it.

Maxwell: That's right. Very much so.

Venden: Please speak to that!

Maxwell: And the principle that's at stake here reflects on our picture of God. See, is God so unfair and arbitrary that though the sin was David's and God had tempted him to do it, He still would punish the people?

You see, unexplained that puts God in a bad light. I think first of all, one last to look at the two passages: "God moved David to number Israel," or "Satan tempted David to number Israel." And show many other places in the Bible where you have apparent contradiction like that. And establish a principle based on many precedents.

Oh, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is one. Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? Did he harden his own heart? Or did God harden his heart? You turn to Exodus where it mentions Pharaoh's heart being hardened. And within about an inch and a half in one column of text, it says, "Pharaoh hardened his own heart." "God hardened his heart." "His heart was hardened."

Or your look at the death of King Saul. He fell on his sword and committed suicide. It says so in so many words. And the next line says, "Thus God slew Saul."

And so you build up this question: When it says God is involved, He sends the evil spirit, He sends the lying spirit, He destroys. Sometimes it's the same Bible writer within a few lines. And Moses was not foolish. He knew what he was doing.

We have to ask what the Bible writers intended by this. Even when Job says, "The Lord gives, the Lord takes away," who took away? But, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." And there's enough precedent for this, you can establish a real principle: that since they recognized that nothing could happen unless God permitted it, that if something happened in some way He was involved.

Like Naomi says, "Don't call me Naomi anymore. Call me Mara, for the Lord has dealt bitterly with me." But she loved the Lord, and won Ruth to faith in Him.

So one can establish the principle there as far as the contradiction is concerned.

On punishing the people, my understanding would be that the numbering of Israel in itself was not bad. They often did that -- look at the book of Numbers. God sometimes instructed them to do it. But David numbered Israel in hopes that he could muster strong enough military force to venture out on some expedition on his own. And God was saying, "That's not very wise. Don't do it." But the people shared with the king in this same self-confidence. And so to teach them all a lesson, God dealt with appropriate severity.

Now, the severity is a real problem. Like the stoning of Achan, and all those other occasions. But it is impressive that they soon forgot it. Apparently God had to be that severe and that

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dramatic to make any impression on the people at all.

As with the stoning of Achan. They had already said to Joshua, "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you." And his heart must have sunk.

But then he [sic] says, "And if anyone will not obey you, let him be put to death." The people had said that: "Let him be put to death." Life was cheap, unfortunately, in those days. It was regrettably cheap. And when life is that cheap, you don't rap people on the wrist.

But what a terrible risk God has run of being misunderstood in all of this. He knows He's been accused of being harsh and severe. So why would He risk being misunderstood? I mean, why not just go off quietly and run the rest of the universe, and let this one planet peter out? Who would miss it?

But apparently it would mean that much to God. And it would not say the right thing about Him. And therefore, He risked the peace of the whole universe, to settle things on this stage here. And look at the risks He's run in seeking to communicate with us. The most difficult thing has been to get us to take Him seriously enough; to listen, and let Him explain, let Him show.

So the Bible is full of very shocking demonstrations of Almighty Power. But He had to go that far to get our attention. Look at the Third Angel's Message. It's fearsome language. We say it's the glorious good news of righteousness by faith. Have you read it lately? The Third Angel's Message talks about nothing but sulphurous flames, and smoke ascending forever and ever, and being tormented day and night.

You see, the last message to the world is warning of destruction. But hopefully, we're in a position to explain, about wrath, and fire, and forever, and how God is involved.

It seems to me, the only person who can really preach the Third Angel's Message, is the one who know about the other Sixty-Five, and what God is really trying to convey by those awful words; and why He would use such severe language.

Otherwise, we're going out and saying, "Down on your knees, or I'll throw you into the burning fiery furnace." And it's amazing how we're horrified at Nebuchadnezzar but say, "God can do it; because anything He does is all right. It doesn't make sense; don't expect it to."

Then how can I trust Him?

"Because you have to. That's an order."

And after awhile the mind begins to go around and around. And that's why religion is in one compartment; science, history and scholarship in another. And they need to be brought into one compartment. The same laws of logic and reason and evidence prevail across the board. And if you believe anything that just defies logic and reason, then re-investigate it. It probably has been misunderstood.

That Third Angel's Message was written by the "beloved" disciple, who said more about gentleness and love than any other Biblical writer. John the Beloved wrote those fearsome words. Because he knew what he was saying. He knew what it meant.

It impresses me; you know, we say, "That's our message; the Third Angel's Message." It's a message of destruction. But it had better be with lots of footnotes of explanation.

Venden: This person would like to ask regarding the relative value of Biblical material. "The Bible contains a number of letters written by St. Paul. Do you consider Paul's letters were of

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greater theological value than, for example, Moses' writings?"

Maxwell: Oh, wouldn't Paul be horrified at the suggestion? And I find people doing this, you know, and saying: "If you really want to get the truth about God and the plan of salvation, read Romans, read Galatians." Well, Romans is the book I've spent more time on than any other; and I will not allow it to be put above the rest.

Where do you think Paul got his ideas, but from the Old Testament? He knew it inside out, and quotes it all the time. In fact, come to the sermon tomorrow morning. I got a glimpse of it in advance. And Dr. Venden is going to speak on John 5, where Jesus says, "If only they would believe Moses, they'd believe Me." You know, what He was saying was in perfect harmony with everything in the Old Testament. I don't think we should ever stack one book above or below another. Even the two books that never mention Him - Song of Solomon and Esther. They're great revelations of the truth about God.

But if you're looking for a code book of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned, those two books aren't very useful. But that's not the purpose of Scripture. It's a record of the unfolding demonstration of the truth about God in history. And those are great books as to how He looked after His people under difficult circumstances.

So I would not rate one above another. By - on the authority of Jesus and Paul, we shouldn't do it.

Venden: I didn't think you would. I thought you'd say "all Sixty-six."

Maxwell: Absolutely; but you'll develop that in the morning.

Venden: I've come to count on that and to believe that's the right one. A young man came up to me right in the middle of the meeting and handed this card. And I hope he's in here with us. Oh, good! Alright. Here we are.

"Last Sunday, KSGN the radio station, did not air last Friday's conversation. I was not here to hear it." (It's coming up, so be patient; you'll be able to hear it.)

Maxwell: Yeah, maybe that's just as well, because on Sabbath they repeated Number Six. In which KSGN would be out of sync with the TV. So if Number Seven is done tomorrow, as announced, then KSGN will have Seven on Sunday. So maybe that's fortuitous.

Venden: All right. Our brother's question here is: "I hope I'm not too late in asking this question. Can sin be forgiven? And if it cannot be forgiven, was it the reason why Jesus had to die?"

Now, I think this is something you've talked about already, but review it again. Can sin be forgiven?

Maxwell: Yeah; sin wouldn't know what to do with forgiveness. Sinners know what to do with forgiveness, so I don't know what it means to forgive sin. Sin is history. I mean, sin is something that's been done. It's an event. It's something that's happened. So in a way, you don't forgive sin. You do forgive sinners. So I would want to turn it to that, as I'm sure you would too. So it would be a mere technicality to say, "Well, I forgive a sin."

Venden: That sort of falls back into that legal model again, if we're not careful.

Maxwell: Yeah, again, it's in the legal model; that's right. Are you impressed with the difference, the "legal model," and the — what shall we call the other one - the "trust, healing model"? These are the two dominant models. Though the one most widely assumed through the millennia has been the legal model.

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Now, the Bible does seem to encourage the legal model, by the emergency measures God has used. So that would be the essence of that night, "God's Use of Emergency Measures." Why has He made so much use of law, and thereby encouraged a rather legal model, for our understanding of what went wrong and what the remedy is?

I mean, God did it. But He also gave us the larger model of all Sixty-six, into which we can fit the emergency model. And then it all makes sense. And you don't have to choose between them.

But those who prefer the legal model, often don't know what to do with the rest of the Sixty-six. If you take the full Sixty-six, you can fit the legal model in and thank God for it. But it is only an emergency measure. And we ought to move on beyond it as we are enabled to do so.

Venden: All right. Here's one that was handed to me just as we came in. But I think it ties right in with this evening and last Friday night:

"Is it true that during the endless ages of eternity, we still will be free to choose to sin? If that could be the case, would it be necessary for God to prove His love again, if that should happen? Or perhaps would the whole universe be more than willing to have the sinner destroyed immediately?"

Maxwell: Oh, that's an interesting thought. I'm glad it's hypothetical. But I think a little sanctified speculation about such hypotheses is not inappropriate, because it serves to test our understanding. That we would be free to rebel. If not, then our love and trust are worthless.

If God can, as it were, fix us against sinning again- Luther has words somewhat like that. That after Satan was cast out of Heaven -and you'd recognize that - the loyal angels were placed beyond the possibility of sinning. I was surprised to read that in his comments on Genesis.

No, my understanding would be that anytime, for the rest of eternity, any one of God's children, could turn against God just as Lucifer did. You don't have to have a tempter to turn against God, for who tempted Lucifer in the beginning? It could happen again. But the evidence is there. This is why I believe the evidence will not be destroyed.

And some say, "Well, we'll be at peace for all eternity, because everything will be forgotten. Everything unpleasant will be blotted out." That would be like God winning the war on the basis of evidence; and then having won it, He destroys all the evidence. Then if it arose again, He'd have to do it all over again. I think the whole thing will be there for eternity.

In that case, if someone should begin to entertain rebellious thoughts — God will deal mercifully. But this time there would be no need to wait and let it spread. He could leave the person to reap the natural consequences of his disorderly rebelliousness; and he would die. But we would know God was not destroying him. He was simply leaving him sadly to reap the consequences. And we would not serve God from fear.

Now, theoretically He could do this an infinite number of times; but perish the thought! I like the verse in Scripture that simply says it will never rise again, and say, God has the foreknowledge to say it won't. I'd much rather stay with that.

But, should it arise again, there will be no need for the repetition of the demonstration; no need at all. And if there's any one reminder above all others, it would be that Christ would still be in His human form. And little girls will still be sitting in His lap saying, "Jesus, where did You get those marks on Your hands?"

Now in some view, Jesus — in a Harry Anderson picture, which is such a beauty. Here's a little girl saying, "Jesus how did You get these marks in Your hands?" And He's saying, "I don't know.

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I was hoping somebody could tell Me." Because all has been forgotten? It would make no sense! No, He remembers. And we will remember. And should He create other peoples through eternity, it would be our privilege to tell and to explain.

So I think God's method will not be changed when the emergency is over. Just no need for thunder and lightning anymore. But the way of evidence, and spreading the Good News, and pointing to Christ; and maybe in the museum, too, He might keep the ark, and the Ten Commandments. I think it would be great! And maybe a King James, and a few other venerable items. So we can take people there and say, "Look at all the measures that He used."

Because the methods God has used are what provide the greatest confirmation that He's trustworthy. The methods that He's used. So, I wouldn't mind if He keeps all those things. Or would it be too sad to remember. Not from the perspective of eternity, it won't. Because there is no other way. And we'll realize that. So I would say the freedom, by all means.

Venden: Now, I got through all the ones I have in my hand.

Maxwell: There's one little one here: "Will babies and young children who die, be lost?" That's an interesting one. I don't know whether it's implying this question. We've heard that angels will take infants to their mothers' arms, and so on. Which leads to the question: "What if neither parent is saved?"

And I think I grew up with a somewhat arbitrary explanation here. If one of the parents is saved, then the little ones will be. But too bad if neither parent is savable. And somehow that doesn't -- I don't feel comfortable with that.

So I love two place where Ellen White makes the comment, that she saw angels taking little orphans into the Kingdom; neither parent saved. I just love that. I mean, that's the way God would be. We don't need her statement. You know He'd do that. He will save anybody and everybody who will be safe to have around in the hereafter. You can count on it for sure.

COMMENT: I know you'd like to keep these question pertaining to tonight's meeting; but I'd like to regress back to last Friday.

Maxwell: Oh, that fits because in a way, tonight was a spin off from last week. It was a continuation.

COMMENT: Fine. Concerning the soul: There seems to be in the past two or three Sabbaths -- I know the church that I belong to -- they discussed that quite a bit. And there seems to be some debate where the soul is concerned. You did explain it briefly last Friday night. But could you elaborate on that a little bit more?

Maxwell: Oh. . .

COMMENT: . . . it doesn't— as long as I have Jesus Christ, I could care less about the soul, to be honest with you. But I do want to know; because people have discussed it with me, and I believe I understood what you said last Friday. But there seems to be a question mark there. Some say that, "Well, there's not a soul." And I've always understood that there's not a soul floating around in the air, and it's going to come back and redeem the body. But then it just said that, "Well, our body - our flesh and blood, etc., all our parts - is still considered a soul." There seems to be a debate about that.

Maxwell: Okay, good, you raised the question very well. And I thought your solution was a good one: that as I try to understand these parts, separable or not, I believe in Christ, and one could enter the Kingdom and gather more information about this in the hereafter.

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The Bible in a very picturesque way, sometimes divides people up; body and mind, soul, spirit, and so on. Paul will even say, "After I'd been converted, I seem to consist of two people. There's the old man of sin, and there's the babe in the truth." And he talks about keeping the old man suppressed so he'll die of malnutrition, while the new man is nourished with spiritual milk and exercise, that he may grow to maturity.

And we have these very picturesque ways of representing things. But now, how literally are we to split people up? And I think we do well to start with the beginning of the Bible, with Creation, and trace it on through. You know, let the Bible speak for itself.

And the first word you come to is, "God breathed into man the breath of life" or "the spirit of life" - spirit and breath are the same - "and man became a living ----."

Now, it all depends what version you're using. So we reluctantly have to admit that Moses wrote in Hebrew. So we look up the Hebrew, and it's NEPHEESH - backwards from right to left. You know, "My Fair Lady" says which is absolutely frightening. That's the way the Hebrews do it. Right to left; the little dots underneath for the vowels.

"Nephesh." Well, what does "Nephesh" mean? Well, I mentioned that in this Jewish translation of the Torah into English, when they had finished the first five books, the books of Moses, reporters came from Time and Newsweek to interview the chairman of the committee, Rabbi Olinski - a great scholar. And they asked him if there was anything unusual about this new English translation of the Jewish Torah.

Well he said, "There's one that will surprise you; we've dropped the word `soul'."

"Well, how could you do that?"

"Well," he said, "the Hebrew word doesn't mean some essence that could be separated from the body. The Hebrew writers had no such conception." He said, "The Hebrew word Nephesh means the whole person, even the blood in his veins." And that's in Newsweek and Times, quoting Olinski.

Now, that translation has now been adopted by almost all other versions - Protestant, Catholic and Jewish - in the Anchor Bible, which is jointly produced by Protestants, Catholics and Jews. It says, "Man became a living being." Or, "Man became a living creature." Or, "Man began to live." That's a beauty. Maybe the version in front of you, Genesis 2:7, has that.

And this is generally agreed to. So then you go on through the Bible to pick up other references to "soul." In the New Testament it's "psoche" from which we get - you can hear "psychology." "Psoche".

"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." Never mind your body; you can indulge all you want. Just let your soul be subject. I don't think that was the point. And it's agreed by everybody, that means, "Let every person; let everyone; let every soul."

But then there's a place where people are called "spirits" in Peter. That before the Flood, Jesus through the Spirit preached to the spirits in prison as they awaited the Flood.

And again you have to look it up in a lexicon, and that's "pneuma"; from which we get pneumatology. Or even pneumonia. Comes from "pneuo" - to blow. That's the Spirit. A pneumatic tire is full of pneuma: wind or spirit. It's all the same word, you see.

Well, you look in a lexicon, and you'll find "pneuma" can refer to people. And that referred to the Savior preaching through Noah, through His Spirit, to all those individuals who were up against the deadline of the Flood -- you know, it was a time of great decision for them. And that's the

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reference, I believe, in Peter.

So I would say if you go through the Bible and pick up these different words in the original for "soul," they all refer to people. However, when you call a person a soul, you seem to be emphasizing this person's ability to think and act in an intelligent way. Where Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman, you remember, and said, "God is a Spirit," you know, "and is not to be worshiped in places made with hands. You say He's to be worshiped here or there. He's a spiritual Being, and men should worship Him in spirit and in truth." And the emphasis seems to be there on His being an intelligent, thinking God. Not like Dagon the fish-god. Or Moloch the hollow god, you know.

So I believe there is a consistent picture through the Bible, that we are either alive or we're dead. And we're all one piece. Though there are picturesque ways of emphasizing different capacities and abilities that we have -- the body, the mind, the soul, the spirit. But if you take away any part of that, you've got a dead person. You know.

COMMENT: Are you saying then that the word "soul" is not really an accurate description of our body?

Maxwell: Well, not now. Because "soul" has come to have this special meaning, you see. Now, you can trace that back through the centuries; and you'll find in the various religions -- in fact, very largely in pagan religion -- you'll find this idea of a separable soul.

And I can only think that's the influence of the adversary who tried to teach that we're immortal. You know, right away, "No, you won't die." Jesus came and really died, to say we do really die. So I'm afraid it's his influence that's been behind it.

But then there are a lot of saintly people, who grow up with that view. We should be most respectful as we try, I think, to lead them to really, a much more sensible view of things; it makes sense out of life.

Because then you read about the resurrection, and the Second Coming. Here are souls that have been in Heaven enjoying Heaven all these years; and they've got to come back and pick up their bodies. It just doesn't make sense. But if we've been asleep in the grave as Lazarus was - you remember those four days - then the resurrection is a very important time. Body and soul are still together. I think the story of Lazarus is very important. Why Jesus waited till the fourth day to resurrect him.

You see, when He resurrected Jairus's daughter, many accused Him of fraud. You know, He'd faked faith healing as it were; that she'd only been unconscious and He knew it. So this time He waited until the most skeptical person in the audience would admit that Lazarus was dead. Because some believed that the soul hovered nearby for three days; but would depart disappointed on the fourth, that obviously there wasn't going to be a resuscitation.

And so even the most skeptical person in the audience would admit that Lazarus was dead, because He waited till the fourth day. Then came the clincher: remove the stone. "Oh," they said, "don't! He stinks."

He said, "Right. He's dead, isn't he? Agree?"

"Yes."

Then when He resurrected him, His opponents were infuriated; because there was no way they could gainsay and deny that miracle this time.

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But Lazarus didn't come and say, "By the way, guess where I've been these four days." He didn't write a book entitled Life After Life, you know, and all these things. He didn't write about that. He awoke the next instant of consciousness. He died, and then he awoke. Jesus said, "He's asleep." You remember? "And I go to awaken him out of sleep."

I find that the view of the wholeness of man can be based on all Sixty-six. This other view requires a rather discriminating selection of texts. And I always feel uneasy with that— if I can't build my model in all Sixty-six. So I think we're either alive, or we're dead.

Venden: This gentleman there, by the wall.

COMMENT: Tonight when you commented on Revelation 14:10, you said quite a bit about God's wrath for ever and ever. Would you please comment a little more on "they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone"?

Maxwell: Oh, dreadful words, aren't they. Yeah, and the fire and brimstone is sulphurous flames. They couldn't be stronger words. It's true. And "wrath" is the strongest word - "orge"; and "torment," that's right - tortured, tormented.

One has to go back and trace those words through the whole Bible. And fortunately, this comes in the Sixty-sixth book. And you understand "wrath," of course. And the fire. The "forever and ever" is very crucial in this. And I mentioned just a few places on the "forever and ever."

That one, you know, about the slave who was offered his freedom and said, "I'd rather stay with my master." And he was taken to the doorpost; and a little hole was punched through the lobe of his ear with an awl. King James spells "a-u-l" I noticed. And then it says, "He will then serve his master forever." Same word.

Now, how long is that? Well, if you look in Jewish commentaries, that could be until the next jubilee, which could be a few months down the road. The jubilees came up quite frequently. Or at longest, it would mean, "as long as life shall last."

So one has to look up all the uses of "forever." And by the way, to be very fair about this, how long will we live if we are saved? Forever. That's all. See, that's not very long, is it?

You see, I heard this when I was small. And you know, when you're taught by well-meaning teachers and then you're privileged to get a little more education; and then you find that they were really wrong. To be disrespectful is most ungrateful, I think. But you know, I'm sure I've had students grow up and learn I've been wrong on some things, as their education has continued.

Well, what I learned was, you see — on the sheep and the goats? The sheep go into everlasting life; but the goats go into eternal destruction. Or is it vice versa? Well, the explanation I was given, was that "everlasting" lasts longer than "eternal." Or was it vice versa? So when I learned from Greek at PUC in 1938, I found that the Greek word is exactly the same. And so if eternal destruction isn't very long, then eternal life is no longer.

The people in the Middle East in those days, could not conceive of time going on without an end. Can you either? I don't know what that means: to go on and on, and never end. We think we know; we think we can speak in such terms. It could be a rather limited period.

What the word really mean was, "as long as it's supposed to last," however long that might be. So that's why the Bible says we will live "forever and ever." But that's not long enough either. Unless the Bible should say, "There shall be no more death," we have no assurance of eternal life. The word "eternal" does not make the life of the saints very long, in and of itself. The word -

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the much more important words are — "There will be no more death." So we will live, and there will be no more death.

Now, the wicked will die. They will be burned like the stubble, in Malachi. They will be burned as in Gehenna. And you put all those places together. And its the effect of the burning that's eternal. I think that Jude 7 one is most appropriate: "They will burn with everlasting fire."

COMMENT: [unintelligible]

Maxwell: Well, why's the word in there? Well, it's a strong word. It's not pleasant. It will be exceedingly unpleasant.

COMMENT: [several unintelligible words] in there, why would God torment anymore?

Maxwell: They will be left to reap the natural consequence, and it will be exceedingly unpleasant. Yes. When they are exposed to the life-giving glory of God, it will be absolutely devastating. And the one who used to live in that life-giving glory -- Satan, who walked among the stones of fire. I don't know what this fire is like. Ezekiel says, "I'll bring forth fire from within you." I don't know what that is. But there is some extraordinary experience of being consumed. Peter as a layman tries his hand at it and says, "The very elements will melt with fervent heat." And apparently it is a terrible experience.

But now, I'd have to match against all the rest of scripture, the possibility of it meaning that God says, "You either love Me, or I will torture you and keep you alive to be tortured for the rest of eternity, and you'll never die."

Now, that contradicts too many things in scripture. In fact, it contradicts the whole tenor of scripture; and contradicts entirely the meaning of Jesus' death. So I have to read it as part of the difficulty of communicating in a sufficiently dramatic and forceful way to get people to pay attention.

And then maybe they will ask, "What do You mean by those words?" And then study the rest of scripture. What do you think yourself on that?

COMMENT: Well, I have a problem with it, because it says, "He shall be." And I don't find this is as, like you say, a warning or something. It's a statement. "This is going to happen."

Maxwell: Well, now put with it this see— what I'd want to do, is to sit down with you and go through the whole Bible. That would be the best way. It would take a little time.

And we would come, say, to Chronicles, where it says that Saul took his sword. He asked his armor bearer first to kill him, when he knew that all was lost. The armor bearer wouldn't do it. So Saul took his own sword and fell upon it, and died. "Thus God slew Saul."

And I have an indication right there that I need to measure the meaning of these words when I read them. God didn't slay him! Except in what sense, perchance? He did give him up. God didn't restrain him. He left him to reap the consequence; and he killed himself.

So when I read about God destroying people, I remember Saul and many others like it. And I do have the feeling, if I'm going to be really wholehearted in my acceptance of scripture, I must build my model on the entire content. And if one verse stands out and won't fit the rest, either there's something wrong with the rest of the model, or I'm reading that one place wrong. So I do feel you can consistently fit that in with many others like it.

And yet it does sound terrible. I think it's meant to. I think it's supposed to strike terror to the hearts of those who need to be terrified before they will be reverent and take God seriously. And

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God is willing to run that risk. Oh, He ran a risk in the Third Angel's Message, that's for sure.

Venden: Are you saying then that this may be a very potent necessary way to talk about consequences.

Maxwell: I'm afraid so. Yes. Yes.

Venden: So that a person will take it very seriously.

Maxwell: That does raise an interesting thing. And maybe it would come up under "emergency measures." You know, when you're dealing with mature people, thoughtful people, you don't have to threaten. You just can speak of consequence.

And you've heard me use this illustration before. But when I was a small boy, Mother desired that we would do certain things, you know, among which was to brush our teeth. And Mother would come by at night and ask us. About four things she'd inquire about: 1) Did you study your lesson? [1]) grew up doing my lesson seven times a week.) And then [2]) Did you say your prayers? (And that meant not blanket prayers, and in England that was not always easy in the winter.) And then, [3]) Did you wash your neck? (She assumed the rest might be; but the neck?) And then, [4]) Did you brush your teeth? (And Mother could always check, you know; if the toothbrushes were dry, then she knew we hadn't done it.)

Well, Mother would become disturbed if we had not brushed our teeth. So I thought in due course of time, that the consequence of not brushing my teeth was that Mother got disturbed. And if Mother's efforts were not fruitful, she'd say, "I will speak to your father about this." It was getting very serious. The consequence of not brushing my teeth was that I offended my parents, I would incur their wrath, and there would be punishment.

Actually, had I been mature enough, my mother could have said, "Look, if you don't look after your teeth, you're going to suffer all the things the School of Dentistry tries to prevent and remedy over here." But you don't tell that to a little child. You say, "Look, you get upstairs and brush your teeth, and Mommy will be up in five minutes -- or else!" And that saved a lot of teeth, you know. [laughter]

Well, my mother died fifteen years ago. And I brush my teeth, you know. I wish I had been more faithful doing it. I wouldn't have all the repairs that I do.

But you know, looking back now and understanding, if my mother could come tonight by my bed and say, "By the way, Graham, did you . . . ?" and she'd list those four things, I'd love it!

Well, you wouldn't mind, would you? From the perspective of arriving at that point in maturity where God has accomplished what the emergency measures were supposed to do. From there, you feel only gratitude that He used all these emergency measures.

And I think the Third Angel's Message is an extreme emergency measure. What harsh words from the Gentle One. But He loves us enough to run the risk of being misunderstood. I'm sure the devil just loves mocking God with the Third Angel's Message. Also with its failure to attract people's attention.

You stop anybody on the street and say, "What's the Third Angel's Message?" And how many know? So even with that, with the severity of the language, who's paying attention? So I think we really are justified in using wind, earthquake and fire as God does to get attention. But then explain afterwards, please, "those were emergency measures."

Venden: All right. This gentleman here, and then we come to a lady over here.

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COMMENT: Back to the question about the soul. Paul said, to be absent from the body is to be with the Lord.

Maxwell: Oh yes.

COMMENT: I know I don't really understand it, but taking the whole Bible I can understand; so in the context of what he said, and what, how, how . . . ?

Maxwell: Yes. To be alive on this earth, he calls "being in the body." And then he talks about being up there. And he says, "But I don't want to be without a body." And he gets a little complicated in I Corinthians 15 on that. But I think his intention is very clear. He knew that the moment that sword lopped off his head - as a Roman citizen he was entitled to that type of execution - that he would awaken the next instant of consciousness in the presence of the One he'd love to be with, love to be with. So he didn't mind.

He said, "Really, I'm torn between my desire to depart and be with the Lord, and to stay with you. Staying with you isn't that pleasant. I'm here in prison, and not being very well fed, and who's paying attention? And when I went to be tried, not a one of you came with me. I felt so lonely. Not one of you came to go with me. Oh, I'd sure love to die and be with the Lord."

I think one can actually -- I haven't reached that place. I mean, I don't want to terminate yet. But theoretically, I hope I can do what some of us ministers encourage sick people to do when they're terminally ill. I always wonder when my turn comes, if I can do it: That when they die, die as God's friends; the next instant of consciousness, they're face to face with the Lord. And they're healthy, and all is well. It's in that sense, I think, that Paul was speaking.

COMMENT: [several unintelligible words] text for the soul. . .

Maxwell: Yes. Very much. Though Billy Graham's favorite text, in the book on angels, is the rich man and Lazarus. And you might notice in there; he says, "I know on the authority of that story, that when I die the good angels will come and take my soul to the bosom of Abraham."

But see, he's already predisposed toward the immortality of a separate soul, from his whole conditioning in life. Most Christians believe that, don't they? A lot of savable Christians believe that. 'Course they haven't allowed it to turn them against God, or to abuse themselves in other ways.

He does make possible a lot of other mistakes, though, regrettably, and it leaves us with a lot of dark spots in our theology. See, if the soul is immortal, you have to believe in Hell. Have to.

COMMENT: I heard one preacher[?] say— call it damnable heresy to not believe in eternal punishment.

Maxwell: Yes, I've heard that phrase used for several things. But. . .

COMMENT: [unintelligible]

Maxwell: Yes. There's some very strong pieces of literature coming out currently where it is said, "God, you make a sissy out of your God. This is sloppy sentimental Babylonianism, to suggest that God does not in righteous wrath, give the wicked what they so richly deserve; and they deserve to have it for eternity." Even a child who because of his misbehavior is not safe to save; he will be tormented for eternity.

But I'm not afraid, because I've been forgiven and I'll be saved. Yes, but you've been saved to live with that kind of a cruel God. That's the thing. So, you'd better not misstep in the hereafter. And so some of these same folk will say, "But don't worry. If God maybe should forget, you show

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Him your right to be there." This is legalism of the highest order! And they call it righteousness by faith. Ooo, that is a caricature of the truth.

No, we will live for eternity with Someone who would never say, "Love Me, or I'll torture you to death. But, "If you choose to be disorderly and unloving and untrustworthy, I will let you go; and you will die. And I will cry." That's the kind of God we're going to live with. That's very different. And I think it greatly affects the way we treat each other.

By the way, on the Moral Influence Theory, Abelard, you know; he's the one whose name is associated with it. Though he believed that Jesus lived and died primarily to show how much God loved us to win us; he saw nothing wrong with destroying heretics. I mean, there's a little harshness still in there.

To identify this great controversy picture of God with the Moral Influence Theory, is just so inadequate and erroneous. It just is not adequate.

Venden: All right, can we go to this lady's question?

COMMENT: A lot of times I have this question thrown at me— or this Bible verse: Don't fear those that can kill the body; but those that can kill the body and soul. And I don't know how to explain it.

Maxwell: Well, for example, to kill the body. Saul's [Paul] body was killed, but he rises to live eternally; because the kind of man that he was marked him as safe to save in the Kingdom. So don't worry about people who may torture you to death, may behead you, in various ways. But be aware of those who can destroy your capacity to be a loving, trusting, savable person. It's not that there are two separate parts.

COMMENT: In this sense, in my mind. . .

Maxwell: Because look, tell me; who can destroy your soul, in the view that the soul's immortal? So I don't know what they mean. They've got more problems than this other view has. If the soul's immortal, how do you destroy it? So they have interesting ways to get out of that. They say, "Well, to go to Hell is to be destroyed; to go to Hell is to die."

So the other day, I listened to a large, eloquent preacher on Trinity Broadcasting. I've never heard Hell presented with such fervor. And he had the voice and the manner.

He said, "I want to tell you what Hell is like." He said with his huge voice; he said, "A million years from now, you'll be writhing in those flames, and you'll be praying God to die. But no one dies in Hell," he said.

I thought, Remember that; remember that. You see. So Hell is not death in their theology; only when it's convenient to say it that way. The immortality of the soul view has a lot of inconsistencies and problems to maintain it. So it's much easier to go the other way. "Don't worry about those who might destroy you physically; but those who can destroy you spiritually."

Meaning that you have been contaminated and tarnished, and you're a rebel; and you're not safe to save. That's what counts. Worry about them. I think that's the message there.

COMMENT: Say that again, now, "Don't destroy. . ."?

Maxwell: You see, to destroy your soul would be -- the devil has sought to destroy us spiritually. He has sought to turn us against God, to become untrusting, untrustworthy rebels. That's to have your spiritual soul-like quality destroyed. Don't worry about those who may torture you to death; but in your heart you're loving the Lord. You'll be raised. Body and soul are still a unit. It's

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in that sense. Because you physically can't get hold of a soul and destroy it anyway, can you? I mean, how do you do it?

COMMENT: You're talking over my head[?]; I don't know!

Maxwell: It's impressive how in order to support the immortality of the soul, scriptures are considerably strained at times. Because there's a great desire to have the soul be immortal; as I mentioned last time about my friend, who says, "I'll admit, Paul does not teach the immortality of the soul. But it has to be immortal. It's such a precious thing." That was his view.

Venden: This gentleman right back here. Yes.

COMMENT: I'd like to comment on this gentleman's concern about the word "torment." Usually it's a person who is very sensitive to suffering and pain, who when they see a horrible incident, will describe it in very vivid terms. They had nothing to do with it, but as an observer, they react in a very visceral way and say, "It was horrible! It was terrible!"

But usually, it would seem to me, those who are insensitive to pain and suffering -- either because they've been around it so much, maybe they're relieving pain as physicians, perhaps; or as someone who actually inflicts torture -- they don't describe it in those terms. So perhaps God is reacting or at least observing in a very visceral way saying people will be tortured. It will be torture for them. So it would seem that this is perhaps a way of expressing God's, well, feelings, for people who are suffering this way.

Maxwell: Yes. I'm sure you've heard many models pictured for the final destruction of the wicked. Those last few hours, or moments, or days -- however long it is after the wicked are resurrected. And there's the New Jerusalem. And there are the saints. There's Christ in His human form. And that whole panoramic review of the whole plan of salvation. When would the torment begin?

I mean, if some of us in this room, knowing what we know, are outside; and knowing God, we know there's nothing arbitrary about it. I mean, if there was any way He could include us in, He would; it means we really are not safe to have around. And we know what's coming. We know what we're losing.

Well, you might look in there and see your family inside the city! What would it do to you? You know. I mean, the torment. . . I mean there are other kinds of torment almost worse than the fire. The whole thing is, God is trying to picture something that you would never want to go through.

I mean, I've imagined it sometimes -- it's come as a nightmare. You know, you're out there. When I was small, it would be the rest of my family. Now that I'm older, it would be my wife and children, say, and my grandchildren, and friends. I mean to have them there and looking out at me; and maybe our eyes meet. Can you imagine what it would be like? It would be simply terrible. And they won't be looking out, as some have said, with a wonderful feeling of deep satisfaction of justice, that Daddy the wretch is out there; and he's going to get what he deserves.

That would strengthen my resistance considerably out there. But if my family's looking out — I let my imagination run wild with this sometimes — I mean, if they would all be together there on the wall and look out there and say, "Look, there's Daddy." What would it do to you? It would be absolutely devastating! And the Lord looking on you as one of His children. I mean, it would be absolutely overwhelming!

So in a way, the fire that consumes is almost a merciful ending to that dreadful thing— but not pleasant. The whole thing is terrible. And then that's the end.

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The only thing that matters is our understanding how God is involved in that. And you know He wouldn't resurrect the wicked unless it said something of great consequence. He doesn't want to see it all. But He wants everyone to be satisfied that more time, more light, more opportunity, would be of no avail whatever.

And so as the fires complete their work, we can turn to God and say, "It's all right. It's all right. There is no other way." And then it's over.

So I think the torment is that whole experience, really. So I wouldn't want to make it less. I wish we could picture in whatever ways appropriate, depending on the individual, and we're all touched at different levels, you know. I think the message is supposed to be enough to touch anybody who is touchable at all, that it will be unspeakable at the end. That words fail Inspiration, even, to make it bad enough.

And God would spare us. He doesn't want anyone of us to die. So I don't mind Him making it so bad. Because He isn't going to force me into it. He says, "This is what it's going to be like. And I would spare you. I'm not willing that any should perish. And if this will make you take Me seriously, then I'm willing to run the risk." And He thunders at me. But seeing that all through scripture prepares me for the Third Angel's Message, it seems to me. Yes?

COMMENT: In this one verse [several unintelligible words] about Noah's time [Maxwell: Oh yes.] . . . [?]. . . the Flood. There were eight people saved in the ark. . . [?]. . . that was lost. [Will any of them be saved at the coming of Christ?] [?]

Maxwell: Oh. We have no information about all the people who didn't get on the boat. We do know about the eight who got on the boat. They obviously were not saved because they were so good. They were saved because they got on the boat. Because look at Ham, and even father Noah hadn't taken the Temperance Pledge yet, you do recall what he did afterwards. Although there are some explanations to that. But they weren't perfect saints. And I've wondered about how many little girls may have said their daddies, "Daddy, take me to the boat; please take me to the boat." And their daddies didn't take them.

Also, how many people died during the 120 years of Noah's preaching, converted souls? See, we don't have any reports on baptisms during the 120 years. We don't know. And we don't need to know. You know, God will save everybody who is safe to have around. And we may meet some people who were drowned in the Flood.

Some of the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers may have been good men. The boys who died in Egypt? Who says they died because they were bad? They died because they were the firstborn.

So I don't worry about any of those. God will save every single person who would be safe to have around. So some before the Flood could be there; who knows?

COMMENT: One of the things that always seemed kind of funny to me from what I read that there were going to be an awful lot of people that were going to take that broad road; they weren't going to make it.

Maxwell: Yes.

Venden: There were going to be very few people who were going to take that narrow road. Now, due to that, shouldn't there be kind of a fear in all of this? Since there's only going to be a few people, what can we do to make sure that we are some of those select few? Because it's going to be the majority -- according to what it says -- is that right? -- who will not make it into Heaven. Right?

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So how can we have the assurance we're going to be in the minority, you might say, that's not really backed by an organization like they have . . . [?]. . . now, but— whatever.

Maxwell: Well, now, your first suggestion is that we ought to take it seriously. Now, if the word "fear" implies that, that's good. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." That is suitable, serious reverence and respect, not only for Him, but for the whole situation. Yes. I think that's very much called for.

So then I read as you've suggested, and I find that those who are saved are described as "a handful of olives in the top of the olive tree." They're a remnant. I am encouraged when, you know, Revelation 13 says that when the devil has finished his campaign, the whole world will be worshiping the adversary, except a few whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

And then I wonder how many are the few? I mean, is it so small our chances are minimal? So I go back to Revelation 7; and I read about the 144,000, and I think, that's not many. And how come we're trying to win a million souls in a thousand days if only 144,000 are going to make it anyway? It seems almost cruel to bring so many in, when so few of them will make it to the Kingdom.

So then I love to read on in there. And John says, "I heard the number. 144,000. Then I turned to look. Oh!" he says, "I couldn't begin to count them." So then I'm sure the 144,000 is a symbolic representation, since it also says, "Twelve thousand of the twelve tribes of Israel." And I'm sure it isn't just going to be Jews who are going to be saved. It's everybody who trusts God.

It must be a symbolic representation of the complete number. And when John saw them, he couldn't count them. So I am assured there would be enough room for us. But unfortunately, it is a minority.

But then I love to think that on a universe-wide basis, the loyal are described as the majority. You know, the devil, the dragon, drew one-third of the stars - the angels - of Heaven with his tail -- is the description. It seems like less than half anyway.

If we want to have majorities and minorities in this, the Bible pictures the majority staying loyal; the minority through the universe rebelling. On this planet the majority rebelling; and the minority being won to loyalty. It's very sad.

COMMENT: There's one verse that says that Christ - he says, "My burden, My yoke is light." That seems like well, he's kind of saying it's easy.

Maxwell: Yes, I think so!

COMMENT: That's why I kind of wonder.

Maxwell: You spoke of the broad path and the narrow path. I just love Ellen White's comment about the broad path. I grew up understanding that the broad path was greased. You got one foot on it, and you were into perdition, you know; that there wasn't a chance! [laughter] And then you know her statement? It's a beautiful one. She says that the broad path that leads to destruction is full of every kind of handicap and hindrance, to make it as hard as possible to be lost.

Now, who says — you know, puts Ellen White in a bad light? It's magnificent the things she can say.

And that's true. Because God does not want to lose anybody. So He will make it just as hard as possible for you to turn Him down. And as you go your own way, you'll reap painful consequences. And isn't that true in this life? You start indulging yourself, you reap bad

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consequences and learn lessons from it. This is God trying to make it hard to be lost.

So it's broad only because that many take it. No, the thief on the cross is the best evidence that God does not ask much of us. And yet what He asks is in a sense everything. It has to be 100% sincere. The thief really changed his mind and said, "I would love to be with You in the kind of Kingdom You'd reign over. Because I've been a crook; and I've never seen a king pray that crooks be forgiven. That's incredible!" So he said, "Your kind of Kingdom is where I need to live."

And Jesus, "I'd be pleased to have you there."

So that's reducing it to the irreducible minimum. But it's not a little, you know.

COMMENT: You tell us to go back to the experience of Christ on the cross. I don't see any place there where Christ was burnt, or He entered into any kind of flames.

Maxwell: The only way fire is mentioned in connection with Christ, is on the mount of transfiguration. He did stand in the unveiled glory of His Father. And had He been a sinner, He would have been consumed. And I think that happened just to emphasize to us that the One who was made to be sin, really knew no sin. He was absolutely perfect when He went out to die.

So He didn't die because He was a sinner. He died to show how God will treat sinners. And He was given up. And to show that the experience of being given up is that terrible.

And I think, to realize how loving God is, when He says, "I'm giving you up," it's absolutely devastating.

You know, when your enemy gives you up, so what else is new? But when someone who loves you and has done everything conceivable for you, and has forgiven you a thousand times, finally says, "You know, this is it." Then there's no response to that. That's the end. And that's what will be so terrible.

And Jesus felt this feeling of being given up, as if He were a hopelessly rebellious sinner who wouldn't listen to His Father. And He went through that thing. And it does lead to death. It leads to a terrible death. And the pain of that separation was so terrible, the physical pain of crucifixion was hardly felt, we're told.

So I think the worst part is this other; no question about it.

Our Loving Father in Heaven,

How good to meet with friends again, and speak of Thee and Thy plans for us. We are so reassured by the word, that Thou art not willing that anyone of us should be lost.

Surely it was well said, that we should take these things seriously. Knowing what's coming, why would we want to miss the freedom and peace of eternity, with friends who can be trusted, with a God who wishes nothing but the best for each one of us?

In Jesus name,

Amen.

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**CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD, Questions #9**

Dr. Louis Venden with Dr. A. Graham Maxwell

Venden: What you said about our Heavenly Father sitting in this chair makes me just a bit hesitant to take this place. I think I might better sit at His feet on the floor.

Maxwell: Well, don't you always feel hesitant Sabbath morning when you stand up at the pulpit and then you ask to speak about God. I mean, Who are we to dare/bare\*? Yet He invites us to do it. He runs a risk in doing so.

Venden: Oh, I love the way you put that, to imagine our Heavenly Father coming in and sitting down and talking with us. It certainly is beautiful.

Maxwell: If we believe that Jesus is God, He did it all those years. \* And if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father. Do we really believe the implications of that? There's a \*. Or do we think that when we get to Heaven, even He will be different, no more quiet chats by the river of life?

Venden: Why, why does it seem so hard for us to really grasp this and to experience it?

Maxwell: Well, I thought of at least two reasons. One is our own natural limitations, it seems almost unbelievable. The other one is, we have an adversary who is determined that we not recognize this.

Venden: Wants us to have another picture.

Maxwell: Absolutely. That's been his whole campaign, and he has won so many believers, it isn't fair. His evangelism, which is bad news, isn't it?, has been so successful.

Venden: Well we had out of last week's meeting, Graham, the presentation on Why Christ Had To Die, we had a great many questions come in, which I think is most appropriate, because these individuals sense that what we covered last week was perhaps the most important thus far. And it has led into this evening. So I think we had better be about some of these questions that have come. Let's start right off with one having to do with this matter of wrath and punishment. Our questioner writes, "Do you think the concept of wrath and punishment and so forth has a useful purpose, in that it helps us to remember the importance of remaining in harmony with God's truthfulness, trustworthiness and so forth." You've commented a bit on that, but say we review again what purpose these words and these thoughts might have.

Maxwell: God has obviously used them many, many times. They have been useful to Him. But to settle for that is so regrettable. It is true, when Israel was noisy and irreverent, God had to strike a little fear into their hearts in the sense of terror, and then mixed with the terror there was a measure of reverence and respect. But you notice when our reverence is based on fear only, the moment the thunder dies away, the reverence evaporates. And Jesus really demonstrated this, when He sat on the Mount of Olives. No thunder, no lightning, no earthquake, and He quietly wept over the city. They despised Him. I do love it, though, that the children are never afraid of Him. They would sit in His lap, and one description says they would "reach up and kiss that pensive Face."

Venden: Is this wrath and punishment and so forth, is that what you are speaking about when you talk about emergency measures?

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Maxwell: Those are emergency measures.

Venden: Or does you standing on the desk throwing the chalk and the erasers out us to get our attention?

Maxwell: That would be an emergency measure, not the regular way.

Venden: All right.

Maxwell: If my understanding is right, I mean there will be thunder and lightning and earthquakes to get attention for the rest of eternity when the emergency is over. We have a whole evening on emergency measures.

Venden: Good, that's what's coming up. This same person went on to ask, "Do you feel comfortable so extensively re-reading passages like Revelation 14:10?"

Maxwell: The third angel's message? It's significant that the last great message from the angels is about the destruction of the wicked.

Venden: It has some pretty strong language.

Maxwell: Very strong language. It seems to me, it's God's last message of warning and the invitation before the end. And things have become so desperate, He raises His voice that high. It would be like a father walking with his son up in the mountains, and the son is getting closer and closer to the cliff. At first the father says, "Son, stop right where you are." But he doesn't hear. He raises his voice, but the wind is blowing in the way. So finally the father at the top of his lungs shouts to the boy, you know, "Stop where you are." And on the trail a group following say to themselves, "Listen to that heartless Father bellowing at his poor little boy." Later on when they get up and learn the truth they say, "Forgive us; we misunderstood." I think many of us may owe God an apology. I'm glad He's raised His voice. We needed it.

Venden: Revelation 14 is something that tells us about how dangerous the cliff is.

Maxwell: One of the strongest terms in all Scripture. But I like the fact that the one who wrote that, is the one who wrote, "There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out all fear." This is the beloved disciple. He knew what he was doing. So we can understand that God is love and still understand the need for earthquake, wind and fire.

Venden: Graham, you alluded to this matter of health, and someone has raised this question: "Since most Christian believers have some idea of a form of Hell, some kind or other, where did that idea of Hell come from? It seems to be so prevalent throughout Christianity."

Maxwell: I mean, in documents, one of the first Christian documents that describes Hell is the Revelation of St. Peter which is in the New Christian Apocrypha. And I don't there's a single copy of that in the room tonight. That's a very detailed description. It antecedes Dante's Inferno by many centuries. And in there it tells you exactly what will happen to you. For example, if your prevailing sin was lying, you might be held by your tongue over a hot flame. If perchance some other organ of the body was your instrument in sin, you might be similarly tortured. I mean, it's very detailed. But I think the real origin of this is the belief in Satan's lie in the Garden of Eden that we are immortal. Because if we are immortal and we're not all going to be saved, then some are going to be immortally lost. Which means that some have to go somewhere else. We either go to Heaven to enjoy the bliss of the hereafter, or we go to some other deprived place, which to some is a place of sulphurous flames. God has no choice, since the soul is immortal anyway. I believe that a combination of the immortality of the soul, which the devil taught in the Garden of Eden, combined with his caricature of God as a destroying God,

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has produced the doctrine of Hell. And I don't think anything has turned more people against God than the doctrine of eternal torment in Hell.

Venden: So it's another example of Satan's success in giving us a false picture of God and creating fear.

Maxwell: Yes. Going back to deceiving \*, "The day you eat thereof, you will die." He twisted that.

Venden: This individual last week wanted to ask this question: "Could the word `wrath' have been translated differently, as in the three angels' messages? Could there have been a better word that `wrath' used?"

Maxwell: Hmm. That's an interesting question. That's a limitation of human language. The word is "orgy" which just does mean, did mean wrath, even fury. God is limited to our human language with all the hazards thereunto pertaining. And so we have to take the whole context to understand. The question there that appeals to me most is, "Why would God use the word at all, if He does not wish to be understood as angry?" It would seem to me that He has left the impression that He is angry with us, and I would have to concur that with a father's conversation with his little girl, say. You've tried everything else under the sun to persuade her not to help herself to cookies at three in the afternoon and it hasn't worked. But finally you put this little monster in front of you, and you know how it is with the little \*. We both have them, and how cute and innocent they can look even in the midst of iniquity. That's true! I say, "Look, if you do that one more time, Daddy's going to be very, very cross with you." Now, don't smile when you say that, because she doesn't know what was "cross" means. She can't look it up in Webster's. She knows what "cross" means by the look on your face and the tone of your voice." So you feel like a bully. Here's this little, tiny child with pigtails, and you're saying, "Daddy will be very, very cross with you." And a little later, when you thought you had impressed her adequately, you find her tiptoeing around the corner and reaching up and taking another cookie. And it's so cute, you wish you had your camera. And then you suddenly realize, no, this is the time for some stern discipline. And you put this helpless little girl in front of you. She puts her hands behind her and assumes that little posture that little girls can, and you as a big brute say, "Daddy told you that if you did that one more time, he'd be very, very cross." You have to look cross, sound cross, don't glance over to your wife, you know, or you'll melt. You've got to go through with this thing. I think it's a matter of communication. And God has dealt with children. We've been the immature children. He even has to say, "Do that one more time and I will be furious with you, and I wish I didn't have to say that one more time." So I think our human experience helps us to understand the Scripture. Parents and teachers and little ones are in the best position to read the Bible sympathetically, it seems to me.

Venden: You remind me of a friend of mine who asked his little girl as he took off his belt. He said, "You know what's going to happen now?" And she chuckled and said, "Your trousers are going to fall down." But that's how they can develop morally. We had a terrible time. We had to leave the room because he was trying to do what you have suggested. He was trying to make the message \*

Maxwell: Discipline as well.

Venden: In the Bible reference sheet you use the word "reverence" as a synonym for fear. Why don't the versions use that word consistently. It seems like that would be a help, any way.

Maxwell: Well, it would be a matter of interpretation, and this enters into the whole philosophy of translation. Should a version render the original liberally? None of them does. They'd be

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quite unreadable. The question is, how much shall we interpret? And there's always a hesitation. When a man like Dr. Taylor does a sincere job a paraphrase, he gets into trouble for doing it, he is interpreted so much. He admits doing it. He did it deliberately. But there is always tension between precisely representing the original and interpreting and then making it clear. So the Revised Standard, which is very conservative, leads it up to the reader to determine from the context whether it's terror or reverence. That one I like more than any other.

Venden: It's most interesting that \* for the word is used in those two ways in the Exodus \*. Jesus is not personified. In

Maxwell: \* over it.

Venden: In Luke 11:37-52, He was invited to dine in the home of a Pharisee, and He went and seemed to be right at home and let them. But was it still when He denounced woes on the Pharisees and the lawyers?

Maxwell: Oh, I wish we had a tape recording or even a video recording. The look on His face and the sound of His voice. I am sure there were tears in His voice when He said that, because He was addressing His own children. And it makes very clear in Scripture that God does not want anyone to be lost. But because their behavior was so gross and so unacceptable, that He was honest with them, like a good physician. You'd like the doctor to tell you the truth and to do whatever needs to be done. And so He gave them the unbiased truth for their own sakes. This is the One who gave His life for them a little while later. So there's a time for denunciation, but it had better be done with tears in the voice.

Venden: What if Jesus were to walk into the room right now, come around the corner here? Would you be afraid?

Maxwell: I've often imagined that. I think the blood pressure would arise and the pulse would quicken, and I'd hope my vascular system could stand it. But I'd be saying to myself, "There is no need to be afraid." But I mean, to have so awesome a Person come in, you'd be bound to react, wouldn't you?

Venden: I remember years ago you asked that question in a church service up in Mountain View where you were speaking at Hill Center. I've never gotten over the question and the idea of picturing Jesus coming in, and what would we do? What would be appropriate to react?

Maxwell: Well, I love the way in Revelation that John "fell at His feet as though dead."

Venden: Was he afraid \*?

Maxwell: Jesus immediately says, "Get up, and don't be scared." And over and over in the Bible where Ezekiel and others have fallen at His feet, He says, "Get up, and don't be scared."

Venden: He doesn't really want us right out \*

Maxwell: He doesn't want us down there, and He doesn't want us scared. He says, "Stand up and speak to Me like a man."

Venden: Well now, Graham, what if the Father, God the Father, were to walk in here. Would you feel any different?

Maxwell: That would be a beautiful test case. If I should be afraid of the Father than the Son, then I'm not living up to what I've been saying tonight. I'd be saying to myself, "'If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father,' 'God is just as loving as His Son.'" I hope when that day comes that my conviction will be right to the core that there is no need to be more afraid of the Father

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than of the Son. I love to picture, you know, arriving in the Hereafter and meeting the Lord first, the Son. And He is saying, "Would you like to meet the Father?" You say, "Well, if You go with me, I'd be willing to go." And He'd say, "Well, you can go by yourself." No, I think that Jesus would say, "Are you still a little scared?" Well I'm embarrassed to say so but, "Yes, then I'll go with you." And then we go in with the Son to see the Father and lo, we find the Father's face is just as kind as that of the Son. See, some folk have died a friend of the Son but still a little afraid of the father. But they're safe to save. They're willing to listen. I think there will be many happy surprises in the hereafter, when people discover that the Father is just as gentle as the Son. So that we will have a lot of happy surprises to listen to.

Venden: And part of it is the good news of the message tonight, There is No Need to Be Afraid of God. I anticipated someone would ask this question and I'm glad they have because they may be speaking for many of us. You know, of course, Dr. Maxwell, our \* rights, that you are labeled as the Moral Influence Proponent. I don't know whether they mean that as a compliment or as a criticism. Would you please distinguish for everyone between Moral Influence and The Larger Moral View?

Maxwell: Now, that doesn't end the way you'd expect it. That's very thoughtfully asked. "What is the difference between the Moral Influence Theory, as it is called, and the Larger Moral View?" Well, a lot depends on what is meant by Moral Influence Theory, and as I have asked people through the years, I don't get the same answer twice. I could wish the one who gave the question could come afterwards and could ask more questions.

Venden: \*

Maxwell: But in the meantime, somebody could be saying, the classic view of Moral Influence Theory goes back to a man by the name Abellard in the eleventh century who taught the point of view that Christ came as a human and lived and died, not to make to make it possible for God to forgive, for that was never a problem with God, but to demonstrate His love and so to win us back. The emphasis was on love. Now there are some who feel that this great controversy that we represent simplest emphasized God's love. But it's so much more than that. It includes ever so much more. And so I would suggest that to call this larger, great controversy view the Moral Influence Theory, is utterly erroneous and inadequate. Because in the larger, great controversy view, we recognize the issues before the universe, the questions about our God. Is it true that sin results in death? But is it torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God? And why does God not want us to be afraid? Is it true that the obedience that springs from fear produces the character of a rebel? These other theologians never, ever dealt with those issues. The great controversy view is far larger than any other. And I notice that there who sometimes caricature perhaps our understanding of the plan of salvation as Moral Influence Theory without exception so far, they do not acknowledge a great controversy over the character and government of God. And more than that, they do understand that what went wrong in the universe is a legal problem, that what went wrong is we're in legal trouble with our God and He is legally bound to destroy us in His righteous justice and that Jesus died to make it legally possible for God to forgive. And we have discussed before what went wrong in the universe. I believe what went wrong was a breakdown of trust and trustworthiness, and Christ had to come to answer all these questions, not with words but with painful, costly demonstration, for trust and trustworthiness to be restored. This is a far larger view and should not be called Moral Influence Theory. There is another aspect of this that is very significant. Is sin only a legal problem, or does sin affect you morally? Do you need to be forgiven and have a new heart and a right spirit? So in that sense there is a moral aspect in the great controversy view.

Venden: I heard you say that it includes it, but that it takes in so much more.

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Maxwell: It takes in so much more.

Venden: That isn't a helpful, useful term.

Maxwell: It isn't a useful term. That's why I prefer the larger view.

Venden: I have heard the expression, "The demonstrative view of the atonement." How do you feel about that label?

Maxwell: Well I'm labeled about any label. That's why I like to, we have used "the larger view" quite a little in our series here. I like to find synonyms all the time. Things are too readily and easily classified. But there's truth here. You know, when a person has been accused of being untrustworthy, denials will not take care of it. Only by demonstration of trustworthiness can trust be restored. The fact that demonstration implies evidence, I like.

Venden: You feel comfortable with that.

Maxwell: That's right, but I hate to just call it "the demonstrative view" because some folk who use that term also have a rather narrow understanding of the issues at stake in the great controversy, it seems to me. What should we call it? Well how about just "the true view?"

Venden: True view. All right. We're going to have to press on with these questions because we want to try to reach through a good many of these. "You mentioned that Jesus died the results of sin. Did He not also die the wages of sin? If Jesus died the second death, wages, how was it that He could be raised from the second death from which there is no resurrection?"

Maxwell: Ah, there you have represented, you see, two understandings of what went wrong. Are we in legal trouble, or in real trouble. Results suggest real trouble. That calls for healing more than just adjustment of our legal standing. But we could use "wages" either way, "results" either way. But I think that's what's behind it. So we need to keep going back, and she mentioned too, several times, to our understanding of what went wrong in God's universe. Our understanding of what went wrong helps us understand what it takes to set it right and keep it right. Now, for Jesus to die the second death; legally, if the second death means you never rise and He died to pay the legal penalty, He should still be there. But He rose on Sunday. In fact, He could have gone on Friday straight to Heaven and said, "Was it enough? Have I answered your questions?" And their angel would have said, "You get right back down. You've got to pay this for eternity." They were not looking for legal payment. They were looking for answers, and they saw them, they heard them and they were satisfied.

Venden: This person asks the question that ties right into this. "Did Jesus die for us the first death or the second death?"

Maxwell: Yes. First death is the death from which there is a resurrection, and thousands have been crucified. If He had been only crucified, it would have been a first death.

Venden: But He died the second death.

Maxwell: He died the awful death of being given up equals God's wrath poured out on Him, God giving Him up like He will give rebels in the end, made to be sin though He knew no sin. He went through that whole experience. But all He was answering was the question, "Does sin result in death?" Yes it does. Is it torture at God's hands? No, it isn't. Who did torture Him? Those who served God from fear did it to answer the third question. And once the questions were answered, why stay in the tomb? He did stay over Sabbath to add still more significance to the Seventh Day, but He didn't even wait for the sun to rise on Sunday morning. He was up there to Heaven to hear the universe tell Him that they understood.

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Venden: The problem really only comes when a person is locked into a legal model.

Maxwell: That's right.

Venden: And then you say, "It couldn't be the second death because He couldn't have come back from the dead.

Maxwell: Exactly. That's it.

Venden: All right, good. I think you've really clarified that. This person also wrote at last, "How does God forgive sins, and what is involved in receiving the remission of our sins?"

Maxwell: Now, remission meaning forgiveness and not just suppressing it for a little while like the medical term. What's involved in God forgiving. I believe God is forgiveness personified. And you and your brother Morrie, you know, when you tell the prodigal son make that so clear. That's beautifully done. What had to be done for the father to receive his son back dirty, and diseased and malnourished as he was? All the boy had to do was come home and find his father had forgiven him long before. In fact, it's when he found that his father had forgiven him, that he repented. It isn't, "If I repent, He'll forgive me." When I find how forgiving He is, that leads me to repentance.

Venden: Another question tied in with last week: "Are you suggesting that God has angels who go against the law and kill such as His "angel of death"? Does God have a 'death squad'?"

Maxwell: Mmmm. That's something. What's behind this...

Venden: The first born of Egypt, Sennacharib...

Maxwell: The angel is pictured as taking the lives...

Venden: We'll need a thirty-second answer on that one.

Maxwell: Well, it's the word again, "Thou shalt not kill." Whether in the Hebrew or in the Greek, it's "murder." "Thou shall not commit murder." And that's why Jesus could say, "If you hate your brother, you've broken that command. He who hates his brother is a murderer." There is not a commandment, "You should not kill." There is a commandment, "You shalt not murder." And in those deaths, God's own angels have put many of God's children to sleep and they will raise them in the resurrection then.

Venden: But there's not breaking God's law. They're not saying...

Maxwell: They're not breaking that law. In then end when the wicked die, it's not a huge violation of God's own commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" when the wicked die.

Venden: Graham, we're going to have to take out one of these for our final one. "For the sake of restoring us into God's image, was death necessary? Couldn't God have forgiven us without Jesus having to die?"

Maxwell: He could have forgiven us to be sure; in fact, He did. But the questions are out there. And those questions were so potentially destructive that until the questions were answered the seeds of distrust and sin and rebellion were in the universe. Because I believe even if Lucifer had repented and come back, Jesus would have needed to answer the question. Once the questions were asked, you could count on God to answer them, no matter what it cost, and He did it.

Venden: In the light of what great controversy what had gone wrong,

Maxwell: That's right.

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Venden: He just had to follow \*

Maxwell: And it cost His life in that particular way.

Venden: This question is a nice break with next Friday evening's meeting. "There's a lot of meaning in why we should keep the Sabbath, but if the specifying of the day that seems arbitrary," this person writes, "why should we keep the seventh day when the rest of the world, many of them keep the first? Why couldn't we keep that day the same way? What difference does it make?" What about that arbitrariness?

Maxwell: Well, that's the whole subject for next week. The reminder of the evidence is the meaning of the Sabbath, and the reason for bringing the Sabbath in so early is that nothing has been misrepresented as being more arbitrary than the keeping of the Sabbath. And so let's bring it in as a test case. I believe the Sabbath is remedy for this misunderstanding. It is a reminder of the evidence that God is not arbitrary.

Venden: So in a way it has been happening thus far.\* Next week we'll bring everything together once again.

Maxwell: That's the hope.

Venden: All right, we hope you'll all be here next Friday night.

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