An aerial photograph of a city skyline at sunset, with a white rectangular text box overlaid in the center. The sky is a mix of orange and blue, and the city buildings are silhouetted against the light. The text box contains the title in red and the author's name in grey at the bottom.

Why the Restrain of Coercive Power is What Defines Adventists

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The Great Controversy 8

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy ***between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty*** over the universe. This conflict ***originated in heaven*** when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in ***self-exaltation became Satan***, God's adversary, and led into ***rebellion*** a portion of the angels. He introduced ***the spirit of rebellion*** into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the global flood, as presented in the historical account of Genesis 1-11. Observed by the whole creation, ***this world*** became the arena of ***the universal conflict***, out of which the God of love ***will ultimately be vindicated***. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. (Gen. 3; 6-8; Job 1:6-12; Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-18; Rom. 1:19-32; 3:4; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 3:6; Rev. 12:4-9.)



- (1) Who is involved in the conflict – Christ versus Satan
- (2) What it is about – The character of God, his law and sovereignty
- (3) Where did the conflict start – in heaven
- (4) Where it is now – in this world, even though it is said that it is universal
- (5) What is the problem – the spirit of rebellion against God
- (6) Who will win it and when – God will be vindicated in the future
- (7) What is the role of people – they are caught up in the conflict and are aided by Christ, Holy Spirit and angels



‘Mercy and truth go before His face. Psalm 89:14. PP 34.2

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures **the service of love**—service that **springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience;** and to all He grants **freedom of will**, that they may render Him voluntary service. PP 34.3



To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels. To this object he was about to bend the energies of that master mind, which, next to Christ's, was first among the hosts of God. PP36.1

He [the Son of God] shared the Father's counsels, while Lucifer did not thus enter into the purposes of God. “Why,” questioned this mighty angel, “should Christ have the supremacy? Why is He honored above Lucifer?” PP36.3



It was his policy **to perplex** with **subtle arguments** concerning the purposes of God. Everything that **was simple he shrouded in mystery**, and by **artful perversion** cast doubt upon the plainest statements of Jehovah. And his high position, so closely connected with the divine government, gave greater force to his representations. PP 41.3

God could employ only such **means as were consistent with truth and righteousness**. **Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit**. He had sought to falsify the word of God and had misrepresented His plan of government, claiming that God was not just in **imposing laws** upon the angels; that in **requiring submission and obedience** from His creatures, He was **seeking merely the exaltation of Himself**. It was therefore **necessary to demonstrate** before the inhabitants of heaven, and of all the worlds, that God's government is just, His law perfect. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper and his real object must be understood by all. **He must have time to manifest himself** by his wicked works. PP 42.1



He [lucifer] worked with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God. He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide. They were not beings that could bring dishonor to God; all their thoughts were holy; it was no more possible for them than for God Himself to err.

The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all. PP 37.1



Therefore **God permitted him to demonstrate** the nature of his claims, **to show the working out of his proposed changes** in the divine law. **His own work must condemn him.** Satan had claimed from the first that he was not in rebellion. The whole universe must see the deceiver unmasked. PP 42.2



Even when he was cast out of heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. **Since only the service of love can be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence.** *The inhabitants of heaven and of the worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. ...he must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question. PP 42.3*



The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, **Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority.** Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan.

DA 22



God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. DA 759



When they came into the meeting in the morning I was surprised to hear Elder _____ make the kind of a speech he did before a large audience of believers and unbelievers—a speech which I knew could not be dictated by the Spirit of the Lord. He was followed by Elder _____, who made remarks of the same order, before Brother Morrison began his talk, which was all calculated to create sympathy which I knew was not after God's order. It was human but not divine. And for the first time I began to think it might be we did not hold correct views, after all, upon the law in Galatians, for the truth required no such spirit to sustain it. 9MR 220.3



Gen 3:1-6 - (NKJV) *“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”* ... Genesis 3:4-5 (NKJV) *“You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*



Revelation 12:7-9 7 *And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the **dragon**. The dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 The great dragon was thrown down, that **ancient serpent**, who is called the **Devil** and **Satan**, the **deceiver of the whole world**—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

13 So when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he **pursued** the woman who had given birth to the male child.

17 *Then the dragon was **angry** with the woman, and went off to **make war** on the rest of her children, those who keep **the commandments of God** and hold **the testimony of Jesus**.*



Exodus 34:6-7

*6 The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a **God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.** 7 keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation,*



John 12:31, 32 - “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.”.

*The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but **before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan.** It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. PP 68.2,*



Lucifer/ Satan's idea of governance is based on

- (1) Law – obsolete, holding us back, an instrument of power used by God
- (2) Use of mystery and secrecy to advance his agenda.
- (3) Manipulation and half-truths/lies
- (4) Subtle and gradually less subtle coercion ending in
- (5) Massive use of power
- (6) Overall, obedience to his vision at all cost is what matters.

The-end, justifies the means...



God and the Son of God use different governance ideology

- (1) The law is the law of love – it is to aid and contribute to the happiness of all the creation.
- (2) There is no secret agenda of God with creation. God has an openness policy
- (3) God does not use manipulation to get us where he wants us to be. There is no subtlety or half-truths.
- (4) God shies away from use of power and coercion in any form.

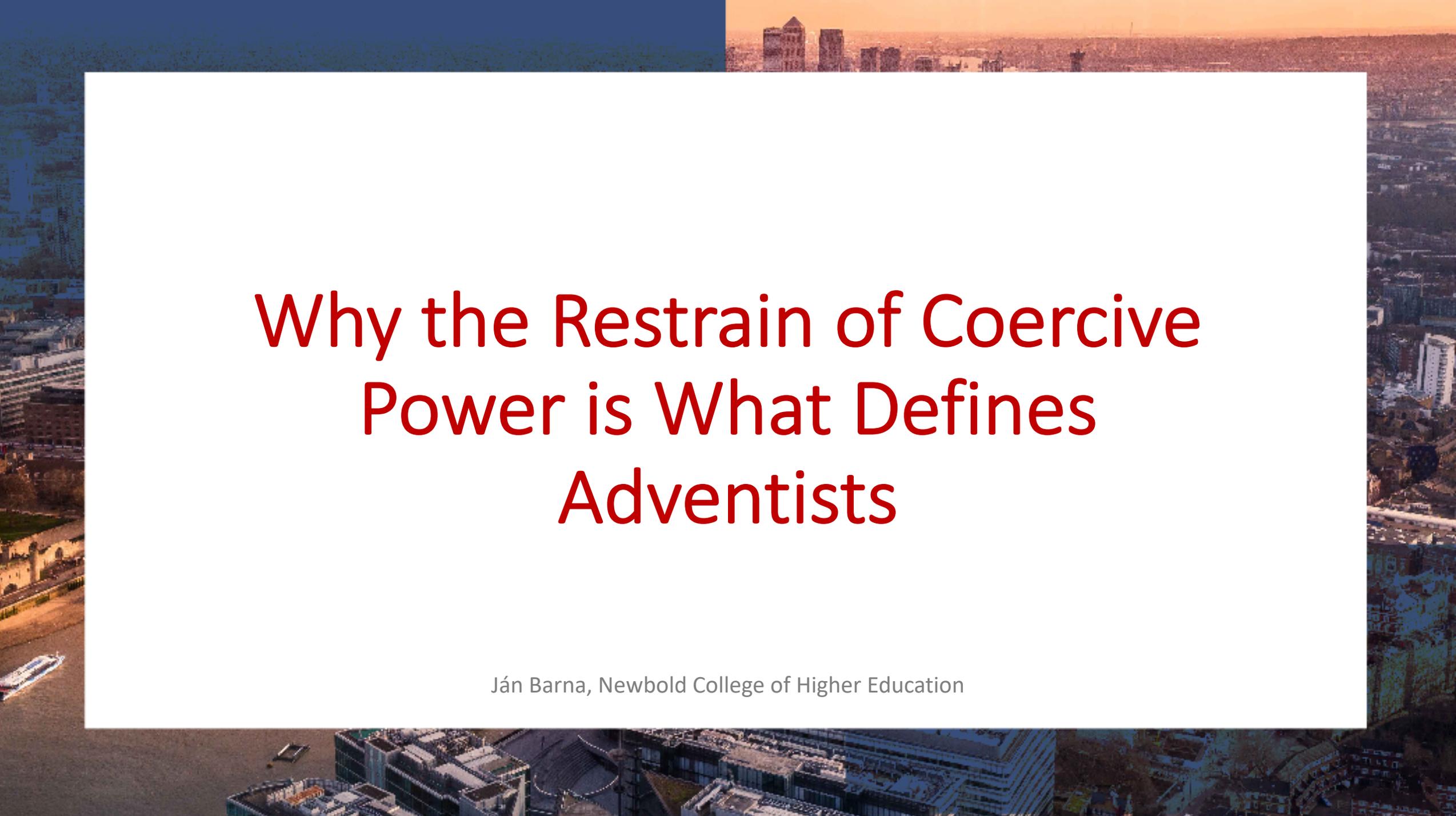


What does it mean for Adventist ecclesiology?

If the controlling theological metaphor for this community of faith is the great controversy, then it must have visible ecclesiological consequences or implications on our very policies, processes and actions.

At the end, our Adventist story needs to be about God, we need to present God as a good God who gives all for the happiness of his creation. We need to preach this message also through our ecclesiology, indeed through our very processes, policy and governance.



An aerial photograph of a city, likely London, showing a river with a boat, a bridge, and various buildings. The image is split into two color-tinted halves: the left side is blue and the right side is orange.

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