

“SAVIOUR OF ALL MEN”

1 Timothy 4:10

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GLAD TIDINGS PUBLISHERS
915 Parks Avenue, SE  Paris, OH 44669 USA

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless indicated. GNB refers to the Good News Bible, and RSV refers to the Revised Standard Version, and NJB refers to the New Jerusalem Bible.

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2M January 1991; 5M January 1994.

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Introduction

About the time the Seventh-day Adventist Church was being established in the mid-nineteenth century, the Christian church was being introduced to the doctrine of Dispensationalism, a doctrine which has today been popularized by the Scofield Bible.

One of the significant teachings of this doctrine is that from Moses to Christ (this is referred to as the dispensation of the Old Covenant), the human race was placed under the law. But since the coming of Christ dispensationalists believe that this Old Covenant was done away with (the law, they say, was nailed to the cross), and replaced by the New Covenant, salvation by grace alone. Accordingly, the proponents of this doctrine teach that the law is no longer binding on the Christian living under grace.

In our attempts to counteract this false teaching, especially in view of the Sabbath truth, the pioneers of the Adventist Church began to emphasize the law, and the law, to the point where the doctrine of justification by faith was excluded from the main thrust of our teachings.

For example, from August 17 to December 19, 1874, Uriah Smith published a series of articles in the *Review and Herald* under the heading "Leading Doctrines of the *Review*". No mention was made of justification by faith. Three years later, in 1877, James White and Uriah Smith conducted "The Bible Insti-

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tute"—to prepare the ministers for the work of evangelism. Again there was no mention of justification by faith. The following year, 1878, Uriah published a book entitled *Synopsis of Present Truth*. In all of the 336 pages of this book no mention was made of justification by faith, but much about the law. No wonder Ellen G. White accused the pioneers of preaching *the law, and the law, till we had become dry as the hills of Gilboa*.

In order to deliver us from the legalism that resulted from this over-emphasis of the law, God in His great mercy brought to this church in 1888 the most precious message of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ. An integral part of this message was that Christ, in order to save mankind from sin's guilt and punishment, as well as its power and slavery, assumed the self-same sinful nature of the human race. He came to redeem.

In 1976 the church acknowledged that this message was not fully accepted, and that consequently the blessings of the latter rain and the loud cry, which were to accompany its reception, were withdrawn (*Adventist Review*, May 27, 1976).

It is evident, however, that our gracious Lord is once again endeavoring to restore this glorious truth of *Christ our righteousness*, a subject which will one day, says Ellen G. White, "swallow up every other truth" (*Review and Herald Extra*, December 23, 1890). Should this message be fully accepted this time, it will accomplish what God had intended it to do some 100 years ago; to lighten the whole earth with Christ's glory, thus making it inexcusable for any to be lost. Matthew 24:14 and Revelation 14:6-12 will then have been fulfilled and the end can come.

In order for the above to become a reality the issue over the humanity of Christ will have to be resolved. It is this writer's sincere prayer that the material presented in this little book will contribute towards that end.

Today the church is polarized into two opposite camps over this issue. As William G. Johnsson, editor of the *Adventist Review*, clearly expressed in his second editorial article, "Our

Matchless Saviour—II” (*Adventist Review*, July 22, 1993), “Some among us would like to modify it [the fourth article of our *Fundamental Beliefs*] to affirm that Jesus came in ‘sinless nature’—the nature of Adam before the Fall; others, a more insistent group, want it to say that Jesus came in ‘fallen nature’—human nature after the Fall.”

One thing must become clear, whatever consensus we come to as a people on this vital issue will affect the gospel and the message of righteousness by faith we proclaim to the world. As the editor of the *Review* correctly stated in the above article: “We see, then, that the stakes in this debate are high. This isn’t some abstract theological discussion—it’s about our salvation; it’s about the very gospel God calls us to proclaim.”

Ever since the birth of the Christian church, and even long before that, Satan has been at work to pervert the truth as it is in Christ, and thus nullify the power of the gospel. Presently, some in our midst have embraced and are advocating the popular evangelical gospel, commonly referred to in Adventism as the “new theology”, although new it isn’t. They are sincerely attempting to restore to God’s “remnant” the peace and joy of salvation, of which over-emphasis of the law and good works has robbed them. They naturally stress justification by faith with little emphasis on sanctification. The result has been a lowering of the standards.

Others, in their attempt to counteract the so-called “new theology” and uphold our firm foundation, the traditional teachings of the church, are emphasizing the keeping of the law or sanctification, with little, and an incomplete, emphasis on justification. This group is preaching a subtle form of legalism, akin to that into which the Judaizers had side-tracked the Galatian church.

It is this writer’s conviction that neither party is presenting the full truth. Ellen G. White described the 1888 message as “justification by faith . . . its fruit is unto holiness” (*Review and Herald*, Sept. 3, 1889). To emphasize justification by faith without a balanced emphasis on sanctification, or vice versa, is to

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misrepresent that most precious message. A correct understanding of the humanity of Christ will, I believe, correct this situation and unite thoughtful people in both camps.

One of the major differences between the evangelical gospel, or so-called “new theology”, and the 1888 message of righteousness by faith, has to do with the humanity of Christ. All agree that the eternal Son of God became man for our salvation, but what kind of human nature did He assume?

Those who are advocating the evangelical gospel, and some others who are upholding traditional Adventism, insist that apart from our physical infirmities (like aging and being prone to fatigue), Christ took the sinless nature of Adam as it was before the Fall. Referring to this group, the above mentioned *Review* article explains why: “They assert that if He [Jesus] shared our moral weakness—our bent toward sin—He would be a sinner and Himself need a Saviour. For them, the very *state* in which humanity finds itself since the Fall comes under divine condemnation, so they are sure that Jesus did not share that state” (emphasis original).

This, incidentally, is the popular view of both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches today. The 1888 message, on the other hand, insisted that Christ assumed our fallen sinful nature as we know it and which was in need of redeeming, but that in spite of this He lived a perfect sinless life, and redeemed that fallen human nature at the cross.

“The humanity of Christ,” says Ellen White, “is everything to us.” Because of this, the view we hold regarding Christ’s humanity has a definite bearing on the gospel we preach, as well as on our own Christian experience and witnessing.

The evangelical gospel equates righteousness by faith only with justification by faith since Christ, in His sinless human nature, only legally redeemed mankind by His doing and dying. Sanctification, though they consider it important, is not part of the good news of the gospel (what Christ accomplished in His earthly mission). Instead it is the *believer’s*

attempt at living a holy life, aided by the Holy Spirit and motivated by love for the gift of justification.

On the contrary, the 1888 message went beyond a legal or forensic redemption; it said that in *Christ's* doing and dying mankind was totally saved from sin, not just its guilt and punishment. Thus in Christ's holy history, *justification, sanctification*, as well as *glorification*, were fully accomplished for fallen humanity (1 Cor. 1:30). Therefore, all Christian experience is based on a finished work, the objective facts of the gospel, and all three form part of the good news of salvation, to be received by faith alone.

The emphasis of the 1888 message was that since in Christ's doing and dying, the law, or principle of sin (love of self) was both conquered and condemned in our sinful human nature that He assumed, this gives to all justified believers everlasting hope to live as Christ did in overcoming temptation and the flesh as He did (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:16; Rev. 3:21).

Therefore, this full or complete gospel not only offers sinful man peace with God and full assurance of heaven now and in the judgment, but also total victory over the tyranny and power of the sinful flesh. Such victorious living in the life of the believer has no merit and consequently makes no contribution to our justification, but manifests the power of the gospel by revealing the self-sacrificing love (*agape*) of God in fallen human nature.

In view of the fact that all human attempts to solve the moral degeneracy of our present selfish and wicked world have failed miserably, the reproduction of Christ's character of unconditional, selfless love in the lives of Christians becomes an important evidence of the gospel's power to save man from sin. This demonstration desperately needs to be witnessed in our present wicked, skeptical, world before the end can come (John 13:34, 35; Matt. 24:14).

It is for this reason that the 1888 message of righteousness by faith was identified by the Spirit of Prophecy with the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, with the ultimate goal

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of ripening the harvest (see vs. 15), and producing a people having the faith of Jesus, the patience of the saints, and demonstrating this by their selfless love for their fellow men—the true keeping of the commandments of God (Rev. 14:12; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13, 14).

Thus, in the 1888 message the Lord actually gave His people the “beginning” of the latter rain and the loud cry; which, if it had been fully received, would have lightened the earth with God’s glory, culminating in the second advent. This is not the teaching of the popular evangelical gospel, which only satisfies man’s egocentric concern to qualify for heaven.

At the Fall, not only did all mankind come under the condemnation of death in Adam (Rom. 5:12, 18), but man’s very nature was corrupted, sold into slavery to sin (2 Pet. 2:19; John 8:34; Rom. 3:9-12; 7:14). Consequently, since the Fall, holy and sinless living, apart from God’s grace, became impossible (Rom. 7:14-25), and therefore, “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16).

But what the law could not accomplish because of weakened human nature, God did. He did it in Christ, who by taking upon His sinless divine nature our fallen sinful human nature, not only legally saved all humanity by His holy history (Rom. 5:18), but also liberated fallen mankind from their slavery to sin by condemning the law of sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:2-4).

Hence, the good news of the true and full gospel not only offers sinful man legal or forensic “justification unto life” in Christ, but also total sanctification or holiness of living in this present evil world, culminating in glorification at the second advent. “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom. 6:22; 1 John 3:8-11).

This was the essence of the 1888 message. This is the gospel which I believe God raised up the Advent Movement to proclaim to all nations as a witness before Christ returns to execute judgment.

1 *The Gospel Defined*

Since the foundation of every saving truth is *Christ our righteousness* (1 Cor. 3:11), all truth pertaining to our redemption must be studied within the context of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This includes the subject under discussion, the humanity of Christ. Unfortunately, there is within Adventism today much confusion as to what constitutes the gospel. This problem must therefore first be corrected before we can enter the discussion of the human nature Christ assumed at the incarnation.

What did our Lord mean when He commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? The answer to this question can be summed up in one sentence, *Christ and Him crucified*. This is what constitutes the good news of the gospel and the central message of the New Testament (1 Cor. 1:17, 18; 2:1, 2).

As a church, we have given the word *gospel* a very general meaning. The Bible describes three phases of salvation that are related yet distinct. These three phases of salvation are: *The gospel; the fruits of the gospel; and the hope of the gospel*. Failure to see the relationship and distinction between them has produced the confusion in our midst. The following is a brief description of these three phases of salvation, showing their relationship as well as their distinction:

The gospel—This is the unconditional good news of salvation obtained for all humanity in Christ's holy history. It is

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referred to as the objective facts of salvation and is a finished or completed work, to which mankind has made no contribution whatsoever (Rom. 3:28, 5:18). It is therefore, entirely the work of God and hence described by the apostle Paul as the *righteousness of God* (Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21). It is this holy history of Christ—His birth, life, death, and resurrection, that saves sinful man, now, and in the judgment. When received by faith, the gospel becomes *justification* or *righteousness by faith*.

It is important to note at this point what Christ actually accomplished in this gospel; for every subjective experience in the believer's life is based on the finished work of Christ. The Bible clearly teaches that God sent His Son into this world to save mankind from sin (John 1:29; 3:17). But sin is a threefold problem. All Adventists are aware that sin is *the transgression of the law* that results in guilt and punishment. But the Scripture also defines sin as a force, a law or principle that resides in our sinful nature (Rom. 7:17, 20, 23). And finally, the corruption and physical infirmities of our being are also part and parcel of our sin problem from which we need to be redeemed (1 Cor. 15:53-57).

Christ, by His life, death, and resurrection saved fallen humanity from all of these three problems, so that the true gospel offers mankind salvation full and complete. Consequently, those who respond to the gospel message in faith stand perfect in Christ, in His performance, in justice, as well as in nature. This is what justifies and qualifies them for heaven.

The only way this could be realized is by Christ assuming our sinful nature that needed redeeming. As was often stated by the church fathers in the first five centuries of the Christian era: “that which was not assumed by Christ could not be redeemed or healed.”

The Fruits of the Gospel—This subjective experience is what the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the believer who has accepted the gospel by faith and is walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 22, 23). In saving us from sin Christ not only saved us from death to life, but also from sinful living to a life of good

works (Tit. 2:11-14; 3:8; John 14:12). Hence, the gospel is not only the means of our salvation into heaven but is also the basis of holy living and good works (Eph. 2:8-10).

This holy living or fruit-bearing is referred to in Scripture as *sanctification*. These fruits do not contribute one iota towards our justification, which qualifies us for heaven, but witness the salvation we already possess in Christ by faith. Therefore, sanctification must *not* be equated with justification, even though it is good news, but defined as *the fruits of the gospel*. Failure to distinguish justification from sanctification has produced the insecurity common among so many Adventists. We must ever keep in mind that the justification of the believer is based on a finished work, the gospel, but sanctification is an ongoing process that will continue as long as life will last.

Through the gospel the believer stands perfect in Christ; this is the basis of assurance. But the good works prove that the believer's faith is genuine and not a sham (James 2:14-26). True justification by faith must express itself in behavior, and behavior must embody salvation. Genuine justification by faith, therefore, *always* produces good works (Matt. 13:23), even though these works may not be apparent to the believer (Matt. 25:37-39).

It is for this reason the New Testament teaches that we are justified by faith alone (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8, 9), but judged by works (Matt. 25:34-40; John 5:28-30; Rom. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:10), the works being not the means but the evidence of justification by faith (James 2:20-22). Further, as mentioned above, justification is entirely God's doing and a finished or completed work, while sanctification does involve our human co-operation, walking in the Spirit, and, as already indicated, is an on-going process, "the work of a lifetime."

The Hope of the Gospel—This refers to the ultimate reality of salvation, which will be experienced by all believers at the second coming of Christ. It is at this time that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). The Bible calls this experience *glorifica-*

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tion. The experience of conversion and the process of sanctification do bring about a change to the Christian's character, but not one iota to the believer's nature. This remains sinful throughout the Christian's earthly existence or until the second advent.

It is for this reason believers groan, waiting patiently for the redemption of their bodies (Rom. 8:22-24; Phil. 3:20, 21). Like sanctification, glorification must *not* be equated with the gospel but with the *hope of the gospel*. For while the gospel is the good news of salvation for all men, the second advent is not. It is the blessed hope only for the believers who are rejoicing in the gospel; but to the unbelievers it is the great day of wrath (Rev. 6:12-17).

With the gospel defined we can now proceed with our discussion on this important subject of the human nature that Christ assumed at the incarnation.

2 The True Position of the Adventist Church

In order that we appreciate the unique Adventist message to the world, the starting point of our discussion on the humanity of Christ must be the historical background of this subject. It would be well for the reader to become familiar with our own denominational history concerning this vital truth. In the May 27, 1976, *Adventist Review* a group of church leaders provided a statement on righteousness by faith and certain related truths. Included in this article was a statement on the humanity of Christ. After explaining both views (the pre-Fall and the post-Fall), the article went on to say that we may hold either view. Thus it is clear that today both views are acceptable within Adventism. But this has not always been so.

A careful examination of our history, especially after 1888, shows that while we did not have an officially defined position, the general teaching of the church in Sabbath School lessons, periodicals and books published prior to the 1950s, taught that Christ took on His sinless divine nature our sinful nature, as we know it, in order to be the Redeemer of the world. The Anglican theologian Geoffrey Paxton in his book *The Shaking of Adventism* recognized this fact.

But there has come a change. What brought it about? Beginning in the early 1950s, dialogue with non-Adventist theologians gradually began to bring about a shift in our position on the humanity of Christ. This was first noticeable in articles

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published in *Ministry* magazine, followed by such books as *Questions on Doctrine* and *Movement of Destiny*. Due to this change in position older books such as *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* and *Answers to Objections* were revised to present the modified view on the humanity of Christ. What motivated this change?

Only the Judgment will reveal the secrets of men's minds, but many feel, and for good reasons, that it was an attempt to remove the stigma of being called a “sect” or a “cult” so we could gain acceptance with the popular Evangelical scholars and churches.

But not all in our midst surrendered to this theological shift on the humanity of Christ. Foremost to oppose this change was M. L. Andreasen. Others followed, until the church was forced at the Palmdale Conference (1976) to declare both views acceptable within Adventism. But Palmdale was not the final word on this debate. This controversy continues and will continue until we get our act together as to what constitutes the gospel that the Advent movement was raised up to restore and proclaim.

3 *Views of Modern Scholarship*

There is much emphasis today on modern scholarship as the basis for arriving at truth. While sound Biblical scholarship is important to a true understanding of Scripture, we must realize that scholars have often gone wrong. For example, Jewish scholars failed to see the Messiah in the suffering servant of the Old Testament. This greatly contributed to the rejection of Jesus by the leaders of Israel.

Likewise, many so-called reliable scholars of today still cling to the heresies of the natural immortality of the soul and Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. Yet neither are supported by Scripture. Again, modern scholarship is often influenced by speculation and liberalism based on human rationale or the opinions of scientists, rather than *thus saith the Lord*.

However, this does not mean that we must totally discard modern scholarship. Present day Biblical research has done much to give us a clearer and deeper understanding of Scripture, and we must take advantage of it. This is especially true in regard to the humanity of Christ, for as D. M. Baillie declared: "It may safely be said that practically all schools of theological thought today take the humanity of our Lord more seriously than has ever been done before by Christian theologians."

Ever since the incarnation of Christ, man has been confronted with the question Jesus posed to His disciples: "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" (Mat. 16:13). The New

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Testament writers did not argue the twofold nature of Christ, but proclaimed as a fact that He was fully God and fully man in one person.

The Gentile Christians of the early church, who were mainly of Greek origin, found it difficult to accept this fact at face value. How could a holy God, they argued, co-exist in human flesh, which to many of them was constituted of evil matter? And so began, early in Christian history, the great Christological controversies in which some denied our Lord's divinity while others denied His true humanity.

It required two church councils, Nicea and Chalcedon, over a period of 400 years, for the Christian church to finally restore and accept the apostolic declarations concerning the unipersonality of Christ—that He was fully God and fully man at the same time. This position, even though it did not solve all the Christological problems, was generally held until "the age of enlightenment" (18th century), when scholars and theologians again began to question the person and work of Christ. Today the discussion still goes on.

But while it is true that modern scholars are not all agreed on this issue of the humanity of Christ, it is assuring to know that many reliable present-day Biblical, as well as systematic, theologians fully support the view of the humanity of Christ which was taught in the 1888 message. Among more prominent ones are: Anders Nygren, Karl Barth, J. A. T. Robinson, T. F. Torrance, C. E. B. Cranfield, Nels F. S. Ferre, Harold Roberts, Leslie Newbigin, and others. The interesting fact about all these modern scholars is that without exception they base their arguments on the New Testament teachings.

For example, Anders Nygren, the famous professor of Systematic Theology at Lund University, Sweden, said in his *Commentary on Romans*: "For it was to be right in sin's own realm that the Son was to bring sin to judgment, overcome it and take away its power. . . . Paul is concerned to affirm that when Christ came into the world, He actually stood under the same conditions as we, and under the same destroying powers as had man

in bondage. . . . Christ's carnal nature was no unreality, but simple, tangible fact. He shared all our conditions. He was under the same powers of destruction. Out of 'the flesh' arose for Him the same temptations as for us. But in all this He was master of sin. . . . Christ overcame sin in its own realm, in the flesh, when He Himself came in the form of sinful flesh" (*Commentary on Romans* 8:1-11).

Another modern theologian, Harry Johnson, earned his doctoral degree from London University on this very subject. In the Introduction to his *The Humanity of the Saviour* (Epworth Press, London, 1962; recently reprinted) he said: "The eternal Son of God assumed human nature; on this all Christians agree. But what kind of human nature did He assume? Was it the human nature that was affected by the Fall, 'fallen human nature', or was it human nature as originally created by God? . . . The answer of this book is that He took human nature as it was because of the Fall. Despite this, He lived a perfect, sinless life, and finally redeemed this 'fallen nature' through His Cross; in this victory is the basis of Atonement" (*flyleaf*).

Johnson adds: "This Christological position is supported by the New Testament, and there are several indications which suggest that it gives a deeper interpretation to some sections of the gospel narrative. It is clearly taught by Paul, and is the obvious implication of certain aspects of the Christology of Hebrews" (*ibid.*).

If we Adventists are to restore the full gospel and complete what the Reformers began some 400 years ago, we need to seriously consider what Thomas F. Torrance has to say about the human nature that Christ assumed in the incarnation. Please note what this noted scholar has to say about *relearning* the truth concerning the humanity of Christ:

"Perhaps the most fundamental truth which we have to learn in the Christian Church, or rather relearn since we have suppressed it, is that the Incarnation was the coming of God to save us in the heart of our *fallen* and *depraved* humanity, where

humanity is at its wickedest in its enmity and violence against the reconciling love of God. That is to say, the Incarnation is to be understood as the coming of God to take upon himself our fallen human nature, our actual human existence laden with sin and guilt, our humanity diseased in mind and soul in its estrangement or alienation from the Creator. This is a doctrine found everywhere in the early Church in the first five centuries, expressed again and again in the terms that the whole man had to be assumed by Christ if the whole man was to be saved, that the unassumed is unhealed, or that what God has not taken up in Christ is not saved. . . . Thus the Incarnation had to be understood as the sending of the Son of God in the concrete form of our own sinful nature and as a sacrifice for sin in which he judged sin within that very nature in order to redeem man from his carnal, hostile mind" (Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, pp. 48, 49 [1983] emphasis original).

Could it be that it is for this reason that *The International Critical Commentary* has, since 1982, changed its position on the humanity of Christ from the pre-Fall position to the post-Fall? This is what it has to say, as a result of this change: "But if we recognize that Paul believed it was fallen human nature which the Son of God assumed, we shall probably be inclined to see here also a reference to the unintermittent warfare of His whole earthly life by which He forced our rebellious nature to render a perfect obedience to God."

It then goes on to make this observation: "Those who believe that it was fallen human nature which was assumed have even more cause than had the authors of the *Heidelberg Catechism* to see the whole of Christ's life before His actual ministry and death was not just a standing where unfallen Adam had stood without yielding to the temptation to which Adam succumbed, but a matter of starting from where we start, subjected to all the evil pressures which we inherit, and using the altogether unpromising and unsuitable material of our corrupt nature to work out a perfect, sinless obedience" (C. E. B. Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary*, Romans, vol. 1, pp. 379-383, 1982 edition).

Please note this commentary's carefully reasoned conclusion after examining possible alternate interpretations of the word *likeness* in Romans 8:3:

“By *sinful flesh* Paul clearly meant ‘sinful flesh’, i.e., fallen human nature. But why did he say *in likeness of sinful flesh* rather than just *in sinful flesh*? At any rate five alternative solutions to this problem have to be considered [solutions (ii) and (v) are quoted here as they represent the two taught within Adventism—solution [ii] by those who hold the pre-Fall position and solution [v] by those who take the post-Fall position].

“(ii) that he introduced *likeness* in order to avoid implying that the Son of God assumed fallen human nature, the sense being: like our fallen flesh, because flesh, but only like, and not identical with it, because unfallen. This though it is the traditional solution, is open to the general theological objection that it was not unfallen, but fallen, human nature that needed redeeming.

“(v) that the intention behind the use of *likeness* here was to take account of the fact that the Son of God was not, in being sent by His Father, changed into a man, but rather assumed human nature while still remaining Himself. On this view, the word *likeness* does have its sense of ‘likeness’; but the intention is not in any way to call in question or to water down the reality of Christ’s *sinful flesh*, but to draw attention to the fact that, while the Son of God truly assumed sinful flesh, He never became sinful flesh and nothing more, nor even *sinful flesh* indwelt by the Holy Spirit and nothing more, but always remained Himself (i.e., God).

“We conclude that (v) is to be accepted as the most probable explanation of Paul’s use of *likeness* here, and understand Paul’s thought to be that the Son of God assumed the selfsame fallen human nature that is ours, but that in His case that fallen human nature was never the whole of Him—He never ceased to be the eternal Son of God” (*ibid.*).

After 15 years of exhaustive research, the *Word Biblical Commentary* has come up with what is believed to be a thor-

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ough interpretation of Scripture. Note what this commentary has to say about Christ being sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3):

“Here, however, the fundamental thought is added that God achieved his purpose for man not by scrapping the first effort and starting again, but by working through man in his fallenness, letting sin and death exhaust themselves in this man’s flesh, and remaking him beyond death as a progenitor and enabler of a life *according to the Spirit*. Hence whatever the precise force of the *likeness*, it must include the thought of Jesus’ complete identification with ‘sinful flesh’ (cf. NJB: ‘the same human nature as any sinner’).

“God sent his Son to deal with sin, or more precisely ‘sin in the flesh’. Since it is through the flesh, through man as he belongs to and is determined by this age, that sin exerts its power (Romans 7:5, 14, 17-18), it is in the flesh that that power has to be combated and broken. Hence the importance of being able to affirm Christ’s complete oneness with humankind’s sinful flesh. For Paul the breaking of that power was achieved by Christ’s death as a sacrifice whereby God condemned that sinful flesh. In the two phrases ‘for sin’ and ‘condemned’ lies the key to Paul’s soteriology. . . . The logic of Paul’s thought here is that sinful flesh could not be healed or redeemed, only destroyed. . . . God did not redeem flesh by an act of incarnation; he destroyed flesh by an act of condemnation” (James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38a, Romans, pp. 420-440 [1988], emphasis original).

No longer do we Seventh-day Adventists have any excuse to feel ashamed of the truth taught in the 1888 message regarding the humanity of Christ. It is evident that modern Biblical scholarship is backing up the 1888 teachings, and is gaining favorable acceptance among present day non-Adventist theologians as well.

4 *The Significance Of Christ's Humanity to Us*

At the heart of the Christian faith is the affirmation that Christ, the Son of God, became man in order to be the Saviour of the world. Ellen White declared that “the humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain which binds our souls to Christ and through Christ to God. This is to be our study” (7 BC 904). She also declared, “Christ could have done nothing during His earthly ministry in saving fallen man if the divine had not been blended with the human” (*ibid.*).

But mystery has always surrounded the coming of the Son of God in human flesh, one we can never fully comprehend. Yet our finite minds must endeavor, within the limits of divine revelation, to grasp this central truth of our faith. For what Christ accomplished in His humanity is “everything to us”, with reference to our redemption—our justification, sanctification and glorification.

If we are to realize the full significance of Christ's humanity to us, it is essential that we answer two vital questions concerning that humanity. First, what was the *primary* purpose in Christ being made flesh? The answer to this question is the starting point of a true understanding of Christology. Today, three answers are being given to this question within Adventism. They are:

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1. *Primarily, to prove that the law of God can be kept by man.*

The problem with this answer is that it cannot be substantiated explicitly by Scripture. Naturally, the fact Christ did keep the law perfectly in His humanity proved that man, controlled by God's Spirit, can fully meet the law's demands. But the Bible does not teach that this is the *primary* reason why Christ became a man.

2. *Primarily, to be our example.*

While the Bible does point to Christ as our example, it does so only with reference to believers who have accepted Christ by faith and have experienced the new birth (1 Pet. 2:21; Phil. 2:5-8). But Scripture does *not* teach that this is the primary reason why Christ took on our human flesh. Those who emphasize Christ as our example, without first clearly presenting Him as our Saviour, give the impression that they are teaching the example theory of the atonement; which is why they are often accused of the heresy of perfectionism or legalism (see “From Controversy to Crisis” by Kenneth Samples, *Christian Research Journal*, Summer 1988, p. 9).

3. *To redeem mankind from sin.*

Scripture presents this as the *primary* reason for the Son of God being made flesh (Matt. 1:21; Gal. 4:4, 5; Heb. 2:14-17). At the very heart of the doctrine of Christology is the glorious truth that Christ assumed humanity so that He could be the Saviour of the world. And only to those who have first received Him as their Saviour does He become to them an Example.

Once we have established the *primary* reason why Christ became a man, to redeem fallen humanity, this leads us to the second important question, and that is: How did Christ, in His humanity, save mankind? To this question two answers are taught within Christianity and Adventism—*vicariously*, and *actually*. Each of these answers demands a different view on the human nature of Christ.

1. Those who hold to the *vicarious* position (one person acting in place of another), as the Reformers and many Evan-

gelicals today, teach the pre-Fall nature of Christ. Here is their basic argument:

Sin is a dual problem. It is first of all a condition or a state, since to them a sinful nature is sin that automatically stands condemned. Accordingly, Christ had to take a sinless human nature in order to substitute our sinful nature which stands condemned. They insist that if Christ had taken our sinful nature as we know it, He would automatically have been a sinner Himself in need of a Saviour. Secondly, His perfect life and sacrificial death substituted for our sinful performance. Thus by His sinless human nature, which *vicariously* substitutes for our sinful nature and by His perfect performance (i.e., doing and dying), which *vicariously* substituted our sinful performance, Christ redeemed mankind from sin.

But this position presents a two-fold problem:

(a) It makes the gospel unethical since no law, God's or man's, will allow guilt or righteousness to be transferred from one person to another. Therefore, those who teach *vicarious* substitution are rightly accused of teaching "legal fiction" or "as-if-passed-on righteousness" (by Osiander and Newman in the counter-reformation, and Islamic scholars today).

Today the problem of "legal fiction" has become a real issue for some Adventist scholars too, so that they are turning to a modified form of "the moral influence theory" to answer the question, why Christ had to die. In his latest book, *A Remnant in Crisis*, Dr. Jack Provonsha clearly rejects forensic justification as taught by the Reformation as being based on a faulty Roman law (pp. 116-118). Incidentally, the "moral influence theory" is not heretical in what it teaches (Christ died to demonstrate His love for us) but in what it denies (that Christ's death was legally essential for our justification).

While it is true that the New Testament clearly teaches that Christ died "for us" and "in place of us," all attempts to solve the ethical problem created by the Reformation definition of substitution (i.e., an innocent man died *instead* of sinful men), such as "Christ is above the law," or "since He volun-

teered to die in man's stead as their Creator this makes it ethical," are unacceptable. Not even God's law will allow sin to be transferred from the guilty to the innocent (see Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:1-20). Only when the two (the humanity of Christ and our corporate humanity) are linked together, as it was illustrated in the sanctuary service, does the substitution theory of the atonement become legally acceptable (see 1 Cor. 10:18).

(b) The vicarious view is very conducive to turning the gospel into cheap grace, i.e., since Christ did it all without having to identify Himself with us (He lived and died *instead* of us), we can receive the blessings of His holy history by faith, understood as a mental assent to truth, without identifying ourselves in that history—His life, death, burial and resurrection, which true faith and baptism demand (Gal. 2:19, 20; Rom. 6:1-4).

2. Those who take the *actual* position teach the post-Fall nature of Christ. Their argument is that since Christ came to save fallen humanity He had to assume the humanity that needed redeeming, which of course was sinful. Thus by identifying Himself with our corporate fallen humanity Christ *qualified* Himself to be the second Adam and legally to be our Substitute.

Consequently, by His doing and dying, Christ *actually* changed mankind's history so that all humanity was legally justified at the cross. Justification by faith is making effective that legal justification in the life of the believer. Faith therefore is more than a mental assent to the truth. It is a heart appreciation of the cross of Christ which in turn produces obedience or surrender of the will to the truth as it is in Christ (Rom. 1:5; 6:17; 10:16; Gal. 5:7; 2 Thess. 1:7, 8). Such obedience of faith is the basis of true holy living (Gal. 2:20, Rom. 6:10-13).

But the proponents of the *vicarious* view make a serious charge against this view. If Christ fully identified Himself with our sinful human nature (which they believe stands condemned under sin), they insist that we drag Christ into sin and therefore make Him a sinner like us in need of a Saviour. Note

how William G. Johnsson, editor of *Adventist Review*, put it in his final editorial article, "Our Matchless Saviour—V".

"In a penetrating analysis, Paul describes sin as a force, an indwelling principle, a state—'sin living in me' (Rom. 7:14-20). So not only are our acts sinful; our very nature is at war with God." Then he goes on to ask this question: "Did Jesus have such a nature?" His reply is: "No. If He had, He would Himself need a Saviour" (*Adventist Review*, August 26, 1993).

Johnsson is correct in defining sin as also "an indwelling principle." Paul clearly teaches that our sinful human nature is indwelt by sin (Rom. 7:17, 20, 23) and therefore we are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). Since the Bible clearly teaches that Christ assumed the same flesh as that of the human race He came to redeem (Heb. 2:14-17), the correct solution to the above problem is to take note of the qualifying word used by the New Testament writers when they refer to the humanity of Christ—for example, John 1:14; Gal. 4:4 and 2 Cor. 5:21. In these three texts the word "made" is used with reference to the human nature of Christ.

What does this word mean? The Greek words translated in our KJV by "made" mean "to become." When Christ became a man, He actually *became* what He was not, so that the sinful nature He assumed was not His by native right but something He *took* upon Himself, or *assumed*, or *was made to be*. He did this in order to redeem that nature of sin. In other words, as Ellen White points out in *Medical Ministry*, p. 181, "He took upon His sinless [divine] nature our sinful [human] nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted." The words "took part" found in Hebrews 2:14 and the word "likeness" in Romans 8:3 carry the same connotation as the word "made" (see the *International Critical Commentary*, 1982 edition, and *Word Biblical Commentary* on Romans 8:3).

Had Christ consented to the sinful desires of that nature which He assumed, even by a thought, then He would have *become* a sinner Himself in need of a Saviour. That is why it *must* be stressed that in dealing with the human nature of

Christ we must be "exceedingly careful" not to drag His mind or His will into sin, or say that He "had" a sinful nature.

But the fact is that Christ did actually *assume* our condemned sinful nature that "is enmity against God" and "not subject to the law of God" (Rom. 8:7), but in His case He totally defeated "the law of sin and death" that resided in that sinful human nature which He assumed, and then executed that condemned nature on the cross. This is the main thought expressed in Romans 8:1-3 which is Paul's explanation of Romans 7:24, 25.

By assuming our corporate sinful humanity at the incarnation, Christ *qualified* to be the second Adam, the second head and representative of mankind (the word Adam in Hebrew means "mankind"). Thus in His doing and dying as man's Substitute, He wrought out a redemption for all humanity (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3). This is the good news of the gospel.

But in identifying Himself with fallen humanity, He also demonstrated that man, as he is after the Fall, united and controlled by God's Spirit, can live a life of total obedience to the law of love. This is the hope and goal of Christian living, and the emphasis of the 1888 message.

We may therefore conclude that the *primary* purpose of the Incarnation was to qualify Christ to be the second Adam, so that He could legally or lawfully represent and substitute for fallen mankind in His redemptive work; while the *secondary* purpose for which He assumed our fallen humanity was that He could become the believer's example and surety in restoring God's image in man. It is with this twofold purpose of the Incarnation in mind that we must examine the humanity of Christ.

5 *Christ, Our Redeemer*

The fundamental truth of the New Testament is that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). In Romans 5:12-21 this is fully expounded by the apostle Paul, so that some Biblical scholars consider this passage not only as the high point of the letter to the Romans (according to Luther, “the clearest gospel of all”), but the most significant passage in all the Bible. According to the argument of this passage, it is “by the offense [sin] of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Christ], the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (vs. 18). Adam, says Paul, is a type of Christ (vs. 14, last part). In order therefore to understand fully and appreciate what God has accomplished for fallen mankind in Christ, we must first come to grips with our situation in Adam.

In carefully examining this passage (Rom. 5:12-21) you will notice that the reason why Adam’s one sin condemns all mankind to death is because in Adam “all . . . sinned” (vs. 12). Adam’s sin, in other words, was a corporate sin, it implicated all mankind. This is the clear teaching of Scripture. The life God breathed into Adam at creation was the corporate life of all mankind, and this is why the word “life” in the Hebrew text of Genesis 2:7 is in the plural—God “breathed into his [Adam’s] nostrils the breath of *lives*” (emphasis mine). Hence, as Acts 17:26 indicates, the human race is actually the multiplication of Adam’s life.

However, before Adam began to multiply that corporate life, he sinned. Therefore all sinned in him, and every child born since then receives a life that has already sinned *in* Adam, a life already condemned to death. This is why Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "in Adam all die." And in view of this Ellen White writes: "All men receive from him [Adam] nothing but guilt [i.e., condemnation] and the sentence of death" (6 BC 1074).

This truth is based on biblical solidarity or corporate oneness. Therefore, no "legal fiction" is involved here. The word "Adam" is used some 510 times in the original Hebrew Bible, and in the majority of cases it has a collective significance.

This fundamental truth is vital to an understanding of the gospel, for Paul, having proved our situation in Adam in Romans 5:13, 14, goes on to state that Adam was "the figure of Him that was to come [i.e., Christ]." By this he did not mean that Christ would come *in* Adam's sinless human nature, but rather He would come as man's representative, as was Adam.

In other words, just as all mankind sinned *in* Adam and therefore stand condemned *in* him, likewise, all mankind obeyed *in* Christ and therefore stand legally justified unto life *in* Him. For this reason Paul can say in 1 Corinthians 15:22 that "even so in Christ shall all be made alive." This is the *in Christ* motif, the central theme of Paul's theology and the biblical solution to the ethical problem of why Christ had to die.

For Christ's obedience to be a legal reality, Christ's humanity had to be the corporate humanity of the fallen race that was in need of redemption. Apart from this, mankind could not have obeyed *in* Christ, and therefore God could not have been just in legally justifying all humanity *in* Christ. Just as we all sinned *in* Adam, God made it possible for all of us to obey *in* Christ, by uniting His divinity with our corporate sinful humanity that needed redeeming. In this truth is the divine secret of our salvation revealed in the New Testament (1 Cor. 1:30).

In answer to the question "How Is Substitution Possible?" Dr. Richard Davidson, of Andrews University Seminary, gave this as one of the solutions to the ethical problem of the atonement: "Christ is the representative man, the second Adam. Just as Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek because by corporate solidarity he was in the loins of Abraham (Heb. 7:9), so the whole world was corporately in Christ on the cross. As Paul put it: 'We are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died' (2 Cor. 5:14). We all died in Christ on Golgotha. Thus the guilt of the whole world was atoned for by the death of that one Representative Man" (Davidson: "Salvation and Forgiveness," *ATS Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, Spring 1992).

Because many Adventists object to the doctrine of original sin (perhaps a better term could be "corporate sin" rather than "original sin"), the tendency has been to dilute our situation *in Adam* as taught by Paul in Romans 5:12–21 and other passages. Any interpretation however that waters down the condemnation and death mankind inherits *in Adam* will of necessity require undermining the "justification of life" accomplished in Christ for all mankind, since in Romans 5:12–21 what is true of Adam is true of Christ, but in a directly opposite sense. As Harry Johnson puts it: "If Paul does not mean that all men are somehow implicated in the sin of Adam, he destroys the whole force of the parallel of the redemption in Christ" (*The Humanity of the Saviour*, p. 10).

It is when "original sin" is linked with "original guilt", as some Calvinists and the Roman Catholic Church teach, that this doctrine tends to more darkness than light.* To put it in Johnson's words: "Even though the phrase 'original sin' points to a

* [Editor's note: The reader should observe that the author specifically disclaims the Augustinian or Roman Catholic doctrine of "original sin" which requires the dogma of the "Immaculate Conception" for the Virgin Mary so she can give her Son Jesus a sinless flesh or nature. Likewise he disclaims the popular Protestant or Evangelical view of "original sin" which requires an "exemption" for Christ so that He can escape the genetic law of heredity and thus have a sinless nature. The author recognizes the clear Scriptural truth that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" in that "all" are born self-centered and thus find it impossible not to be selfish apart from having a Saviour and experiencing the new birth in Him.]

valid truth, the phrase 'original guilt' seems unacceptable and out of harmony with the biblical message" (*ibid.* p. 24).

The British scholar, James D. G. Dunn, makes a similar statement in the *Word Biblical Commentary*: "Paul could be said to hold a doctrine of original sin, in the sense that from the beginning everyone has been under the power of sin with death as the consequence, but not a doctrine of original guilt, since individuals are only held responsible for deliberate acts of defiance against God and his law" (vol. 38a, p. 291).

Incidentally, when Ellen G. White uses the word "guilt" (see for example 6 BC 1074; FW 86; SD 120) she actually is referring to "condemnation." While the two words are synonymous to many, legally there is a distinction.

Guilt involves volition and responsibility, and God does not hold us responsible for Adam's sin, any more than we are responsible for Christ's righteousness. Nevertheless, both Adam and Christ stood as the heads and representatives of the human race, and what they did affected all mankind. That is why Scripture declares all men stand "condemned to death" because of Adam's disobedience, and are "by nature the children of wrath"; and all men are "justified to life", because of Christ's obedience (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 5:18).

To reject the judgment of condemnation and death *in* Adam is to reject our justification unto life *in* Christ, and this unfortunately is what has led many into legalism. For as Anders Nygren states in his *Commentary on Romans* (5:12), "If Paul had meant that all become subject to death because of the sins which they themselves committed, the conclusion would logically be that all would enter into life by reason of the righteousness which they themselves achieved. That is an idea which is certainly the utter opposite of all that Paul says."

Since guilt involves volition and responsibility, God does not declare us guilty sinners until we join our wills to the sinful desires of the flesh. This all mankind have done apart from Christ who never, even by a thought, sinned. Likewise, God does not declare us subjectively justified until we by faith

unite our wills to Christ's righteousness, or as Paul puts it in Romans 5:17, "*receive* abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness" (emphasis mine). This writer feels strongly that a correct understanding of what is true of original sin (or corporate sin) is crucial to a correct understanding of original righteousness, which is *in* Christ.

Note the following statements from Scripture:

"Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! For in our *union with Christ* He has blessed us by giving us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world" (Eph. 1:3, GNB, emphasis mine). And again, "But God has brought you *into union with Christ Jesus*, and God has made Christ to be our wisdom. By Him we are put right with God; we became God's holy people and are set free" (1 Cor. 1:30, GNB, emphasis mine). This is what I mean by "original righteousness."

This clear teaching of Scripture is reflected by Ellen White: "By His obedience to all the commandments of God, Christ wrought out a redemption for men. This was not done by going out of Himself to another, but by taking humanity into Himself. Thus Christ gave to humanity an existence out of Himself. To bring humanity into Christ, to bring the *fallen race* into oneness with divinity, is the work of redemption. Christ took human nature that men might be one with Him as He is one with the Father, that God may love man as He loves His only begotten Son, that men may be partakers of the divine nature, and be complete in Him" (1 SM 250, 251, emphasis mine).

In view of this truth of the gospel, the humanity Christ assumed at the incarnation had to be the fallen, sinful, condemned humanity which He came to redeem. The moment we deny this and insist that Christ came in a sinless human nature, like Adam's spiritual nature before the Fall, we sever Christ's union with the humanity He came to save. In doing this we preach an unethical gospel (legal fiction), and the justice of God comes under question.

Let me put it this way: did sinful humanity die the wages of sin on the cross, or sinless humanity? If we admit that it was sinful humanity, then not only were the just and legal demands of the law met at the cross, but fallen men can honestly identify themselves, through faith, with the death which sets them free from the curse of the law (Rom. 6:7—the word “freed” in this text in the Greek is “justified”). This in fact was Paul’s point: “So far as the Law is concerned, however, I am dead—killed by the Law itself—in order that I might live for God. I have been put to death with Christ on His cross, so that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave His life for me” (Gal. 2:19, 20, GNB).

On the other hand, if we say that it was a sinless human nature that died on the cross, *instead* of our corporate condemned nature, we accuse God of injustice, since His own Word will not legally accept the death of an innocent person in the place of the guilty one (see Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:20). Besides, such a belief makes it impossible for fallen man, truly and sincerely, to identify himself with that death as true faith demands (see 2 Tim. 2:11; Rom. 6:3, 8).

The reason why the so called “new theology” Reformationist gospel, which is presently advocated by “Evangelical Adventists,” has come under fire and has been accused of “legal fiction,” “divine make-believe,” “celestial bookkeeping,” and “as-if-passed-on righteousness” by both Roman Catholic as well as Muslim scholars, is for this very reason. By teaching that Christ assumed a sinless human nature at the incarnation, the Saviour has been alienated from the humanity He came to redeem, and consequently this makes the gospel unethical or “legal fiction”.

At the expense of repetition, may I emphasize, no innocent person can lawfully pay the wages of sin for a guilty person. “Evangelical Adventists” who insist that Christ assumed the sinless nature of Adam have tried in vain to defend the ethical issue of the gospel. No wonder so many in our midst are turn-

ing to “the moral influence theory” as a better solution to the meaning of the cross.

The gift of God to fallen mankind is the divine eternal life of His Son (1 John 5:11). This was necessary because the human life of Christ, which was in reality our corporate condemned life, died the second or eternal death, “the wages of sin,” on the cross. It is this gift that made it possible for our humanity, united to Christ, to be resurrected to life the third day, and thus give eternal hope to us (1 Cor. 15:22, 23). Evangelical scholars have failed to see the true significance of the supreme sacrifice of the cross, because they hold to the non-Biblical view that man possesses an immortal soul.

The clear teaching of the New Testament is that on the cross sinful humanity died in Christ (2 Cor. 5:14; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:20; 3:3; 1 Pet 2:24). This fulfilled or met the just demands of the law (Rom. 6:7; 7:1, 4, 6). As a result, it gave God the legal or lawful right to forgive us of our sins (Matt. 26:27, 28; Rom. 3:24-26). In exchange for our condemned life that died eternally on the cross God gave us the immortal life of His Son, so that we may live again (1 John 5:11, 12; 2 Tim. 1:8-10). This is God’s love gift to humanity and the glorious truth of the gospel. Hence, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things (the old life with its condemnation) are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17; see also 2 Tim. 2:11). This truth becomes relevant only when we identify Christ’s humanity with our corporate sinful humanity that needed redeeming.

The purpose of redemption is that the results of the Fall should be reversed, that the power of sin should be broken, that sinful nature “sold under sin” should be redeemed. This could only be possible if the humanity Christ assumed was the corporate humanity of those whom He came to save, for that which is not assumed could not have been redeemed. As Harry Johnson clearly demonstrates in his book *The Humanity of the Saviour*: “In Christ we become linked with the second Adam and His victory and His benefits become ours. . . . It

could appear, therefore, that, for this Representative theory of the cross to be fully adequate to meet the sinful human situation, there needs to be incorporated within its structure a Christological position similar to the one that is the object of our present study (i.e., Christ assumed our fallen nature at the Incarnation)" (p. 212).

Brooke Foss Westcott, the 19th century New Testament Greek scholar, expressed a similar truth: "If Christ took our nature upon Him, as we believe, by an act of love, it was not that of one but of all. He was not one man only among many men, but in Him all humanity was gathered up. And thus now, as at all time, mankind are, so to speak organically united with Him. His acts are in a true sense our acts, so far as we realize the union, His death is our death, His resurrection our resurrection" (*The Gospel of the Resurrection*, chap. 2, p. 39).

According to the 1888 message, Christ assumed human nature as we know it after the Fall. It however maintained also that in spite of this, Jesus lived a perfect life through the power of the indwelling Spirit, triumphing over the "law of sin" in the flesh. Finally, it asserts, this nature was cleansed on the cross and Jesus rose from the dead with a redeemed or glorified human nature. This nature is now reserved for the believer in heaven until the second coming (Phil. 3:20, 21). This is how God legally justified all mankind, in the doing and dying of Christ, and liberated us totally from our sin problem to give us eternal hope now and in the world to come.

This being so, the good news of the gospel not only guarantees legal justification (to all who believe) but also provides total victory over the clamors of our sinful nature. Righteousness by faith therefore includes on the one hand peace with God through justification by faith (Rom. 5:1), but at the same time gives hope to the justified believer to live a life above sinning (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:16). This was the true understanding of the 1888 message of righteousness by faith *in* Christ.

This now brings us to the *secondary* purpose of the Incarnation.

6 *Christ, the Believer's Example*

One of the questions under discussion presently in the Adventist church is this: "Is sinless living in sinful flesh possible?" This same question was raised during the 1888 era by many, and the answer of the 1888 message was "yes." Sinless living in sinful flesh is not only possible, but must be the goal of every believer. This was clearly supported by Ellen White.

In Romans 7:14-24 Paul demonstrates that the stumbling block to sinless living in the experience of the believer is the "law of sin" dwelling in the flesh of fallen sinful nature. According to Scripture, Adam's sin not only brought condemnation to all mankind, but also corrupted human nature (Rom. 5:19), bringing all humanity under the law of sin (John 8:32-34; Rom. 3:9, 7:14). If Christ did not have to contend with this "law of sin" in His flesh, then we must conclude that He did not *totally* redeem mankind from sin. As a result, He cannot be set forth as the Saviour from our *state* of sin and therefore as an example to believers.

Consequently, (in this view) sinless living in sinful flesh becomes an impossibility this side of eternity. Yet Scripture declares that we may overcome even as Christ overcame (Rev. 3:21), and admonishes believers, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal [sinful] bodies, to make you obey their passions" (Rom. 6:12, RSV). Again, Peter says that those who arm them-

selves with the mind of Christ will cease from sin (1 Pet. 4:1). And, Paul told the Galatians that if they walked in the Spirit they would not fulfill the sinful desires of their sinful natures (Gal. 5:16; see also Rom. 13:14).

All this becomes meaningful because in Christ's holy history humanity has been set free from "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). Having assumed our sinful humanity with all the force of sin dwelling in its nature, Christ conquered and condemned "the law of sin" through "the law of the Spirit of life," and thus became forever the Redeemer of the world as well as the perfect Example for the believers.

However, Christ as our example must not be confused with the "example theory" of the Atonement as taught by some theologians. According to this theory, salvation is realized by following or imitating the example of Christ's holy living. Such teaching makes sanctification the means of justification and therefore becomes a form of legalism which must be totally rejected. The truth of the gospel is that man is justified by faith alone in the holy history of Jesus Christ. Nothing else must be added to that, not even our works of the law (Gal. 5:4).

In the New Testament, sanctification, as well as glorification, is making real in experience what is already true of the believer *in* Christ who is justified by faith. Man's only hope now and in the judgment is through justification by faith in the doing and dying of Christ. But justification or imputed righteousness, wonderful as it may be, is not the end of God's saving plan. Whom He justifies He also sanctifies as the fruit and evidence of justification by faith, and glorifies as the ultimate reality of that justification (Rom. 8:28-30). And when this, along with the cleansing of the earth, is realized, everlasting righteousness will be fully ushered in as a tangible reality and Christ will have finished His heavenly sanctuary ministry. He will have accomplished all that He fulfilled for our humanity, which He assumed and redeemed two thousand years ago. This is the meaning of the "final atonement."

Nowhere in Scripture do we find that sanctification is the believer's righteousness produced through his own efforts with the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus does not send His Spirit to indwell the believer in order to help him to be good, but to *communicate* His righteousness. While faith is a battle and therefore always involves effort because of the sinfulness and self-centeredness of the flesh, genuine sanctification is nevertheless the work of God's Spirit demonstrating the saving power of the gospel in the life of the justified believer.

"Such is the divine secret of Christian sanctification," says Evan H. Hopkins, "which distinguishes it profoundly from simple natural morality. The latter says to man, Become what thou wouldest be. The former says to the believer, Become what thou art already in Christ. It puts a positive fact at the foundation of moral effort, to which the believer can return and have recourse anew at every instant. And this is the reason why his labour is not lost in barren aspiration, and does not end in despair" (*The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life*, p. 15).

When Christian ethics is defined in terms of the believer's good works, even though they may be motivated by our human love for Christ, this ceases to prove effective justification which is by faith, but only shows man's ability to produce self-righteousness which is "filthy rags" (because it is polluted with self—Isa. 64:6). What the world desperately needs to see is not man's goodness, but Christ manifested in His "body," the church. The church is to be the light of the world (Matt. 5:14-16, the word "light" in this text is in the singular and refers to Christ and His righteousness, John 1:4). Then there will be no excuse for sin to continue and God will bring an end to it. This is the true meaning of what is included in the cleansing of the sanctuary, as the 1888 message taught it.

Again, sinless living must not be confused with sinlessness, or perfectionism, which was the heresy of the Holy Flesh movement that once plagued the church, and was taught in a modified form by the "Awakening" a few years ago. Sinlessness of nature will not be a reality until the second coming, when

“this corruption shall have put on incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:54). Sinless living has to do with reproducing Christ’s character, or holy living, in sinful flesh. This process brings no change to the believer’s hereditary nature, which remains inherently sinful until death or the coming of Christ.

It is for this reason, there will never come a time, this side of eternity, when we can live without the Saviour. The reason Ellen G. White said that we will have to live “without a mediator” after probation closes is because the verdict of all believers will have been made in the investigative or pre-advent judgment. Therefore, Christ’s role as intercessor and advocate will have finished. This, however, does not mean that He has ceased to be our Saviour. We must not confuse His priestly ministry with His saving ministry. The two are related, since Christ as our Saviour qualified Him to be our High Priest (Heb. 5:1, 2, 5-10), but these two functions are not identical. Christ is “the Saviour of all men” (1 Tim. 4:10), but the High Priest of believers only (Heb. 7:24, 25).

Since sinless living in the life of the believer is the work of God produced in sinful flesh, this is referred to in Scripture as “the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). This was realized in Christ’s humanity, and through faith in Him becomes the hope and goal of the justified believer—“Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world (i.e., the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—see 1 John 2:15, 16): and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

If Christ is to be truly the believer’s example and surety in holy living, He had to contend with and overcome the law or principle of sin (i.e., love of self) residing in sinful flesh. And this is precisely what Scripture teaches. Having demonstrated his total inability to overcome sin in and of himself, Paul concludes his struggle against indwelling sin with this cry of desperation: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:14-24). This cry is immediate-

ly followed by the shout of triumph in verse 25: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Then the apostle goes on to show that in Christ's humanity which was *like* our sinful humanity, "the law of sin and death" was totally conquered and condemned (Rom. 8:2, 3).

It is important to note that our being *set free* from the "law of sin and death" is expressed in the past historical tense (Greek, *aorist*) in verse 2. That is, this "law of sin and death," which in Romans 7 was the stumblingblock to holy living, has in reality already been dealt with in Christ's humanity by "the law of the Spirit of life," and therefore there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1), as well as there is hope for the righteous requirements of the law to be fulfilled in the believer who walks in the Spirit as Christ did (Rom. 8:4; see also 13:14 and Gal. 5:16).

We must, however, realize at this point that when the New Testament speaks of holy living, it does so on two levels: *mental*, as well as *practical*. Christ lived a sinless life on both levels in His humanity, and thus demonstrated that when fallen man totally surrenders his *will* to God as did Christ, he is able through God's power to overcome sin (John 6:57; 8:28; 14:10). However, sinless living in sinful flesh is only possible when we have "the mind of Christ." We are often concerned only about holy living on the *practical* level; but this is possible only when we have put sin away in the mind (through repentance—a turning around of the mind), through a faith acceptance of the principle of the cross (Luke 9:23; Rom. 6:17, 18).

According to Scripture, every born-again follower of Christ who has truly understood and believed the gospel will reject temptation in his innermost soul (converted mind) from the moment of conversion. This is because New Testament faith is more than a mental assent to the gospel, but also includes a heart obedience to the truth as it is in Christ (see Rom. 1:5; 6:17; 10:16; Gal. 5:7; 2 Thess. 1:7, 8; Heb. 5:9). This is Paul's whole argument in Romans 6. In the first half of this chapter Paul shows that every believer baptized into Christ

must consider himself “dead unto sin,” and “alive unto God” (vs. 11).

Professor Godat comments: “The believer does not get disentangled from sin gradually; he breaks with it in Christ once for all. He is placed by a decisive act of will in the sphere of perfect holiness, and it is within it that the gradual renewing of the personal life goes forward.”

In the second half of Romans 6 Paul continues the same argument, that sinning must be unthinkable in the mind of the converted believer, but from another standpoint; that is, the believer has been set free from sin in Christ, and by his own heart choice has become a slave of God, the author of righteousness (vs. 17, 18). Based on this dual fact—“dead to sin” and “slaves of God,” the truly converted person does not cherish even a single sin. Freedom from sin’s ruling power and dominion is the immediate privilege of every one who takes hold of it by faith, since this is part and parcel of the good news of the gospel of Christ.

This does not mean that believers have necessarily begun to live a sinless life on the *practical* level from the moment of conversion. On the contrary, Ellen G. White tells us that we will have to come many times to the foot of the cross because of our shortcomings. But we do not become unjustified every time we fall, nor does Jesus forsake us. However, day by day we are to grow in Him and gain victories (Eph. 4:17-24; Rom. 12:1, 2). Further, because our sinful nature, which will not change until the second advent, believers are never to *feel* that they have attained perfection (Phil. 3:12-15). On the other hand, even though they are in constant battle with indwelling sin, they must never *condone* sinning (note Rom. 6:2, 15), since that would be a denial of one’s faith-obedience to the gospel.

Is sinless living in sinful flesh impossible, on the *practical* level, as some insist? The answer of Scripture is a definite No! But sinless living on the *practical* level is a possibility only when it is preceded by sinless living on the *mental* level; when the believer has taken upon him the yoke of Christ, which

according to Paul's counsel is—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Genuine righteousness by faith means that we have fully identified ourselves with the holy history of Christ—His perfect life and His death to sin. When this is realized and believed by God's people, the way is then open for God's Spirit to take over and demonstrate to the world the power of the gospel. At the heart of every failure to live up to God's ideal is unbelief in what God has already accomplished in Christ.

True New Testament faith is taking God at His word, even though it disagrees with our human rationale, the scientific method, or even human experience. Abraham believed God against all hope and therefore became the father or prototype of all true believers (read Rom. 4:16-18).

What Paul failed to accomplish in Romans 7, (the "I" used some 25 times in Rom. 7:14-25, is really a generic "I") through his own strength or self-effort, is made possible by faith in Romans 8 through the power of the indwelling Spirit. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make alive] your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (verse 11). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17, 18, RSV).

In these last days the Holy Spirit is preparing a faithful and willing people who by the grace of Christ will mature to the place where they will fully overcome "even as" Christ overcame. This again is a practical result of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.

In Ephesians 2:8, 9 we have a clear gospel statement that we are saved by grace alone through faith and not by our works. But going on to verse 10 we discover that in this salvation God has created us "anew in Christ Jesus unto good works" which He now purposes that every believer walk in

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(see also Col. 2:6). Again, in Titus 2:14 Paul reminds us that Christ “gave Himself for us, to rescue us from *all* wickedness and to make us a pure people who belong to Him alone and are eager to do good” (GNB, emphasis mine). In view of this gospel truth, let us therefore remove all unbelief and have “the mind of Christ” (Phil. 2:5-7), a mind or purpose that is fully emptied of self, surrendered to the cross of Christ daily (Luke 9:23), so that God may take over and enlighten the earth with the glory of His Son.

But as long as we deny the true humanity of Christ, that which manifested God in our corporate sinful flesh, we will never be able to truly enter by faith into the present work of our High Priest in heaven, which includes the cleansing of the human temple (see GC 488). Just as it is impossible for us to appreciate forgiveness of sins unless we see Christ bearing the wages of our sins on the cross, so we cannot experience victory over sin’s power unless we see Christ conquering and condemning our law of sin in the flesh which He did in His life and death.

We are told that Christ is waiting with longing desire to reproduce His character in His church (COL 69). How long are we going to keep Him waiting? “When the Lord rebuilds Zion [the church], He will reveal His greatness” (Ps. 102:15, GNB; see also Eph. 2:19-22; 5:25-27).

7 *Objections Considered*

Those who teach that Christ took a sinless human nature at His Incarnation, the spiritual nature of Adam before the Fall, object to the idea that Christ assumed our sinful nature, the post-Fall nature of Adam with its bent to sin, out of a sincere concern to preserve the perfect sinlessness of our Saviour. Their main arguments are:

1. If Christ took our sinful nature, as we know it, He would have been tainted with sin, and therefore could not be the spotless Lamb of God, but would Himself be a sinner in need of redemption.

2. While Christ did assume our humanity and was like us physically, the Scripture refers to Him as “that holy thing,” “without sin,” “separate from sinners” (Luke 1:35; Heb. 4:15; 7:26). Therefore His spiritual nature was like Adam’s before the Fall.

3. Christ could not have resisted temptation had His human nature been sinful in all respects as is ours.

4. Christ is the second Adam; therefore He took the sinless spiritual nature of the first Adam.

Since a correct view of Christ’s humanity is essential to a true understanding of salvation, both in terms of justification as well as sanctification and glorification, these objections which come from sincere men of God cannot be ignored. Let us therefore consider them in the spirit of truth, unity, and the clarity of the gospel, so that the divine purpose of enlighten-

ing this dark world with His glory may soon become a living reality:

1. *The argument that Christ would have been tainted with sin and could not be the spotless Lamb of God if He took our sinful nature derives from the doctrine of "original sin."*—This doctrine, as we saw earlier, teaches that because of the Fall, sinful human nature stands condemned because of indwelling sin (Rom. 5:18, 19; 7:20, 23). Hence, it is thought, if Christ assumed this sinful nature He would automatically become a condemned sinner like all men are from their birth.

While it is true that Paul refers to our sinful humanity as "the body of sin" (Rom. 6:6) because it is indwelt by "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 7:1, 8ff), the problem of original sin cannot be applied to Christ. This is because of the dual nature or unipersonality of our Saviour. At the Incarnation, Christ's divinity was mysteriously united to our corporate humanity that needed redeeming, so that Christ was both God and man at the same time. However, it is most important that we keep these two natures distinct—which distinction the 16th century Reformers unfortunately failed to preserve.

In the Incarnation, Christ took upon His *own* sinless divine nature *our* sinful human nature. For this reason, wherever the Bible refers to Christ's humanity, it uses the word "made." He was "made flesh" (John 1:14); "made to be sin" (2 Cor. 5:21); "made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4); "made a curse" (Gal. 3:13); "made of the seed of David" (Rom. 1:3). The word "made," as we saw earlier, means that Christ became what He was not by nature.

Hence, while Christ did really and truly assume our sinful nature, which is under the curse of the law and therefore condemned to death, this did not constitute Christ Himself as being a sinner, or a blemished sacrifice; since that human nature was not His by native right, but He assumed it in order to redeem fallen mankind. Had Christ, even by a thought, yielded to the sinful desires of the flesh, He would have become a guilty sinner like us. But as long as He did not unite

His will or mind to our sinful nature which He assumed, He cannot be considered a sinner.

Yes, Scripture tells us that He was tempted in all points like as we are (i.e., through the flesh, see James 1:14), but He never sinned (Heb. 4:15)—even though He took upon Himself our sinful nature at the incarnation, which nature He cleansed on the cross.

For this reason Paul is very careful to use the word “likeness” when he says that God sent His Son in “sinful flesh” to condemn “sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). While Scripture, on the one hand, identifies Christ with our total sinful situation, apart from actually sinning, in order that He might truly redeem us (Heb. 2:14-18), on the other hand, it makes very clear that He was not altogether like us, a sinner; “this can never be.”

According to *The International Critical Commentary*, (Romans, vol. 1; 1982 edition), Paul used the word “likeness” in Romans 8:3 to emphasize the fact that “the Son of God was not, in being sent by His Father, changed into a man, but rather assumed human nature while still remaining Himself.” In view of this, the commentary concludes: “[We] understand Paul’s thought to be that the Son of God assumed the selfsame fallen human nature that is ours, but that in His case that fallen human nature was never the whole of Him—He never ceased to be the eternal Son of God.”

We may explain it this way: Every born again Christian has become a “partaker of the divine nature” through the experience of the new birth (2 Pet. 1:4). While this divine nature is sinless, this in no way makes the believer himself innately sinless, even though Scripture declares such a person a child of God (Rom. 8:16; 1 John 3:1, 2). This is because this divine nature does not belong to the believer by native right. Likewise, partaking of our sinful nature did not make Christ a sinner, since that human nature was not His by native right. He *assumed* it in order to redeem it. And this He accomplished in His doing and dying. Therefore, as long as Christ Himself did

not consent to sin, or yield in any way to temptation, He remained spotless.

Again, those who insist that by taking our sinful nature Christ would disqualify Himself from being the spotless Lamb of God have failed to see the true significance of the sanctuary symbolism with reference to Christ's redeeming work. Because of the Fall, all humanity stands condemned and under the curse of the law (Rom. 5:18; Gal. 3:10). For the fallen race to be redeemed from this condemnation and curse, plus to have their status changed to justification unto life, two requirements are demanded of God's law:

(a) The law requires perfect obedience in order to qualify for life. This was accomplished by Christ's 33 years of active obedience to God's law in our humanity which He assumed. However, this obedience, even though it was absolutely perfect, or spotless, could not cleanse our humanity from the curse and condemnation of the law. Only death could set us legally free from sin (Rom. 6:7). And until Christ took this condemned humanity to the cross and surrendered it to the full wages of sin, He could not qualify to be our righteousness (Rom. 4:25).

So, (b) Christ satisfied the further demand of the law, its justice, by dying for us on the cross. Thus, by both, His doing which satisfied the positive demands of the law, and by His dying which met the justice of the law, Christ obtained eternal redemption for mankind (Heb. 9:12) and forever became the world's Redeemer (John 5:24).

Only in the light of this truth can we understand the Old Testament symbolism. By His perfect active obedience to the law Christ fulfilled the symbolism of the spotless lamb, and it was this that qualified Him to meet the justice of the law on our behalf. Nowhere in Scripture do we find it hinted that the spotless lamb represented the sinless human nature of Christ. This is only an assumption that cannot be proven from the Word of God.

What that spotless lamb represented had to do with our salvation, and that is the perfect obedience of Christ which the

law demands of us in order to qualify us for life. When the spotless lamb was slain, it represented the blood or death of Christ which cleanses us from sin (Heb. 9:22-28). Both requirements were necessary for man's justification. This is obviously what the writer of Hebrews had in mind in Hebrews 10:5-10, 14.

Had Christ taken Adam's sinless nature as our representative and substitute, the law would only have required of Him positive obedience, as it did from Adam. But since Christ came to redeem *fallen* man and not sinless man, our sins which proceed from the flesh had to be condemned at its source, the flesh, and this Christ did by assuming that same sinful flesh and submitting it to death on His cross. Thus He "condemned sin [singular] in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3).

Again, there are those who say that if Christ assumed our sinful nature as we know it, His perfect obedience would have been polluted because of the "corrupt channel" through which it was performed—(they derive this term "corrupt channel" from a mistaken reading of 1 SM 344). This again cannot be substantiated by Scripture.

It is true that Christ's perfect obedience in itself could not justify the fallen race, because of the "corrupt channel" that stood condemned. Hence both were required, the doing as well as the dying of Christ, in order to justify sinful man. But in no way was our Saviour's perfect performance marred by the sinful human nature He assumed. According to Scripture, Christ "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

James defines our temptations in this way: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (i.e., of the flesh)" (1:14). But while we have yielded to temptation, never for a moment did Christ consent to temptation, so that not even by a thought did sin rest in His mind. According to the Greek New Testament scholar K. Wuest, "The words 'without sin' (Heb. 4:15) mean that in our Lord's case temptation never resulted in sin" (*Hebrews in the Greek New Testament*, p. 95). Thus Christ produced a perfectly sinless character in our cor-

porate sinful nature that He assumed. In doing so He fully satisfied the positive requirements of the law as our substitute. This qualified Him to be the spotless Lamb of God.

Yet on the cross this same Christ, as the Lamb of God, took away the sin of the world (John 1:29). How could Christ *take away* "the sin" (note the singular) of the world if it was not there in the flesh which He assumed? Or in other words, how could Christ condemn "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3, again note the singular) in a sinless flesh?

But Christ did *take away* our sin, by condemning it on the cross. He could do this because He assumed our flesh which has sin dwelling in it (Rom. 7:17, 20). In Hebrews 9:26 we read: "He [Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." According to Wuest, the putting away of sin denotes both the sinful nature as well as sinful acts: "The verb (*thetos*) means 'to do away with something laid down, prescribed, established.' Sin had established itself in the human race through the disobedience of Adam, a sinful nature and sinful acts" (*ibid.*, p. 40, emphasis mine).

Because Christ partook of and overcame our sinful human nature, He is able today, as our High Priest, to do both—understand "the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15), as well as "succour them that are tempted" (2:18). The word "infirmities" must not be limited to physical weakness such as fatigue or aging, as some teach. Again, according to Wuest: "The word 'infirmities' is *astheneia*, 'moral weakness which makes men capable of sinning,' in other words, the totally depraved nature." Interpreting the expression "He Himself [Christ] also is compassed with infirmity," Wuest continues: "The high priest has infirmity, sinful tendencies, lying around him. That is, he is completely encircled by sin since he has a sinful nature which if unrepressed, will control his entire being" (*ibid.*, p. 98).

In this connection it is interesting to note Karl Barth's observation: "Those who believe that it was fallen human nature which was assumed have even more cause than had the

authors of the *Heidelberg Catechism* to see the whole of Christ's life on earth as having redemptive significance; for, on this view, Christ's life before His actual ministry and death was not just a standing where unfallen Adam had stood without yielding to the temptation to which Adam succumbed, but a matter of starting from where we start, subjected to all the evil pressures which we inherit, and using the altogether unpromising and unsuitable material of our corrupt nature to work out a perfect, sinless obedience" (quoted in *The International Critical Commentary*, on Romans 8:3, 1982 edition).

Thus we may be assured through this truth that our redemption in Christ's holy history was both perfect and complete. Not only do we believers have in Christ's righteousness "justification unto life" (Rom. 5:18), but in Him, we can likewise claim liberation from our bondage to sin, so that we may now "live unto God" (Rom. 6:7-13). This is the basis of true justification as well as sanctification, both of which are to be received by faith alone.

2. *Do the following statements of Scripture propose that Christ's human nature was sinless: "that holy thing; "without sin;" "separate from sinners" (Luke 1:35; Heb. 4:15; 7:26)?*

In order to understand these statements correctly, we must take into account other texts which identify Christ with our sinful human condition. There must be no contradiction. God "hath made Him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21); God sent Him "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3); "in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren" (Heb. 2:17); Christ "Himself took our infirmities" (Matt. 8:17); etc.

Those who try to reconcile these two apparently opposite views by teaching that Christ took our sinful nature only as far as the physical make-up is concerned, so that He was prone to fatigue, aging, etc., while insisting that morally or spiritually He took the sinless nature of Adam before the Fall, are going beyond Scripture. Such an interpretation cannot be supported by an honest exegesis of these texts. Furthermore, in Scripture, our physical and spiritual natures are related so that if the one

is sinful, so is the other. Hence "this corruptible" is identified with "mortal," and "incorruption" with "immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). Similarly, "the body of sin" (Rom. 6:6) is identified with "the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24).

As this writer sees it, a true harmony of these two groups of texts, which on the surface seem to contradict each other, is possible only when we take into consideration two important facts:

First, Christ was both God and man, so that He had two distinct natures united in one person. His own divine nature, which was sinless, and our corporate sinful human nature, which He assumed. Thus Christ was a paradox. On the one hand, He could be called "that holy thing" and on the other hand, He was "made to be sin."

Secondly, while Christ took upon Himself our sinful nature, this must not be identified with our sinning nature. Our sinful nature has sinned and sins, but His human nature did no sin, so that in performance His humanity can be called sinless. According to Scripture, Christ understands our weakness since He took our sinful nature that is dominated by the "law of sin." Nevertheless, His mind never for a moment consented to sin, so that His flesh was totally deprived of indulgence in sin (1 Pet. 4:1).

Once we come to grips with these two important facts, the sinlessness of Christ's divinity and the perfect sinlessness of character produced in His humanity, the problem of reconciling these two sets of apparently contradictory texts ceases. Clearly, the texts referring to Christ's sinlessness are either dealing with His sinless divine nature or His sinless performance or character, while the texts that identify Christ with our sinful condition are referring to His equipment, our sinful human nature which He assumed, and which is "sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14).

With this in mind, let us examine the key texts referring to the sinlessness of Christ and see how they either refer to His

sinless divine nature or His sinless life or performance produced in our sinful flesh:

Luke 1:35—"that holy thing." This phrase is used in connection with Christ being "called the Son of God." Therefore it was His divinity the angel was referring to, which was holy and sinless, and which constituted His true being.

John 8:46—"which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Jesus made this statement when talking to the Jews who were incapable of reading into His divine nature, or appreciating His perfect character. He was referring to His performance, which was without sin.

John 14:30—"the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." It was ever Satan's purpose to thwart the plan of salvation by enticing Christ to sin. The temptations in the wilderness are a good example. But all his attempts failed, as Hebrews 4:15 confirms. It was this victory that Christ was referring to. Jesus Himself explains this passage in the next verse: "As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (vs. 31). This was perfect performance, perfect righteousness!

Hebrews 7:26—"separate from sinners." This phrase is preceded by the words, "holy, harmless, undefiled," all of which suggest Christ's perfect performance, His righteousness. It is in His sinless living and not in the nature which He took that Christ was unlike or separate from the sinful human race He came to redeem. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Heb. 1:9). This character is His righteousness!

2 Corinthians 5:21—"who knew no sin." This statement is made in the context of Christ being our sin-bearer. Christ knew no sin with reference to both His divine nature and His character or performance. Yet He "bare our sins in His own body" (1 Pet. 2:24). He did this by bearing our sinful humanity from birth all the way to death. In this way, Paul tells us, God "hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin."

1 John 3:5—"in Him is no sin." The preceding sentence reads: "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins." John's context (verses 4 and 6) indicates that "sin" here means sinning, and not the nature which Christ "took."

Hebrews 9:14—"offered Himself without spot." This expression, as well as to "purge your conscience from dead works" which follows, both suggest performance rather than nature. He was "without sin," although tempted as we are. (See 1 Pet. 1:19 and Heb. 5:8, 9).

Thus, none of these texts refers to Christ's human nature itself, and they cannot be used as proof that His human nature was sinless as was that of Adam before the Fall. When correctly harmonized, Scripture teaches that Christ's sinlessness was in character or performance produced in a human nature exactly like that He came to save. He "condemned sin" in the nature which is dominated by the principle of sin, or love of self.

Hence, God's righteousness manifested in sinful flesh can be truly called "the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16).

3. *Could Christ have resisted temptation if His human nature which He assumed had been of the same inheritance as ours, that is, dominated by the "law of sin"?*

This was the very question raised against the 1888 message. Note how Ellen G. White responded to it in the *Review and Herald* on February 18, 1890: "Letters have been coming in to me affirming that Christ could not have the same nature as man, for, if He had, He would have fallen under similar temptations. If He was not a partaker of *our* nature, He could not be our example. If He was not a partaker of *our* nature He could not have been tempted as man has been. If it was not possible for Him to yield to temptation, He could not be *our* helper. It was a solemn reality that Christ came to fight the battle as man, in man's behalf. His temptation and victory tell us that humanity must copy the Pattern" (quoted in 1 SM 408, emphasis mine).

In Romans 2 and 3, Paul demonstrates that "all are under sin" so that "there is none righteous, no not one." Therefore, so far as sinful human nature is concerned "there is none that doeth good" (Rom. 3:9-12). Yet the same apostle also informs us that what sinful man cannot do, in and of himself (Rom. 7:14-24), and what the law could not do because of weakened human nature (Rom. 8:3), God did! He did it in Christ's humanity which was "in the likeness of" our sinful flesh. And he did this so that the righteous demands of the law might be fulfilled in us, who, like Christ, choose to walk in the Spirit (Rom. 8:3, 4).

Christ's sinless living did not prove that sinful man in and of himself can resist temptation and live above sin. What His life demonstrated proved that sinful man *indwelt and controlled by God's Spirit* can overcome all the powers of the devil that he masters through the sinful flesh. This is the teaching of the New Testament. Speaking of Himself as a man, Christ made it clear that He could do nothing of Himself (John 5:19, 30), that He lived "by the Father" (John 6:57). Even His works all proceeded from the Father (John 14:10, 11). Luke, after relating the temptations of Christ in the wilderness, concludes: "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit" (4:14). Speaking of His death, the writer of Hebrews says: "By the grace of God" Christ "tasted death for every man" (2:9).

It is only in this context that Christ could resist all temptations, and thus make it possible for the born-again believer to live above sin. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises [i.e., in Christ]: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet 1:4).

While Paul makes it clear that man in and of himself cannot resist temptation, he nonetheless makes it equally clear that what is impossible with man is possible with God: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14).

If, in the light of this truth, any dare to say that sinful humanity cannot resist temptation or live above sin if they walk in the Spirit, they are elevating the power of the devil and sin above the power of God. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make alive] your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11). This is the glorious truth of the gospel which must give all believers everlasting hope in this world of sin.

4. *Since Christ is the "second Adam," does this not mean that He took the sinless nature of the first Adam before the Fall?*

Such a conclusion is unscriptural. While it is true that Christ is the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), it qualifies in what sense Christ is like Adam. To go beyond this qualification is to take liberty not warranted by the Word of God. In Romans 5:12-21 Adam and Christ are compared and contrasted. In reading this passage it becomes clear in what sense Christ resembles Adam. It is not in nature, but in representation. Just as all men were present in the first Adam, when by his representative sin he ruined his posterity, so God united all men to Christ, qualifying Him to be the second or "last Adam" (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3). Thus by His obedience all men were legally justified unto life *in* Him (Rom. 5:18).

It is only in this sense that Scripture makes a comparison between Adam and Christ. Just as what Adam did affected the whole human race, similarly what Christ did affected all mankind (Rom. 5:15, 18). To go beyond this comparison and identify Christ's human nature with Adam's sinless nature, before his Fall, is to add to Scripture.

Nowhere in the Bible do we find Christ in any way compared with Adam in terms of nature. On the contrary, Christ, as the "son of man" is called the Son of David and of Abraham (Mat. 1:1), both of whom had sinful flesh; or He is referred to as being "made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7); or "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb.

2:16, 17). Clearly then, we cannot say that Christ took Adam's sinless nature in the incarnation on the basis that He was called the second Adam.

In concluding this section on objections, it is important to remember that any attempt to preserve the perfect sinlessness of Christ at the expense of the full significance and power of the gospel is to undermine the truth of the gospel. Those who teach that Christ assumed only the pre-Fall nature of Adam must of necessity teach that He did not have to contend with the power or law of sin dwelling in sinful flesh, but such teaching destroys a vital truth of the gospel. The gospel offers sinful man not only legal justification, but also God's power unto salvation *from* sin (Mat. 1:21; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:17, 18, 24).

To appreciate this salvation, sin must be understood in the light of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. At the heart of this controversy lies the issue between God's law founded on the principle of selfless love (*agape*), which "seeketh not her own" (1 Cor. 13:5; Mat. 22:36-40), and the law of sin founded on the principle of the love of self (Isa. 53:6; Phil. 2:21). These two opposite principles met and fought each other in the humanity of Christ. On the one hand, Satan, working through Christ's flesh, desperately tried to entice the mind of Christ to consent to self-will, while on the other hand, the Holy Spirit working through the mind of Christ never yielded. Thus every attempt on Satan's part failed, for Christ's response was always, "Not My (self) will, but Thine be done" (John 4:34; 5:30; Mat. 26:39).

This battle, which began the moment Christ as a child was old enough to choose for Himself, ended at the cross when Satan, using the full driving force of temptations arising from sinful flesh, tempted Christ to come down from the cross and save Himself (Luke 23:35-37). But when Christ refused to yield and was obedient "even unto death" (Phil. 2:8), Satan's kingdom along with his principle of the love of self was totally defeated forever (John 12:31; Rom. 8:2, 3). This victory is a vital part of the good news of the gospel: "Be of good cheer, I have

overcome the world" (John 16:33; for John's definition of "world" see 1 John 2:16; 5:4).

Now there may be some, among those who hold to the sinless theory of the nature of Christ, who will say that Christ did not need to take our sinful nature in order to be tempted. While this is true, for Adam had already proven that sinless human nature can be tempted and can sin, this is not the issue involved in Christ's temptations. It is a mistake to identify and equate Adam's temptation and fall with our temptations and failures. When Adam sinned in Eden, he committed an unnatural act, for his sin was a contradiction to his sinless nature. In other words, his act of disobedience, or saying "No" to God was inexcusable and therefore unexplainable. On the contrary, when fallen sinful man yields to temptation and sins, he is doing something perfectly natural to his sinful nature.

Those who teach that a person need not have a sinful nature in order to be tempted, and therefore Christ's supposedly sinless nature was tempted and subject to the possibility of falling, may be making a correct statement in and of itself. But the fact is that Scripture clearly states that Christ was "in all points tempted like as *we* are" (Heb. 4:15, emphasis mine). This means that Christ had to be tempted through His flesh even as we are, since temptation to fallen sinful man is defined as being "drawn away of his own lust and enticed" (James 1:14).

The real issue in Christ's earthly life was not that He could be tempted or that He was subject to the possibility of falling as Adam did; the issue was, could Christ resist Satan and defeat temptation, the principle of self-seeking, in sinful human nature? Man's real problem is not only that he is born with certain sinful tendencies, but (as Christ Himself declared) sinful man is in bondage or slavery to sin and the devil (John 8:34; Rom. 3:9; 6:16; 7:14; Acts 8:23; 2 Pet. 2:19; 1 John 3:6-8). This was not true of Adam or his nature before the Fall. Hence Adam's temptation in Eden and his fall must never be equated with our temptations and failures. The sinless Adam had no

“self” that needed constantly to be denied or crucified. But Christ had to bear a cross all His life, on which self had to be crucified (Luke 9:23).

It is true that the fundamental issue in every temptation is the same, for temptation to sin is simply being enticed to say “No” to God, and live independently of Him, following self-will instead of God’s will of love. But while no fundamental difference may exist between Adam’s temptation and ours, a world of difference exists in the actual struggle or battle against the temptation itself. For if sin is to say “No” to God or to live independently of Him, then our basic definition of sinful nature must be a bent toward self-love or independence from God. Paul clearly brings this out in describing mankind’s sin problem in Romans 1:18-23. By very nature sinful man is self-seeking and self-dependent, and sinful tendencies are simply different manifestations of the principle of love of self. This in fact is the primary meaning of the Hebrew word rendered “iniquity” (see Ps. 51:5; Isa. 53:6).

This was not true of Adam as God created him. Consequently, Adam was tempted to sin in a nature dominated by selfless love or holiness, and hence his failure is inexcusable. Satan tempts us in a nature that is dominated by “the law of sin” (love of self), a nature that naturally seeks its own way (Isa. 53:6; Phil. 2:21). Adam’s sinless or holy flesh was subject to the law of God and in fact he delighted in it, while our carnal nature is “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” in and of itself (Rom. 8:7). There was perfect harmony, unity, and agreement between Adam’s sinless nature and the Spirit of God who indwelt Him; but in the case of the born-again believer, the Spirit and the flesh are at war with each other (Gal. 5:17).

For Adam to sin was unnatural and an extremely hard thing for him to do; but for sinful man, sin is enjoyable to the sinful nature, and the most natural thing (he feels) to do (Rom. 7:14-23). Adam could be justified by keeping the law; but in our case “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justi-

fied in His sight" (Rom. 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16). Adam's sin cannot be explained for it is the "mystery of iniquity," revealing the power of the devil; with us it is the opposite, for when the righteousness of God is manifested in sinful flesh, it reveals God's power over sin and the devil, and is referred to as "the mystery of godliness"—which mystery was first manifested in Christ, and through Him made available to us by faith (1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 1:27).

The great error of those who claim that Christ did not need to come in our fallen nature to be tempted and tried as we are, is the identification of Adam's situation with ours. Much more was involved in Christ's victorious life over temptation and sin than would have been required for Adam's success had he not fallen. And it is this we must now consider if we are fully to appreciate Christ as our righteousness. For when we discover the real difference between Adam's temptation in relation to his sinless nature and our temptations in relation to our sinful nature, we cannot but conclude that Christ could not possibly be tempted as we are if He had assumed the sinless spiritual nature of Adam before the Fall. This in turn will open our eyes to appreciate how great a salvation Christ has wrought out for us.

To understand this we must consider the temptations of Christ in relation to that of Adam. Since Christ was both God and man, and therefore possessed inherent divine power, it would seem that the temptation to use that divine power independently of His Father would be very great, and therefore we could conclude that His temptations were far greater and different from man's, including Adam's. But while this may sound convincing, it must be realized that this could only be true in the context of sinful nature, and this is what we must come to grips with.

If Christ's temptations were greater than ours in a sinless human nature because of the inherent divine power available to him without faith, then is it not true that we must also confess that Adam's temptation was greater than ours, since his nat-

ural ability to do right, inherent in his sinless nature, was greater than ours? In which case we must also admit that it was much easier for Adam to sin (be self-dependent) than it is for us, and certainly this would make his sin excusable, besides undermining God's perfect creation.

Further, if it was extremely hard for Christ to be God-dependent because of His own inherent divine power, should not the very opposite be true of us because of our inherent weaknesses? Should it not be very easy for us to be God-dependent? Yet we must all confess that to live by faith (i.e., God-dependent) involves a constant fight (1 Tim. 6:12), as well as self-denial and acceptance of the principle of the cross (Luke 9:23).

It is true that in tempting Christ, Satan tried to persuade Him to take matters in His own hands and so act independently of His Father. But the distinction that must be made is that if Christ had assumed a sinless human nature, Satan would be tempting Him to do an unnatural thing, since His human nature would then have been naturally unselfish. He would not have needed to deny His own will as He told us He had to do (John 5:30; 6:38).

On the other hand, if Christ took our sinful nature upon Himself, a nature naturally bent toward yielding to self-will, Satan would be tempting Him to do a perfectly desirable thing, desirable to self (for example, coming down from the cross). It is this that makes a world of difference between being tempted as Adam was (in a sinless nature) and being tempted as we are (in a sinful nature).

We must realize that the principle of self-love is foreign to God's nature, or for that matter, sinless human nature which He created. The law of the love of self was originated by the devil (Isa. 14:12-14), and with which he infected the human race at the Fall. If Christ had assumed a sinless human nature without the inclination to sin, He obviously did not have self-love as part of His very nature to contend with, and therefore Satan could not tempt Him through the flesh as he does us.

But our Lord declared that He came not to do His own will (i.e., self-will) but the will of the Father. The fact that Christ as a man could speak of His own will in potential contradiction to His Father's will clearly indicates that in His humanity He identified Himself with the temptations to self-will of sinful men He came to save. He could only do this by assuming our sinful nature. The Gospels show that the great battle in Christ's life was against the principle of self-will, the stumbling-block to holy living in the life of all sinful people.

Again, if Christ's flesh was void of the "law of sin," the law of self-love, then His flesh need not have suffered each time He refused to yield to temptation. But we read that "He Himself hath suffered being tempted" (Heb. 2:18), and that He was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10), and that He learned "obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). Christ's victory was attained in His mind, because it was surrendered to the control of the Spirit. But this involved suffering in the flesh, since it was deprived of its own way, that is, sin.

This is how Peter expressed the conflict: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Pet 4:1). What is true of Christ must be true of us, because the flesh He assumed was the likeness of our sinful flesh. Had Adam successfully resisted the devil's temptation, this would not have involved crucifying the flesh or human nature. But for Christ, as it must be with the believer, victory over sin involves the principle of the cross (Gal. 5:24).

Our Lord's holy life, if produced in a sinless nature like that of Adam before the Fall, can bring no hope or encouragement to believers struggling with temptation. By this lie that Christ came in sinless flesh, the devil has destroyed in the hearts of millions all belief that sinless living in sinful flesh is possible. Thus the door to antinomianism is opened, and the power of the gospel is made null and void. No wonder the apostle John condemns the denial of the true humanity of Christ as being antichrist (1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 7).

If Christ assumed Adam's sinless nature spiritually, He becomes Adam's example, but not fallen man's. In which case our only hope of holy living would be either through the eradication of our sinful nature (the heresy of "holy flesh" or perfectionism), or waiting until the second coming when this corruptible puts on incorruption. If this is true, all admonition in the Bible to holy living becomes futile.

But if the gospel is to be vindicated before the end comes, the last generation of believers must restore the truth as it is in Christ, so that the world may be enlightened with His glory (Rev. 18:1; Col. 1:27). This was God's purpose in the 1888 message.

Much more than what Adam failed to do was accomplished by our Saviour, for He produced the perfect righteousness of God in the likeness of sinful flesh. And herein lies the true sinlessness of Christ and the fulness and power of His gospel. God did the "impossible" by producing perfect righteousness in our sinful flesh in Christ Jesus. And if only we by faith will obey this truth and allow the Holy Spirit to indwell and dominate us (2 Cor. 2:16), then also He will reveal His power in the "body" of Christ, the church. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). This too is righteousness by faith.

It is therefore the knowledge of this truth, Christ's righteousness produced in our sinful flesh, that gives every believer the hope of glory. Let us therefore abide in Him, and thus make ourselves totally available to Him so that we may walk "even as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

8 **Jesus Christ, The God-Man Saviour**

We have already demonstrated that in order for Christ to legally qualify to be our substitute and representative His divinity had to be united to our corporate fallen humanity that needed redeeming. It is in the incarnation that these two distinct opposite natures were united together in one person and Christ became the second Adam. This is the *in Christ* motif, the central theme of Paul's theology, 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:3-6.

According to W. W. Prescott this truth constitutes the very heart of the Christian message:

“Now what does it mean to us that Jesus Christ became the second head of this human family? It means this: Just as, when Adam was created, all the members of the human family were created in him, so also when the second man was created ‘according to God in righteousness and true holiness,’ all the members of that family were created in him.

“It means that, as God saw in Adam all the members of the human family, so he saw in Christ, the second father of the family, all the members of the divine-human family; so he saw in him all his sons, all his daughters, all his descendants; all that belong to the family.

“That is to say that Jesus Christ was the representative of humanity, and all humanity centered in him, and when he took flesh, he took humanity. He took humanity and he

became the father of this divine-human family, and he became the father by joining himself in this way to humanity, and the flesh which he took and in which he dwelt was our flesh, and we were there in him, he in us, just as what Abraham did, Levi did in Abraham, so what Jesus Christ in the flesh did, we did in him.

“And this is the most glorious truth in Christianity. It is Christianity itself, it is the very core and life and heart of Christianity. He took our flesh, and our humanity was found in him, and what he did, humanity did in him.” (W. W. Prescott, “The Divine-Human Family,” *General Conference Bulletin*, 1895, pp. 8, 9).

Because Christ was both God and man, He was not only unique but also a paradox. What He was as God, contradicted what He assumed as man. This is the great mystery of the incarnation which our finite human minds cannot fathom, but which we by faith believe, because the Word of God declares it.

The following chart shows the distinction between Christ’s divine nature which was His by native right, and His human nature, which was our corporate sinful nature that He assumed at the incarnation in order to be the Saviour of the world:

JESUS CHRIST AT THE INCARNATION

Two Distinct, Opposite Natures United in One Person

HIS DIVINE NATURE

HIS HUMAN NATURE

What He Is:

What He Was Made:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Son of God - Luke 1:35 | 1. Son of Man - Luke 19:10 |
| 2. Self-Existing - John 1:4 | 2. Of a Woman - Gal. 4:4 |
| 3. Spirit - John 4:24 | 3. Flesh - John 1:14 |
| 4. Equal with God - Phil. 2:6 | 4. A Slave of God - Phil. 2:7 |
| 5. Sinless - 2 Cor. 5:21 | 5. Sin - 2 Cor. 5:21 |
| 6. Independent - John 10:18 | 6. Dependent - John 5:19,30 |
| 7. Immortal - 1 Tim. 1:17 | 7. Mortal - Heb. 2:14,15 |
| 8. Lawgiver - Ja. 4:12 | 8. Under Law - Gal. 4:4 |

66 “Saviour of All Men”

On the cross our corporate condemned life died eternally *in Christ* (the wages of sin), 2 Cor. 5:14. In the resurrection God gave the human race the eternal life of His Son, 1 John 5:11; 2 Tim. 1:10. All that we are, as a result of the Fall, Christ was made at the incarnation; that through His life, death, and resurrection all that He is we were made *in Him*, 2 Cor. 5:17. This constitutes the good news of the gospel.

The following chart explains the dramatic change that was made to the human family as a result of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

JESUS CHRIST IN THE RESURRECTION

The Two Natures Become One, Sharing The Same Divine Life
By Nature We—

1. Are spiritually dead but *in Christ* were made spiritually alive - Eph. 2:5
2. Are sinners but *in Christ* were made righteous - 2 Cor. 5:21
3. Are sinful but *in Christ* were made holy and blameless - Eph. 1:4
4. Are condemned but *in Christ* were justified - Rom. 5:18
5. Are sons of man but *in Christ* were made sons of God - 1 John 3:1
6. Are hell bound but *in Christ* were made to sit in heavenly places - Eph. 2:6
7. Are mortal but *in Christ* were made immortal - 2 Tim. 1:8-10
8. Are poor but *in Christ* were made rich - 2 Cor. 8:9
9. Are lower than the angels but *in Christ* were made joint heirs with Christ - Heb. 2:6-12; Rom. 8:17.

Surely, every believer who realizes this truth will join Paul in exclaiming, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” (2 Cor. 9:15).

9 *The Fall and Restoration of Man*

In order to appreciate fully the redemptive work of Christ wrought out in our corporate, sinful humanity, we will conclude this study on the humanity of Christ by examining the threefold aspects of salvation realized in the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord.

Christ came to reverse the damage brought about by the fall of Adam. Everything necessary for the restoration of fallen man has already been prepared in the holy history of Christ, so that there is nothing the believer receives or experiences in this life and in the world to come that has not been accomplished *in* Christ. For this reason, our faith must be built on a foundation already laid, namely Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 3:11).

As the result of Adam's sin, the human race has become a ruined species. The effects of that first sin are passed on from generation to generation, so that apart from God's redemptive act in Christ, all men are hopelessly lost. Adam's sin has alienated us from God and thus all men are born into a realm over which sin and death rule. Christ assumed this sinful condemned humanity in order to save such a race.

To benefit fully from such a great salvation, we must first understand the effects of the Fall. Scripture tells us that Adam's sin affected mankind in three ways: *Spiritually, morally, and physically*. Let us briefly examine these as the basis of appreciating the fullness of Christ's redemptive work:

1. *Spiritually*—Unlike the animal kingdom, man was created a spiritual being. Modern studies in anthropology have demonstrated that even among the most primitive societies, man seeks to worship some form of a god. It was God’s original purpose to dwell in man, and through him reveal His glory. “From eternal ages it was God’s purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator” (DA 161).

But when Adam rebelled against God, this purpose was brought to nought. The Holy Spirit immediately left him, and Adam’s life was plunged into darkness. Thus was fulfilled the warning God gave our first parents: “If you eat of the tree of good and evil you will die the same day” (Gen. 2:17, GNB). The immediate result of the Fall therefore was spiritual death. And this death was passed on to all men, so that all men are born in this world spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1, 5, GNB), alienated from God (Isa. 59:2).

2. *Morally*—In sinless Eden, God created Adam in His image. This meant that Adam’s nature was dominated by sinless innocence. There was perfect harmony between God’s holy law and Adam’s moral nature, so that keeping the law was spontaneous and natural. However, at the Fall, that sinless nature became sinful so that Adam’s nature was now dominated by the law of sin or love of self. “Through disobedience,” says Ellen White, “Adam’s powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil” (SC 7). This is what Isaiah meant when he said, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (53:6). It is this bent to self-love that the Bible calls iniquity, that makes all our good works polluted and therefore condemned as “filthy rags” in God’s eyes (Isa. 64:6). In this sense man’s moral nature, since the Fall, is totally depraved.

3. *Physically*—As long as our first parents had access to the tree of life, their physical nature knew no degeneration. But

after being expelled from the Garden of Eden, because of sin, man became prone to sickness, fatigue, and aging, culminating in death. And death being the "Grim Reaper," Scripture tells us that all humanity has become "all their lifetime subject to bondage" to the fear of death (Heb. 2: 15).

To redeem us from every one of these consequences of the Fall, Christ came to this world as Saviour. And in order to do this, "in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren" (Heb. 2:17). With this in view, let us observe how fallen humanity was redeemed from the three-fold effects of sin, in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

1. *Spiritually*—At the Incarnation, Christ's divinity was mysteriously united to our corporate humanity in the womb of Mary. This humanity which Christ assumed through Mary, like that of all mankind, was in and of itself spiritually dead. But the moment it was united to divinity, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, it became spiritually alive. So then, from His very conception, Christ's humanity was spiritually alive, and this being our corporate humanity, what is true of Christ also became true of us *in* Him.

When Paul told the Ephesians they were made spiritually alive (Eph. 2:5), he used a past historic tense (*aorist*) to indicate an objective truth realized *in Christ* at the Incarnation, and not their subjective experience. The same objective truth applies in Titus 3:5.

Thus, we must never equate Christ's humanity with that of unbelievers who are still spiritually dead. While no distinction exists between the flesh (sinful human nature) of the believer and the unbeliever, two major differences do exist between the total humanity of believers and that of unbelievers:

(a) A true believer is one who has repented and, as the Greek word implies, has had a change of mind, so that his will is in harmony with God and His law (Rom. 7:22, 25). Paul refers to this converted mind as the *inner* or *new man* (Eph. 3:16; 4:24). This is not true of the unbeliever whose mind is

still unconverted and is in harmony with sin and the flesh (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 8:7).

(b) Unlike the unbeliever, the believer who has been baptized *into* Christ has become spiritually alive through the new birth experience (Rom. 8:9-11). And this experience is based on the objective truth that he was first made spiritually alive *in* Christ when divinity was united to our corporate sinful humanity.

Hence, the new birth, the believer's first experience at conversion, is the result of a reality already prepared for all men *in* Christ. And it is this new birth, referred to as "firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23) or regeneration that changes the believer's whole situation, so that now holy living and law-keeping are brought within his reach. While fallen man is totally depraved so that in and of himself he cannot be subject to the law, this same person, when made spiritually alive with God's Spirit dwelling in him, finds holy living a possibility (Rom. 8:9, 10; Gal. 5:16, 22, 23). To such a converted person, Christ's holy life becomes his example and goal (Phil. 3: 12-14; Rom. 13:14; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18).

2. *Morally*—To be made spiritually alive does not mean that the moral nature has been changed in any way. Thus when Christ took upon Himself our humanity, even though that humanity was made spiritually alive, its nature or the flesh was still bent towards self or pressured by the law of sin. Christ's holy living therefore always involved the cross of self-denial (Luke. 9:23).

While the *mind* of Jesus was fully surrendered to God's will, so that not even an inclination or propensity to sin rested there, His flesh was dominated by the principle that affects all mankind—the principle of self. Consequently, holy living to Him was not simply a matter of following the natural inclinations of His human nature, as in the case of sinless Adam, but involved a constant battle against "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." When He declared to His disciples, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John

16:33), His victory over the flesh was included in that statement (see 1 John 2:15, 16 for the meaning of “the world”).

Such an understanding of Christ’s holy living gives a deeper and more complete meaning to His redemptive mission. In this context *The International Critical Commentary* makes a most interesting observation with reference to Paul’s statement in Romans. 8:3, wherein the apostle declared that in the likeness of sinful flesh Christ “condemned sin in the flesh”: “But if we recognize that Paul believed it was fallen human nature which the Son of God assumed, we shall probably be inclined to see here also a reference to the un-intermittent warfare of His whole earthly life by which He forced our rebellious nature to render a perfect obedience to God.”

According to Peter, all the sufferings of Christ that resulted in His perfect character took place in His flesh (1 Pet 4:1). And this could only be possible because His flesh was the likeness of our sinful flesh, and was denied sinful desires. But this is an essential part of the good news of the gospel that must fill us with deep heartfelt appreciation of His righteousness, and make us willing in turn to suffer in the flesh that He may be glorified (Rom. 8:16-18).

Having produced perfect obedience by completely and totally overcoming the flesh for 33 years, Christ took this condemned flesh and surrendered it to the wages of sin on His cross. Thus He “condemned sin in the flesh” by both His active and passive obedience and forever became the author and finisher of salvation to all who believe (Heb. 5:8, 9). In this knowledge of full and complete salvation rests the hope of fallen man. And this hope is twofold: “Justification unto life” as well as “sanctification of the Spirit,” and both become effective by faith alone.

3. *Physically*—When Christ assumed our sinful humanity, not only did He identify Himself with our moral weaknesses, but He also took our physical infirmities. Thus He became subject to fatigue, aging, and death. But having redeemed and cleansed our sinful humanity at the cross, Jesus rose from the

dead with a glorified body, both morally as well as physically. Therefore, at His ascension, He took this redeemed body to heaven where it is reserved for us at the second coming. This is the "blessed hope" of all born-again believers (Rom. 8:23-25; Phil. 3:20, 21).

In the light of this full and wonderful good news of the everlasting gospel, the humanity of Christ is indeed "everything to us." This perfect, full, and complete message of salvation *in* Christ, which was once preached by the apostles, must again be restored to our dark and doomed world before the end comes. "For how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him" (Heb. 2:3).

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

AMEN.

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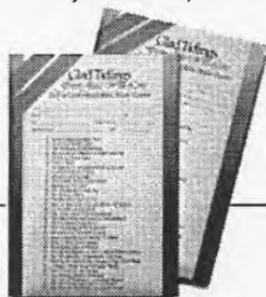
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