

"THE GOLDEN CHAIN"

Is There A Broken Link?

Some Insights into the Humanity of Christ

by Robert J. Wieland

"The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God."

—Selected Messages, Book One, p. 244

"The Immaculate Conception ... contradicts the true humanity of Jesus and overthrows the good news of salvation: in fact, if Mary is outside the 'camp' where humanity is held captive by the Evil One, then the child which she has miraculously conceived will Himself also be born outside this camp: and then neither He nor His work will have relevance for men."

—J. von Allmen.

- **How seriously do Seventh-day Adventists consider the humanity of Jesus?**
- **Did He take the humanity of Adam before the Fall?**
- **Or that of humanity after the Fall?**
- **Or something half-way between?**

The author explores a number of questions that keep coming up. He is convinced that the evidence from both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White is not ambiguous, but is clear and unequivocal.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

BC	<i>The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vols. 1-7</i>
CD	<i>Counsels on Diet and Foods</i>
CG	<i>Child Guidance</i>
COL	<i>Christ's Object Lessons</i>
DA	<i>Desire of Ages, The</i>
GC	<i>Great Controversy, The</i>
GCB	<i>General Conference Bulletin</i>
IHP	<i>In High Places</i>
MD	<i>Movement of Destiny, L. E. Froom</i>
MH	<i>Ministry of Healing, The</i>
Ms	Ellen G. White Manuscript
OHC	<i>Our High Calling</i>
R&H	<i>Review and Herald</i>
SC	<i>Steps to Christ</i>
SM	<i>Selected Messages, books 1, 2</i>
ST	<i>Signs of the Times</i>
T	<i>Testimonies for the Church, vols. 1-9</i>
TM	<i>Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers</i>
YI	<i>Youths Instructor</i>

PREFACE

This book was written to meet what I thought was a need: a defense of Ellen White's integrity. Are her writings confusing and self-contradictory on the humanity of Christ? Some think so.

Can the so-called, apparent contradictions be resolved? My answer to that question is yes. I suggest four certainties:

- (1) The Bible teachings are not self-contradictory.
- (2) Ellen White's writings do not contradict Scripture.
- (3) Neither are her writings self-contradictory.

(4) The "message of Christ's righteousness" brought to us in the 1888 era is the true context of most of her remarks about the humanity of Christ, and is in remarkable harmony with both Scripture and her writings.

I might add a fifth point:

When we as a people come to true heart-felt unity in understanding and proclaiming this "message of Christ's righteousness," great power will be manifest in the closing proclamation of "the third angel's message in verity." If this is true, it would follow that the questions discussed here are of tremendous importance.

The full and eternal divinity of Christ is assumed to be understood. Our only problem to discuss here is what kind of humanity Christ "took" or "assumed" in His incarnation. That He retained His divinity in His incarnation is not questioned. Again, His perfect sinlessness is assumed.

I believe that the fine-honed accuracy of Ellen White's many statements on this subject is itself a powerful evidence that her mind was controlled by the Holy Spirit. The paradoxes demonstrate that she took her own advice seriously to be "careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ." She did not avoid the subject, and neither should we, for she says it "is everything to us." She picked her way unerringly through this dangerous minefield where careless theologians stumble. This is a remarkable evidence of her calling as the Lord's messenger.

If "the humanity of the Son of God is everything to us," "the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God," there must be no "broken link" in the chain. The full implications of His humanity must not be downgraded in the slightest. A world populated with billions of people for whom He died is waiting to "see" the Saviour as "nigh at hand," One who saves from sin, not in sin. May Seventh-day Adventists rediscover the joy of seeing Him thus.

Where there is sincere perplexity which hinders the message being brought before the world, I hope that this study may help by clearing up apparent difficulties. The "golden chain that binds our souls ... to God" must be complete. The humanity of Christ is a practical godliness truth related to the accomplishment of the Lord's purpose in human hearts—a preparation for His return. For that, a correct view becomes extremely important.

Though some may be tempted to doubt that it will ever be possible for us all to agree on this subject, Ellen White has left us a precious promise that such perfect unity will yet be attained by God's people: "Although possessing different temperaments and dispositions, they will see eye to eye in all matters of religious belief. They will speak the same things,

they will have the same judgment, they will be one in Christ Jesus (*Historical Sketches*, 1886), p. 124."

I dedicate this book to that cause of harmony and unity "in Christ."

Robert J. Wieland

INTRODUCTION

Why This Subject Is Important

Jesus our Saviour! How could anything be more important than seeing Him as He truly is?

The author of Hebrews urges us to "consider" Him, the Greek word (*katanoeo*) meaning to "perceive clearly," intensively, to "understand fully, closely." Our spiritual weaknesses and defeats come from not obeying that command found in Hebrews 3:1.

Since His name is "Immanuel,... God with us," we must "perceive clearly" that He is both fully God and fully man. How to understand this has been a main problem for nearly two thousand years and is still so among Seventh-day Adventists today. Yet "the humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. *This is to be our study.*" (ISM 244, emphasis added).

"For years," says Ellen White, "I have seen that there is a broken link which has kept us from reaching hearts, this link is supplied by presenting the love and mercy of God" (March 3, 1891, Council of Presidents meeting). Any failure to "perceive Christ clearly" is a broken link in "the chain that has been let down from the throne of God [which] is long enough to reach to the lowest depths" (7T 229). "One defective link makes a chain worthless" (8T 158).

Ellen White sensed that the clearest and most beautiful presentation of Christ as "God with us" since apostolic times was found in the 1888 message of Christ's righteousness because she saw it as the "beginning" of the Holy Spirit's latter rain and the loud cry of the final gospel message. For some 105 times she identified Jones and Waggoner (during the decade after 1888) as "the Lord's messengers," and ten times as His "special" or "delegated" messengers. Surely she is trying to tell us something. It would seem the most natural thing to do now would be to give a sympathetic hearing to the message.

But there are objections, because in the very heart of the 1888 message is a concept that some sincere scholars see as a stumbling block. They are rightly anxious to preserve inviolate the truth of Christ's perfect sinlessness. The 1888 messengers had no doubts about Christ's perfect holiness and righteousness, but they maintained that His character was developed in a human nature identical to ours—a fallen nature. Further, they maintained that when God's people truly understand and appreciate this "righteousness by faith" they will be enabled to "overcome even as [Christ] overcame" and thus prepare for His glorious return.

The problem of objectors is four-fold: (a) fear that this concept will somehow worm its way in to undermine Christ's perfect sinlessness; (b) fear that "orthodox" theologians in the popular churches will ridicule us if we embrace it; (c) fear that this is "Pharisaic perfectionism;" and (d) perplexity regarding *apparently* contradictory statements in the Bible and in Ellen White writings.

If such contradiction seems apparent, the solution must be closer study. Complete confidence in divine inspiration is at stake. Hence, this subject assumes a towering importance.

There is no desire here to pry into deep mystery, but there is a reason for more study. "Those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). There are divine mysteries in regard to the incarnation of Christ that we may never fully understand, but there are also truths revealed that are essential to understand now if we are ever to "overcome even as [Christ] overcame."

Ellen White frequently spoke of the 1888 message as "the message of Christ's righteousness." Never did she speak of it as the message of His "holiness." Christ was "holy" at His birth (Luke 1:35), but He was "righteous" at His death (Romans 5:18). There is a vast distinction. Implicit in her phrase "Christ's righteousness" is the idea that Christ "overcame" and condemned sin in our fallen, sinful flesh which He "took." The following was written concerning this 1888 message of Christ's righteousness:

The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken. If he can control minds so that doubt and unbelief and darkness shall compose the experience of those who claim to be the children of God, he can overcome them with temptation.... Unless divine power is brought into the experience of the people of God, false theories and erroneous ideas will take minds captive, Christ and His righteousness will be dropped out of the experience of many, and their faith will be without power or life....

The Lord can do little for His people, because of their limited faith. The ministers have not presented Christ in His fulness to the people, either in the churches or in new fields, and the people have not had an intelligent faith. They have not been instructed as they should have been that Christ is unto them salvation and righteousness.... A bright light shines upon our pathway today [she is writing in the context of the 1888 message] and it leads to increased faith in Jesus. We must receive every ray of light. (R&H, Sept. 3, 1889, emphasis added; somehow this powerful statement failed to get into the four-volume set of her *1888 Materials*).

A "mystery" in the New Testament is not something God wants to hide from man, but a truth He wants to reveal to us. The 1888 view of Christ's righteousness "in the likeness of sinful flesh" was an important part of the "rich floods of light" that shone on our pathway. The message Ellen White endorsed as "most precious" was not merely emotional feeling; it was objective truth, a "secret" which God obviously wills to make known.

We expect that Ellen White wrote simply and clearly within her own context. Further, we would not dare to charge God with giving us a Bible that is not understandable, or is self-contradictory. If we do not permit our own ideas to intrude into our reading of inspired writings, I believe we shall encounter no problems of confusion.

As to the embarrassment we fear could come from the ridicule of "orthodox" Evangelicals should we publicly embrace that "most precious message" God gave to us, I believe we may be repeating the unbelief of the ten spies at Kadesh-Barnea. They were sinfully afraid of "giants" who were powerless before the arm of the Lord. The popular churches desperately need to have their minds stirred by a bold proclamation of Bible truth. And especially in this area of Christ's righteousness, there is a tremendous vacuum waiting to be filled. Millions in the popular churches want to be led to the true Christ and find Him "nigh at hand" and not "afar off." Ellen White's enthusiastic endorsement of

Jones's and Waggoner's presentation of Christ and His righteousness at South Lancaster, Massachusetts, January 11, 1889 is on record: "We felt the necessity of presenting Christ as a Saviour who was not afar off, but nigh at hand" (R&H, March 5, 1889). That statement alone lifts this subject out of the realm of sterile theology into practical gospel living.

Further, there is not the slightest need for us to be embarrassed. The Lord has already prepared the way before us. Well-respected individual non-Adventist theologians today have come to believe basically the same truth as the 1888 idea about Jesus. The British theologian Harry Johnson has written a doctoral thesis at London University, *The Humanity of the Saviour*, in which he convincingly demonstrates that respected theologians through the centuries have embraced a view of Christ's nature identical to that which was the heart of our 1888 message. Johnson cites the following: Gregory of Nyssa (330-395 A.D.), Felix of Urgel (f. 792), Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680), Peter Poiret (1646-1719), Christian Fende, Johann Konrad Dippel (1673-1734), Gottfried Menken (1768-1831), Hermann Friedrich Kohlburgge (1803-1875), Edward Irving (1792-1834), Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1788-1870), Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann (1810-1917), and McCloud Campbell (1800-1872). There was also J. Gamier who was contemporary with Jones and Waggoner.

It is unlikely that Jones and Waggoner read these writers. At least, they never cite any of them. What they taught is what they found in the Bible itself. (The same can be said for most of these who studied and wrote independently). Few if any theologians of a past age were free from all error of some kind, but precisely the same can be said of all of our "prophetic fathers" of the Dark Ages. But it is truly inspiring that these had the courage in the face of vicious persecution to advance a view of Christ's righteousness that until now we have been slow to accept.

Of modern proponents that Christ took our fallen nature and lived in it a life of perfect righteousness Harry Johnson says: "There are signs that in the future it may win more general acceptance" (*The Humanity of the Saviour*, p. 167).

Dr. Fromm could well have added a section to his *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* series showing how this "most precious message" was brought to the fore time and again through the centuries both before and after the 1260 years of papal supremacy. Little was said about it in pre-Reformation times however, for reasons that are not difficult to imagine. Those who did from time to time advocate it were mercilessly opposed, even by Protestant leaders. But their opponents never came to grips with the objective realities of their message. Time and again, Johnson points out, their opponents jumped to the conclusion that when they said that Christ "took fallen human nature" they implied that He was a sinner, whereas the opposite is the truth. (The same insistent misapprehension seems echoed in current efforts in our midst to oppose the 1888 concepts.) Speaking of those who believed Christ took fallen human nature, Johnson comments:

In their view it was perfectly possible to hold side by side His sinlessness and his assumption of "fallen human nature," and they do not appear to be guilty of illogically combining incompatibles. If this doctrine has been rejected for this reason, it has been rejected only because it has been misunderstood (*op. cit.*, p. 193).

It's something like the frequent situation during past centuries when Christian sabbath-keepers were persecuted as Jews simply because they kept the seventh day. The

idea that the sinless Christ assumed fallen human nature has been even more unpopular through the centuries than the seventh day sabbath, yet it rests on the same Biblical foundation.

There is no "perfectionism" in the 1888 message. It is simply the message of "the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." There is not a trace of extremism in it, though its contemporary opponents mistakenly charged it with being extremism (TM 92, 97). Ellen White stoutly defended it.

In fact, it's impossible to accept Ellen White and not accept what she says about that message. The White Estate have released all that she wrote in letters, articles, and manuscripts that relate to the 1888 message and history. The four volumes of these *1888 Materials* total an astonishing 1,800 pages—more than she wrote about any other single subject. Whatever may have been the human faults or weaknesses of the 1888 messengers, her endorsement of their message is massively supportive, leaving only an isolated hook on which objectors can precariously hang an unbelieving doubt.

This author is convinced that it's far too late in the day to entertain any doubt. A quote from the dust cover of one of John F. MacArthur's recent books is sadly appropriate to the spiritual condition of many of us in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today:

Pragmatism ignores doctrine and focuses more on achieving "success" than on communicating God's Word unashamedly. Tragically this theology:

- emphasizes church growth over church doctrine
- makes entertaining congregations more important than feeding them spiritually
- views truth as being secondary to "what works"

—*Ashamed of the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993).

The 1888 message which "the Lord in His great mercy sent" to Seventh-day Adventists is the spiritual food for which many in the church are famishing. It's too true that "Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them." The "most precious message" has indeed "in a great degree [been] kept away from the world" (TM 91; 1SM 234, 235; 1896).

The natural, unconverted human heart resents a call to Christlike character. But the message is all Good News, and it is all by faith. It is simply the gospel standard set by Christ, for which He ministers much more abounding grace to make all its imperatives become joyous enablings.

Although there is no "perfectionism" in the 1888 message, there is indeed a call to holy living. In February 1894 Ellen White published a booklet as No. 118 of the "Bible Students' Library," entitled *Christ Tempted As We Are*. Her message supported Jones's and Waggoner's concept of Christ taking our fallen, sinful nature, yet living therein a life of perfect righteousness.

She begins by quoting Hebrews 2:17,18 and 4:15: "It behooved [Christ] to be made like unto His brethren.... He is able to succor them that are tempted," "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." She then refutes the popular "Christian" idea that "we cannot overcome as He overcame":

This is not true.... Christ knows the sinner's trials; He knows his temptations. He took upon Himself our nature.... Christ was actually tempted, not only in the wilderness, but all through His life. In all points He was tempted as we are, and because He successfully resisted temptation in every form, He gave us a perfect example.... Jesus can enable us to resist Satan's temptations.... Jesus fought all our battles.... The Christian's ... strongest

temptations will come from within; for he must battle against the inclinations of the natural heart. The Lord knows our weaknesses.... The hand of the Infinite is stretched over the battlements of heaven to grasp your hand in its embrace. The mighty Helper is nigh to help the most erring, the most sinful and despairing (pp. 3-12).

Good News! To realize how good it is, this is our purpose.

A Brief Review of the 1888 Concept of Christ's Humanity¹

Christ is God in the fullest sense, eternally pre-existent, equal with the Father, possessing life in Himself, the Creator of all things.

In order to save the human race He entered the corporate stream of our humanity, becoming one of us, the second or "last Adam." In order to be our sinless Substitute, He had to identify with us completely. He could not fail to assume that which He came to redeem. Thus He took upon His sinless nature our fallen, sinful nature, coming so close to us that no other human being can be wedged in closer. His long arm reaches down to the lowest level to lift up and to save the most hopeless sinner who will look to Him with an intelligent faith.

In His incarnation He endured all of our temptations, "yet without sin." His righteousness is perfect because He condemned sin in the likeness, not the unlikeness, of our sinful flesh. No one of us can claim that he has a more difficult battle to fight than Jesus had. Since He knows the full force of our deepest, most alluring temptations, He can save to the uttermost those who are captives of Satan.

Both Jones and Waggoner taught that the idea that Christ took the sinless nature of Adam before the fall is a legacy of Roman Catholicism, for them a fulfillment of the warning the apostle John writes in 1 John 4:1-3 about Antichrist. The only flesh there is in this world that Christ could "take" is the same fallen, sinful flesh that all of us possess by nature. Short of being a fraud, He could not be "exempt" from any aspect of our genetic inheritance from Adam.

Christ's perfect righteousness which He lived in our fallen, sinful flesh was therefore by faith. Thus He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. When the church as a body truly receives the same faith that motivated Jesus, the result will be righteousness manifested in His people that will honor Christ before the world and the universe.

It is possible for those who exercise faith to overcome even as Christ overcame. A people *can* be prepared for the second coming of Christ, because this preparation will simply be righteousness by faith fully understood and believed. The 1888 messengers never used the phrase "absolute sinless perfection." This phrase has been coined by opponents, and mistakenly applied to them. The 1888 idea is simply character perfection, overcoming even as Christ overcame, *by faith*.

This growing up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ becomes a preparation for translation, again all by faith. It is the practical-godliness aspect of Christ's cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, a work begun in 1844 and now long overdue in completion. There must come a time when the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is

¹ Some suggested sources: *Christ and His Righteousness*, *The Glad Tidings*, *Waggoner on Romans*, sermons in the 1901 *General Conference Bulletin*, by E. J. Waggoner; *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, and sermons in the 1893 and 1895 *General Conference Bulletins* by A. T. Jones.

accomplished. To see our great High Priest as He truly is, to "behold" Him more clearly, is most essential to this end.

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Is There A Broken Link?

Some Insights into the Humanity of Christ

Section 1

Is the Bible Clear?

1. Does the Bible contradict itself?

No, but there are *seeming* contradictions. They are in the category of the "some things hard to be understood" that Peter says are in Paul's epistles (2 Peter 3:16). Peter *appears* to be mildly rebuking Paul for not sufficiently honing his communication skills, but in fact the Greek word he uses (*dusnoetos*) means "misperceived." Paul's writing was clear enough but his readers' "perceiving" was not. Let's not criticise Paul.

Paul says that Christ "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3, KJV). There was no break in the genetic line. The word translated "seed" in the original is *sperm*, which means full genetic descent. The word translated "made" specifies that Christ became what He was not intrinsically. The word translated "flesh" is *sarx*, which denotes the common flesh or nature which all *fallen* descendants of Adam possess.

Although Christ was born of a virgin mother, He was sent through the process of human generation. Paul does not say that He was re-created from the ground as a replica of sinless Adam, but was "made ... according to the flesh." In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church sees the virgin Mary as a re-created replica of Eve that was "exempt" and "desolidarized" from our fallen genetic inheritance, so that she could give to her Son an "exempt" sinless flesh and a sinless nature (Fulton Sheen, *The World's First Love*, pp. 15,16,48).

In chapter 8 of Romans, Paul adds that Christ was sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh" (verse 3). The question that perplexes many is what "likeness" means. Is it reality or mere resemblance?

There is no need for us to "misperceive" what Paul is saying because he explains himself by using "likeness" in the same Greek dative case in Philippians 2:7, where he says that Christ was "made ... in the likeness of men." Thus the word cannot mean mere appearance or outward form. To interpret it so in Philippians would be the heresy of Docetism (which denies the true humanity of Christ). If the word "likeness" means reality in Philippians it must also mean reality in Romans. It was *in* His human flesh that Christ "condemned sin." The sinless Adam had no such problem in his flesh. It would be unnecessary and even impossible for Christ to "condemn sin" in sinless flesh, for such would be meaningless and irrelevant to us. Since Christ already "had" a sinless nature, the only nature He could "take" would be our sinful nature.

Hebrews 2 enlarges on this idea. "Jesus ... was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death" (verse 9). As man is since he became subject unto death, this is what we "see Jesus" to be. Death could not have touched Him had He come in the sinless nature of Adam before the Fall. He "took not on Him the nature of angels: but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (verse 16, KJV). That is, He took upon Himself the full heredity imposed by the genetic line from Abraham, that He might minister to *them*, not to the unfallen angels. The text does not say that He had to be made like unto His sinless *brother* Adam.

"In all things He had to be made like His *brethren*" (verse 17).

2. How can we be sure that this "flesh and blood" is not that of the sinless Adam, but that of our sinful selves?

"As the *children* are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (verse 14, KJV). Thus He was "in all points tempted like as *we* are, yet without sin" (4:15). How are we tempted? James makes clear that our human temptations derive from *within*, for "each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire *when it has conceived* gives birth to sin" James 1:15, RSV).

Was sinless Adam "lured and enticed by his own desire"? It would be blasphemy to suggest that God created him with a sinful nature or with built-in temptations to sin. The Lord's warning to the sinless pair was specific: they were to beware *only* "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17). They were totally safe anywhere else in the Garden. Satan could not have appealed to them anywhere else. If there were temptations lurking within them that could spring up while they were anywhere else, the Lord was remiss in not warning them. We read how the temptation of the forbidden fruit was external: "When the woman *saw* that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the *eyes*, and a tree to be desired to make one wise," she sinned. The "desire" was created only by external stimuli. We dare not say that God implanted within her that evil "desire" like a seed waiting to sprout. She and Adam were tempted from without and fell. In their sinless state Adam and Eve did not need to deny their own will in order to follow God's will; they knew no cross on which a sinful self needed always to be crucified.

In what consisted the strength of the assault made upon Adam, which caused his fall? It was not indwelling sin; for God made Adam after His own character, pure and upright. There were no corrupt principles in the first Adam, no corrupt propensities or tendencies to evil. Adam was as faultless as the angels before God's throne (Letter 191, 1899; 1BC 1083).

But Jesus makes clear that His temptability was in our realm of the inclination to follow His own will even as we are tempted in that same way, and His victory lay in the denial of His own will: "I came ... *not* to do My own will, *but* the will of Him who sent Me." "I do not seek My own will *but* the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 6:38; 5:30). Here was an inward struggle that Jesus bore constantly, which Adam never experienced in his sinless state. Before the Fall, Adam had no constant cross to bear, no need to deny self as did our Lord who "did not please Himself" (Romans 15:3).

3. Does Paul's use of "like" in Romans 1:23 mean that his use of "likeness" in 8:3 means mere resemblance or similarity, and not identity?

The Saviour could not condemn sin in sinless flesh that only *resembled* the flesh where the problem is. God would never deceive us by sending His Son as a plastic resemblance or a veneer that denied reality and then claiming a victory that never truly took place. Paul makes his meaning clear when he adds that Christ condemned sin in that same flesh.

In Romans 1:23 Paul is not saying that the heathen made images that were a resemblance of *God* (that would be impossible), but that they made "a likeness of an *image*" of "corruptible *man*" and birds and animals (*en homoiomati eikonos*). The "likeness of an image" is the duplication or *reality* of that image. Every *eikon* or image is exactly like every other image. "The likeness of sinful flesh" in which God sent His Son "on account of sin" is

likewise the reality of sinful flesh, not a mere resemblance of it. But Paul uses the word "likeness" in Romans 8:3 to make clear that in so doing Christ did not participate in our sin, nor did He relinquish His divinity. C. E. B. Cranfield observes:

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) (*International Critical Commentary*, Romans, Vol. 1, p. 383).

4. Jesus often used the word "like" in His parables. But He did not mean that "the kingdom of heaven" is actually leaven, or a fish-net, etc.

The word "like" is an adjective, whereas "likeness" is a noun. Jesus never said that a fish-net or leaven etc. is the likeness (or reality) of the kingdom of heaven. But His flesh was the reality of our sinful flesh. (See next question.)

5. Are you not going too far when you say that the nature which Christ "took" or "assumed" was "identical" to our own? Would it not be better to say it was "similar" or it "resembled" ours?

When Paul speaks of Christ "coming in the likeness of men" (the same Greek word in Philippians 2:7) he means that He truly became man, or He would be teaching the heresy of Docetism. He identified Himself with man, in nature He was "made" identical to man, although before His incarnation He was in "form" identical with God (vs. 6). And there is no other way to translate *kath homoioteta* in Hebrews 4:15 than to say He was "in all things tempted identically as we are." The *Twentieth Century New Testament* translates it, "tempted exactly as we have been."

Paul's expression in Hebrews 2:17 clarifies how "in all things" Christ is "made like" His brethren who partake of a common fallen "flesh and blood." Those who oppose this view confuse *homoiomati* in Romans 8:3 with another Greek word, *paromoios* which does indeed mean merely "similar" or "resembling" but not "identical to." It is used in Mark 7:8,13 ("many such like things ye do"). If Paul had intended his meaning in Romans 8:3 to be merely a "resemblance" or "similar to" our "sinful flesh," *paromoios* would have been the proper word to use, not *homoioima*.

6. How was Christ tempted in the flesh?

Hebrews sums up Christ's humanity by saying that it is only as Christ Himself suffered temptation *as we suffer it* that He is able to help us who are tempted. If in any way Christ was "exempt" from participation in our struggle, in that respect He must fail to be our Saviour: "In that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

Does the New Testament elsewhere contradict this view? Two texts are commonly cited to imply a contradiction: "The child to be born [of you] will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35, RSV). The angel's announcement to Mary cannot imply that Christ was not

truly "made like unto His brethren," that He did not truly "take on Him the seed [*sperm*] of Abraham." The angel would not dare to deny that He was truly sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin." He simply described Christ's holy, sinless character. There can not be a contradiction. Christ's perfect holiness was manifested in our sinful nature. Thus He gained the power to save us *from* our sins, not *in* them.

The other text is Hebrews 7:26: "Such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Does the expression "separate from sinners" imply a kind of Immaculate Conception that exempted Christ from the inheritance of our fallen heredity?

We must distinguish between Christ's nature of *equipment*, and what He did with it, namely, His *performance*. *Our* performance is that of sin; *His* performance was perfect righteousness. If Christ lived a holy life in holy flesh in a holy nature unlike ours, He would not be "Immanuel, God with us." The glory of the "message of Christ's righteousness" is that His amazing performance was with *our* equipment, even our fallen human nature. Christ was "in all things ... made like unto His brethren," sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh," "in all points tempted like as we are, *yet without sin*." "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" means "without sin," yet tempted as *we are*, not merely as the sinless Adam was tempted.

Thus Christ is "that Holy One." The angel was glorying in Christ's performance, not His equipment, for He was to be "born of *thee*," "made of a woman, made under the law" (cf. Luke 1:35, Galatians 4:4, KJV). His holiness was sublime and glorious, for it was perfected in fallen human flesh, the result of conflict with temptation, yes, even "unto blood," "even the death of the cross" (Hebrews 12:4; Philippians 2:8, KJV). This is *true* righteousness!

Paul's expression "separate from sinners" tells the Hebrews that Christ is a High Priest different from the sinful human priests ministering in the Jerusalem temple. It cannot mean He did not come near us, or take our nature, because we read, "Then all the tax-collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him" (Luke 15:1). "To him that knoweth to do good, and *doeth it not*, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Christ did not *sin*; thus He was "separate from sinners" who have sinned—different from all of us. Paul said He was "made to be sin for us."

Fulton Sheen however maintains that "Mary was desolidarized and separated from ... sin-laden humanity." In defending the Immaculate Conception he says further, "There ought to be an infinite separation between God and sin." "How could [Christ] be sinless if He was born of sin-laden humanity? ... If He came to this earth through the wheatfield of moral weakness, He certainly would have some chaff hanging on the garment of His human nature" (*op. cit.*, pp. 15, 16, 45). Sheen's idea is a carryover from Platonism. Here we have an excusing of sin in all who are by nature "sin-laden humanity"! That was not Paul's intention in his use of "separate" in Hebrews 7:26.

The phrase "Christ's righteousness" denotes the victory of His holiness in conflict with temptation to sin, as we are tempted. If in any way He must be insulated from the struggle as we must face it, to that extent there has to be a "broken link" in His righteousness. There is no contradiction in the Bible regarding the humanity of Christ, because Luke's proleptic concept of His holiness as an infant is fulfilled by His righteousness manifested in His perfect life, even to His death of the cross. And that involved a victorious but terrible conflict with temptation to sin.

7. Is a correct understanding of the humanity of Christ essential to our salvation?

From a human point of view, it may not be essential to salvation *if we* expect to die before Christ's second coming. Since Waggoner's presentation of righteousness by faith at Minneapolis in 1888 was "the first clear [public] teaching from any human lips" that Ellen White had heard, apparently the Holy Spirit had not led anyone else among us to teach this truth forcefully prior to 1888.

But it would not be correct to say that a right understanding of Christ's humanity is not vital to those who will be living on earth when "the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above." Jones and Waggoner recognized that this truth was essential to demonstrating a vindication of Christ in the body of His church. And so did Ellen White: "The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man" (1SM 244; cf. GC 425).

If we must die "in the wilderness" for decades or centuries more to come, then it can be said that this subject is not important now. But if we expect the Lord's coming in our generation, a true understanding will be essential if the church is to manifest the beauty of Christ's character in the final fearful trials. The sad moral failures of so many professed Christians in this age of "new morality" (including sexual permissiveness) are due to a failure to relate to Christ by faith in consequence of erroneous views of His righteousness. "In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the nature of our Lord" (7BC 929). Those "mistakes" can be death-dealing (see next question).

8. Supposing that we may find the truth on this subject, what is its practical value?

As an example, let us look at one problem that is a frightful emergency in the church and in modern society: the world is drowning in a cesspool of sexual immorality. Some 70% of teenagers in the United States practice fornication, of whom 3 million a year contract STD's; and over half of marriages are poisoned by infidelity. Studies indicate that the percentages among many Adventists are becoming alarmingly similar. Dr. Reo M. Christenson in *Spectrum* says:

Fornication causes more suffering in America than theft and perjury and random violence combined ... high rates of illegitimacy, single-parent families, school dropouts following pregnancies, subsequent entries onto welfare rolls plus their children who get involved in crime, drugs, poor educational performance, and often lifelong poverty. Think of the parental distress all this brings, too. Add these up and the reader can see why I think fornication is an evil far greater than modern society likes to acknowledge. It is sad that even churches are unwilling to give this sin the attention it so richly deserves (Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 64).

Temptation to fornication and adultery is not sin, but *yielding* to it is, with all these horrendous consequences and much more. In fact, 100% of human beings are tempted, and sexual temptations are very alluring because human beings have "hot blood." And these sinful drives are commonly considered to be irresistible. A succession of U. S. Surgeons General have assumed that it is impossible to expect teens not to indulge in this immorality, which is of course worldwide as well. It is appropriate to ask, Does the world have a Saviour "nigh at hand and not afar off?" Does He know how we are tempted? Can He save

us *from* sin? William Johnsson declares that "Jesus wasn't exposed to some areas of temptation that we face" (*Bible Amplifier, Hebrews*, p. 105). Many Christian people, including Seventh-day Adventists, agree with one of my esteemed correspondents who wrote me recently saying, "Bob, you can never make me believe that Christ was ever tempted to break the seventh commandment."

If this view is correct, according to Hebrews 2:18 we have no Saviour from that sin. All He can do is continually pardon us while we continually fall. In this highly ensconced view, He is *not* "able to aid those [of us] who are tempted" so that we can be saved *from* sin *now*. He is reduced to being the Ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, picking up the pieces after we fall, promising us a pie-in-the-sky salvation after we die or after we are translated. His High Priestly ministry consists of forgiving us continually *after* we continually sin—which is wonderful indeed. But Hebrews says *He can and must do more than that!*

In fact, the bottom-of-the-cliff ambulance is the Roman Catholic view of Christ's (and Mary's!) "intercession." Only after we get rid of this sinful flesh and enter into a fleshless realm known as Purgatory will it be possible for selfish, sensual sin to be "purged" from us. And the conclusion is that if Christ had truly "taken" upon Himself "the likeness of [our] sinful flesh" with our hot blood, then He too would either have been forced to give in or be "exempt" from our temptations. In other words, Satan wins the controversy— he has invented something that even Christ could not have "overcome" *if He had taken our fallen nature and been tempted as we are*.

What kind of triumph would it be to declare Christ victor over Satan if He picked and chose the temptations He wanted to face, or if He took some deluxe "equipment" that kept Him above the battle-level where we live? How brave is a soldier with a bullet-proof vest in comparison to one who has none? How could Christ be either our Substitute or Example if He had special exemptions?

In *Christianity Today* Carol Anderson Streeter declares that adultery "is as hurtful as murder" (April 3, 1995, p. 38). If that is true, so is fornication—it's only the prelude to the same murderous sin. In the same issue is a forceful article by R. Kent Hodges and John H. Armstrong pleading that although in church administration "the impulse to link forgiveness with restoration to ministry remains strong," church leaders who commit adultery should not be readmitted "to pastoral leadership." But this moral abomination that *Christianity Today* decries is now knocking for entrance to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. What could children and youth think when they know that their spiritual "leader" in the pulpit is guilty of moral turpitude?

Ancient Israel at Baal-peor might be excused for their fornication and adultery on the borders of their Promised Land, but why should this cancer be allowed to spread in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today when we are so near the end? This is the church that claims to "keep the commandments of God"! The apostle says this particular sin must "not be once named among you, as becometh saints." What's back of this spiritual abomination that maketh desolate? The rejection of the 1888 message of Christ's righteousness, the truth of a Saviour who can "succor them that are tempted" "in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted."

Lift up the trumpet and loud let it ring: Christ *can* save from sin *now*, and can cleanse and purify impure hearts *now*, that His church "may become blameless,... without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom [they may] shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15).

The Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception with its Augustinian Protestant echoes has resulted in a vast amount of misery. In the final judgment it will be revealed that "the blood ... of all who were slain on the earth" is to be "found" in Babylon's doctrine of a false christ (Revelation 18:24).

9. Does the Greek of Hebrews 4:15 imply that Christ was not really tempted "in all points like as we are"?

It says that He was tempted "identically" with us (*kata panta kath'homoioteta*). No matter how you try to translate it, you end up with the same thought: He was tempted "identically" "in all things" as we are, or "in all points like as we are." The Greek of Hebrews 2:18 farther clarifies this text: "*In that* [which] He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." In other words, "*only* in respect of the temptations He Himself has suffered, being tempted" is He "able to aid those who are tempted." The context of Hebrews 2:9-17 is so clear that we cannot deny the equivalence and the necessity of Christ's temptations as related to ours.

Was He tempted to watch TV? To eat too much ice cream? To listen to rock and roll? To indulge in illicit sex? To use cocaine? (Incidentally, no addict has ever felt more compulsion to take a fix than was Jesus tempted to bite down on that sponge filled with the narcotic offered Him as He hung on the cross in horrible pain, but He refused, Matthew 27:34). Hebrews 4:15 answers all our questions: as the second Adam "He was tempted *identically* with us," and the reason this is so is that he was tempted to the indulgence of self as we are and felt the force of the temptation as fully as do we. All our temptations stem from that root.

10. Were not Christ's temptations different from ours in that He was tempted to use His divine power, which we of course are not tempted to do? And different because His were of greater intensity?

The fact that Christ was tempted beyond what we are tempted does not imply that He was not truly tempted in all points *like* as we are, as well. The greater temptations can never cancel the lesser. He was tempted to self-indulgence, as we are, and perfectly "overcame." His temptation to evade His cross coincides with the principle underlying all our temptations.

11. Jesus said, "The prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me" (John 14:30). If He had taken our sinful humanity, how could He have said those words? Wouldn't He have to say, "Satan has something in Me"?

No, the fact that Christ took our sinful nature would not mean that Satan *had* anything in Him. Since Christ "overcame," it would mean the exact opposite, for only by "taking" our sinful nature and overcoming could Christ have truly defeated Satan so that he "has nothing in Me," as He says. Unless Christ's overcoming included His condemning "sin *in* the flesh," Satan would indeed have *had* "something" in Him, for he would have accused Christ of being sheltered from the real conflict and therefore dishonestly winning only a sham victory. "The will must *consent* ... before Satan can exercise his power upon us ... Every sinful desire we *cherish* affords him a foothold" (DA 125, emphasis added). Jesus simply said that Satan had no "foothold" in Him. Again, here is where the false Immaculate Conception doctrine logically yields to Satan the victory in the great controversy.

Here is an inspired comment on this text of Scripture and a clear explanation of this question:

Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to *yield* to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts [ours, obviously] some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is *cherished*, by means of which his temptations *assert their power*. But Christ declared of Himself: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30). Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and *there was no sin in Him* that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble (GC 623, emphasis added).

Note the point: for Satan to "have nothing in Me" means "there was no *sin* in Him that Satan could use to his advantage," and sin is *yielding* to temptation, *cherishing* sinful desire. We must remember that a sinful nature is not the same as a *sinning* nature. Ours has been a *sinning* nature, true; but not Christ's. And while we are still in sinful flesh, still with a sinful nature, we too can overcome, for "this is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble." The only alternative to this *Great Controversy* statement (p. 623) is "holy flesh" either for the saints in the time of trouble or for Christ in His incarnation, neither of which can be true.

Christ gained total victory over the power of sin which has its seat in the flesh. His mind was the mind of the Spirit and never yielded or consented to the desires of the flesh. Thus Satan "had nothing" in Him. Says Peter, "Arm yourselves also with the same mind" (1 Peter 4:1).

12. But if Christ was tempted as we are, does that mean that He would have what Dr. William Johnsson implies, "a corrupted nature that hankered after sin, that preferred the darkness to the light, and to which the devil could appeal with his enticements" (op. cit, p. 104)?

The 1888 messengers were "exceedingly careful" in their use of language about the humanity of Christ. They preferred not to say that He "had" a sinful nature, but consistently said that He "took" or "assumed" our sinful nature. To have "a corrupted nature that hankered after sin, that preferred the darkness to the light" would of course be sin itself. To "prefer" or to "hanker after" it is to *choose sin*, which Christ never chose. To attribute this distortion to the 1888 view is not only incorrect but unfair.

13. If Christ "took" our sinful nature or flesh, would that mean that He also had our sinful mind?

No, for His mind was totally sinless. Paul urges us, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Then he lists seven steps in condescension that Christ took in our behalf, extending to "even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). Such a "mind" was pure and sinless. Paul sharply contrasts the "mind" and the "flesh" in Romans 7:23 and Ephesians 2:1-3. Christ's flesh was our flesh; His mind was His, totally guided and filled by the Holy Spirit. To confuse Christ's mind with His flesh is to betray a basic misconception of New Testament teaching about Christ's righteousness as well as the nature of sin.

14. If Christ truly took our nature, would not His righteousness have been frustrated by that sinful nature?

The answer can be found in Romans 8:3, 4 where Paul declares that "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." The "might" is the subjunctive mood of the verb, indicating that the righteousness *can* be "fulfilled in us," opposed by the flesh indeed, but not frustrated.

What kind of nature will God's people have in which that righteousness is "fulfilled"? Sinful, for the sinful nature will not be eradicated until glorification at the return of Jesus. Nevertheless, the righteousness will be fulfilled in them. "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness ..." (Titus 2:11, NIV). Surely the "mind" can say "No!" to the "flesh" through the exercise of "the faith of Jesus." To take the position that sinful flesh must succeed in "frustrating" a sinless mind is the essence of antinomianism (anti-lawism), the source of the world's crime and immorality, and yields the victory in the great controversy to Satan.

15. If Christ took our nature, did the cross save Him? Did He have the experience of Romans 7:14-24?

Christ did not have the "experience" of Romans 7 for He never did that which He would not, nor what He hated did He do. He never sinned. But He would have sinned if He had taken Peter's advice and evaded His cross (Matthew 16:22). Here is the sublime truth of the incarnation of our Saviour: in order to "condemn sin in the flesh," He needed the cross. And so do we! The cross was not His "saviour," but He needed the cross in order to become our Saviour, and thus to "be made sin ... for us."

16. If the 1888 view is correct, would Christ Himself need a Saviour? Would not His sacrifice have been imperfect, polluted?

On the contrary, His sacrifice could have been perfect only if He had identified Himself fully with us by taking our fallen, sinful nature. A messiah "exempt" from our inheritance or from the identical conflict we have with temptation would have been a useless sacrifice because he could not have made full satisfaction for our sin. Heaven would never be secure against a recurrence of sin unless the Saviour's victory were won by triumphing completely over our sinful nature with all its liabilities "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Any "exemption" through genetic advantage would raise the cry "unfair" and create an unsuppressible conviction that sin is justified in all the fallen sons and daughters of Adam. This would automatically negate Christ's sacrifice and reduce it to the level of Roman Catholicism, and in the end completely satisfy Satan. It would be the "broken link" in God's great chain let down to save the world.

17. Would it not be impossible for Christ to take sinful human nature after 4000 years and "bypass the universal infection of sin" that has polluted everybody else (cf. Dr. Roy Adams, *The Nature of Christ*, p. 38)?

"They shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:23). God is *agape*. And whenever *agape* comes in conflict with sin, a cross is erected. The cross is the answer to this question. Yes, by His identity as *agape* in human flesh and His sanctified human will, He "bypassed this universal infection of sin." He *chose* not to be infected.

18. Did Christ in His incarnation have to "keep under" His "body" like Paul said he had to do (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27)?

This is an important question. Paul learned from Christ how to "keep under his body," for he says, "I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). Of course, Jesus kept under His body! "I do not seek My own will," He said. This is the very essence of His being sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3, KJV). Christ is our perfect Example in self-control, temperance, purity, physical fitness, and unselfish love.

19. But does not this imply that He was under a life-long "tension"? That He had to repress sinful tendencies?

In response, we ask a reverent question: was Jesus under "tension" in the Garden of Gethsemane? Was His desperate prayer, "If it be possible let this cup pass from Me?" a mere actor's role?

If He was under "tension" in Gethsemane and as He hung on the cross, could He not have been under a holy tension during His entire lifetime when He said, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:30)? The verb is *zeto* which is the present indicative, meaning, "I continually do not seek My own will, but..." If we say that that was not "tension," but that it was easy, how can we explain His sweating of blood in Gethsemane, His "strong crying and tears" (Hebrews 5:9)? He sweat blood in His struggle to surrender His own will, to let the "I" be crucified.

We ourselves do indeed have a never-ending "tension" to surrender self to the constant convictions of the Holy Spirit, to bear our cross. Christ never resisted the Holy Spirit as we have done, but surely He knew the full force of our temptation to resist. And not only did He know our never-ending "tension" or struggle, He also knew a never-ending victory over the temptation to indulge the "as-I-will" as opposed to His Father's will. In his sinless state Adam knew no such inner tension, but Christ assures us that He did have such a holy conflict "even unto blood."

Again let it be emphasized that "tension" is not sin; temptation is not sin; wrestling with temptation to indulge self is not sin. A consciousness of self is not sin. The possession of a self that is opposed to the Father's will is not sin. *Yielding to self is sin.* And that, Christ never did.

This is the crux of the problem—seeing Christ as He truly is apart from the clouds of confusion thrown up by the Antichrist of 1 John 4. This is no mere tempest in a theological teapot. It has a direct bearing on the spiritual and moral health of the church. Our teens desperately need a Saviour who is "nigh at hand and not afar off." And so do we all!

20. Is this not a new idea—that Christ knew such an inner struggle? Is it not the usual idea that Christ's personal righteousness was innate and not by faith, that His temptations were external? Are you sure that He experienced a battle with "I" or "self like we have?"

It's impossible for us to "look unto Jesus" meaningfully unless we understand this. Without exception all our temptations to personal sin involve that "I" or "self." Here is the sinner battling with a terrible temptation to indulge self. If you remove the Saviour from that identity with his temptations, you set Him "afar off," and the sinner is left only with a vague sense that Jesus was tempted in ways far different from his temptations. You throw a

smoke screen between him and his Saviour. However he may be told that Christ's temptations were "greater" or "more intense" than his in a totally different realm, if he is robbed of the conviction that He was tempted "in all points like as" *he* is, he will inevitably fail of the succor Christ wants to give him. Tell the gambler, the cocaine addict, the alcoholic, the adulterer, the embezzler, that Christ was not tempted as he is but that He was instead tempted in totally irrelevant ways like turning stones to bread, jumping off pinnacles without a bungee, etc.,—how can the embattled sinner relate?

Again, the fundamental problem is the lurking idea that temptation is automatically sin. It is assumed that because Adam did not have an inner conflict, then no conflict existed in the nature of Christ. But the nature which He took or assumed was a nature that required painful self-denial— something unknown to the sinless Adam. Jesus chose to say "No!" to what self naturally wanted, and to say "Yes" to the Father's will. Of course, we can call that choice His "will" because He willed to make the choice; but it involved the complete denial of "I" or "self." The Greek word *thelema* used in Ephesians 2:3 of "the desires of the flesh" is the same as that "will of My own" that Jesus says He denied (John 5:30; 6:38). Indeed, Jesus was "unlike us" in this respect—we have "fulfilled" those "desires of the flesh." He denied them. The real issue boils down to one simple question: was that self-denial easy for Him, or did it involve a continual cross that led Him at last to that lonely hill called Calvary?

Once that question is answered, every sinner in the world can "look unto Jesus" meaningfully. He can see his own cross looming up before him whereon self or "I" can be "crucified with Christ." Christ's identity with us (the objective gospel) becomes our identity with Him (the subjective gospel). The sinner can overcome because now he sees how Christ "overcame." And that, we insist, is not a ludicrous, contemptible "perfectionism," a strawman, as it is sometimes portrayed. (Incidentally, for Laodicea to "overcome even as [Christ] overcame" does not involve the eradication of the sinful nature, but overcoming within fallen, sinful nature).

21. David says that he was "shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5, KJV). Was there anything in the words of Jesus that parallels this cry?

If one understands that all human acts are inherently sinful apart from redemption, David is giving voice to the realization of the compulsion that self-seeking imposes on us all. The virgin Mary was a sinner, for she said "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:47), but the angel said "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). It was a holy, not a sinful conception. But Jesus inherited from Mary the same kind of flesh or nature that she had. There was no cutoff or "exemption" that removed Him from her genetic inheritance.

There is something in the words of Jesus that parallels this cry of David's but does not compromise His total sinlessness. Remember, "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6) and He was "made to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). In two Messianic psalms Christ speaks of the reality of His identification with us. He had no sin of His own, but He took ours, and was made to be sin for us:

Then I said, Behold, I come; in the scroll of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God, and Your law is within My heart... Innumerable evils have surrounded Me; My iniquities have overtaken Me, so that I am not able to look up; they are

more than the hairs of My head; therefore My heart fails Me (Psalm 40:7-12; cf. vs. 9 and John 2:17, etc.).

Those who hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of My head; they are mighty who would destroy Me, being My enemies wrongfully;... O God, You know My foolishness; and My "sins" are not hid from You (Psalm 69:4, 5; cf. vs. 9 and John 2:17, etc.).

There is no contradiction here. "We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ." Peter says that He bore our sins "in His own body" (1 Peter 2:24). He must have felt the guilt of our sin as though it were His own. Thus He was "made to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). His identification with us was complete. He truly took the sinner's place. Ellen White speaks further of this complete identification with us:

After Christ had taken the necessary steps in *repentance*, conversion, and faith *in behalf of the human race*, He went to John to be baptized of him in Jordan (GCB, 1901, p. *Id*, *emphasis added*).

Christ came not confessing His own sins; but guilt was imputed to Him as the sinner's substitute. He came not to repent on His own account; but *in behalf of the sinner*.... He takes upon Him their sins, numbering Himself with the transgressors, taking the steps the sinner is required to take; and doing the work the sinner must do (R&H, January 21, 1873, *emphasis added*).

He [Christ] had taken the steps which every sinner must take, in conversion, *repentance*, and baptism. He Himself had no sins of which to repent, and therefore He had no sins to wash away. But He was our example, in all things, and therefore He must do that which He would have us do (IHP p. 252, *emphasis added*).

These inspired comments on the humanity of Christ throw much light on otherwise inexplicable statements in the Messianic psalms. And they are in perfect harmony with "all Scripture." They elucidate the inspired name of "Immanuel,... God with us."

22. What kind of death did Jesus die on His cross? How does that relate to the real purpose of His becoming one with us?

In past decades we as a denomination have not emphasized the reality of Christ's death on the cross as being the second death. But recently, this idea has begun to find recognition. It was clearly recognized in the *Sabbath School Quarterly* for the Fourth Quarter 1994, and in Dwight Nelson's *The Godforsaken God* (1993). It is also presented in this author's *Grace on Trial* (1988, pp. 39-41), and *"Lightened With His Glory"* (1991; pp. 17, 18, etc.). This truth packs a powerful charge of spiritual dynamite.

In becoming man and dying our death, Christ won the right to become the new Head of the human race. He is now the "last Adam," having replaced the former head of our race who fell into sin. Had Christ not taken our fallen nature and "become sin for us who knew no sin," He could not have died, for the only "wages of sin" is "death" (the second). Christ became corporately united with us in order that we might by faith become corporately united to Him. He partook of our sinful nature that we might become "partakers" of His

divine nature. Thus He was entitled to "taste death for every man," even the second death (Hebrews 2:9, KJV).

Since the world began, how many people have truly died? Only One! All the rest have gone to "sleep," according to Scripture (John 11:11-13).

If Christ had sidestepped taking our sinful nature, He could not have earned the right to be the second Adam and die "every man's" second death, nor could He have become our Substitute had He not assumed our corporate nature; *no "Adam" can stand at the head of the human race unless He corporately shares "the flesh and blood" of that race.* The first Adam in his sinless state stood at the head of the unfallen human race; now the second Adam must stand at the Head of the only human race there is at the present time—a fallen human race.

Hence He must become "Immanuel, God with us" not God with the sinless Adam. Here is where the problem is, and here the Son of God must come in order to solve it, all the way to where we are. He can redeem only that which He assumed.

If God has called the Seventh-day Adventist Church to proclaim "the everlasting gospel" to "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" in this time of the cleansing of the sanctuary, this truth of the cross must find central place in our message. Our Evangelical friends are hungry to understand it. We must no longer deprive them of the blessing they deserve. This is "the beginning" of that light which must yet lighten the earth with glory, the fourth angel's message. "Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost" in proclaiming that larger truth of the cross. Our spiritual impotence in the face of the world's desperate need is due to our failure to behold Christ as He truly is, and to present Him thus to the hungry multitudes. There is grave danger that the false christ of Babylon can confuse us and deflect us from our true mission.

Those who believe in the natural immortality of the human soul cannot appreciate the dimensions of the love that led Christ to His cross; they cannot comprehend the reality of the second death which He died.

Here is the truth that will make the Sabbath truth come alive, the truth that will penetrate to the inner consciousness of that vast host of honest people in "Babylon" who will someday soon hear that "voice" from heaven saying with authority and power, "Come out of her, My people" (Revelation 18:4).

23. Here is the question of questions: How could Christ be sinless as a Baby before He came to the age of accountability? Why was He "different" from "other children"? Why for example did He never have temper tantrums as other children have? Does this not indicate that He took on Himself the sinless nature of Adam before the Fall?

Several factors may be worth looking at:

Not all babies have temper tantrums, or exhibit perversity and rebellion. "Before he is old enough to reason, he [the child] may be taught to obey" (CG p. 82). Our "children have sensitive, loving natures.... Brought up under the wise and loving guidance of a true home, children will have no desire to wander away in search of pleasure and companionship. Evil will not attract them. The spirit that prevails in the home will mold their characters" (MH 388, 394). If these things are true of our children, could they not also be true of Jesus? "Even the babe in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother" (DA 515). John the Baptist was an example of a

baby who was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). Yet we recognize that such babies as here described are not born with a sinless nature!

The real problem here is the question of "original sin." The phrase does not appear in the Bible, nor in Ellen White's writings as a theological term. Paul's discussion in Romans 5 makes clear that the evil brought upon the race by Adam has been canceled by Christ. Verse 12 for example says clearly: "As by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men—well, all sinned." The Greek *eph ho* is significantly used— Paul is almost on the verge of articulating the Augustinian "original sin" theory, affirming that because death has passed upon all men it must stem from "original sin" genetically inherited from Adam, but he catches himself and using the *eph ho*, adds, "well, the fact is, all sinned."

Then he goes on to say most clearly that not only as Adam's transgression brought a curse did Christ bring a blessing, but He did so "much more." "As by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation [wouldn't this be "original sin"?]; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (verse 18, KJ V). For "all men" Christ has canceled out the guilt of "original sin." We have no reason to adopt the Catholic theory.

We are born with a sinful nature, however, which means that we are born in a state of natural separation from God—alienation from Him. If that terrible gulf of separation is not bridged by divine love expressed through "the praying mother" (and father), the child's natural alienation from God will result in its becoming perverse in disposition, expressing temper tantrums, etc. Actually, it is "the faith of the praying mother" that enables her babe to "dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty."

24. In what way then was Christ different from us as a baby?

Christ was indeed different from us in that "God is *agape*," says 1 John 4:8. He Himself exercised faith. Since Christ was *agape* in human flesh, He was always divine as well as human. Thus He was different from us, who are born without *agape*, and are only human, not divine. But that is just the point of the teaching of the nature of Christ that Jones and Waggoner, with Ellen White's endorsement, so earnestly proclaimed: Christ was like us in all respects, "yet without sin;" and what He exercised that we have not exercised, was faith. He had perfect faith because He was *agape*, so that "not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity." His righteousness was not innate, natural-born, automatic, advantageous over us; it was by faith. (Faith and *agape* are frequently tied together in Paul's epistles; see Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:3, etc.) As Son of God He brings to us a tremendous advantage!

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the innocent childhood of Jesus as a time when He knew "to refuse the evil, and choose the good" (Isaiah 7:14-16). The prophet is speaking metaphorically of the excellent prenatal and postnatal care that Mary and Joseph gave the holy Child. Given such care, we are told that even our "children will have no desire to wander away in search of pleasure and companionship. Evil will not attract them" (MH 388, 394). Certainly Isaiah is speaking of our Saviour's character in the emphasis he gives to His "refusing" evil and "choosing" good. Such righteousness through the exercise of His will by choice meant that "Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character" (DA 762).

25. Can a baby have faith?

If John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb and, says Elizabeth, leaped "in my womb for joy" at the sound of Mary's greeting (Luke 1:44), the answer must be "yes." "The fruit of the spirit is ... faith" (Galatians 5:22). But please note: the "faith" a sinless infant could have must of course be infantile; but at the same time the "temptations" an infant would have under the care of a loving, praying mother would also be infantile.

We must not neglect the effect of proper prenatal influence. We need to give more attention and respect to the virgin mother of our Lord. She had a marvelous faith. She gave to the Baby Jesus the finest care any human mother could have given. And His stepfather Joseph deserves our respect. He tenderly cared for the pregnant Mary and shielded her from the terrible influence that a lonely, shameful pregnancy without a husband would have brought.

If before the birth of her child she [the mother] is self-indulgent, if she is selfish, impatient, and exacting, these traits will be reflected in the disposition of the child. Thus [environmentally, not genetically] many children have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil (MH 372, 374).

Thank God for the adverb "almost"! Though Christ was not abused as a fetus or as an infant and thus did not have our "evil propensities" or "passions," He came in the genetic stream of fallen humanity, and grew up to humble Himself to take the full burden of our sins and to feel the effect of our abuse. He was "made to be sin for us." He knows the strength of our "almost unconquerable tendencies to evil." And thus he is able to "save perfectly those that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25).

26. If Christ took upon Himself our sinful nature, would there not be "indwelling sin" in Him, which was not in the sinless Adam?

No, for "indwelling sin" is already sin. "Indwelling sin" is a habit pattern that has been planted among the brain cells by the sinner's choice. It causes us to "do that which I allow not.... What I hate, I do.... Now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:15-18, KJV). "Indwelling sin" makes us captive to sin, so "how to perform that which is good I find not" (verse 18). If my problem is "indwelling sin," then "the evil which I would not, that I do" (verse 19). This is the problem of our "evil propensities." Christ never "did evil" or did what He "hated," or could "will to do good" but not know how "to perform" it (Romans 7:18). To assert such of Christ would be blasphemy.

27. Was the fallen nature that Christ "took" limited to the innocent physical effects of the Fall, such as weariness, hunger, thirst, fatigue, etc.?

Surely He physically took upon Himself those innocent consequences of the Fall. But He makes clear that He also "took" upon Himself the inner spiritual battle that we have with temptations—He had to battle with the urge to gratify self. "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:30; that necessity for constant denial of self was what Ellen White says Christ took upon Himself—the "decreasing ... in moral worth" (DA 117). Please note: the necessity for Christ to deny self did not mean that He was selfish; His perfect self-denial meant the opposite. In fact, there can be no such thing as unselfishness

without a denial of self. And for Christ, that was as painful as it is for us, more so in the light of the agony of His cross.

Section 2

Is Ellen White Clear On the Nature of Christ?

1. Did Ellen White oppose or contradict the teaching of the 1888 message on this subject?

With few exceptions, the bulk of her statements on the humanity of Christ were made after the 1888 Conference, and it is these that some think are contradictory. If we use Bible or Ellen White statements out of their context, we are certain to end up in confusion. And her true context is the message of Jones and Waggoner as presented at the 1888 Session and in *Signs* editorials afterwards, in Waggoner's *Christ and His Righteousness* (1890), and in Jones's sermons in the 1893 and 1895 *General Conference Bulletins*. Their message, its impact on the church, and the influence of some leaders' rejection of it, must be borne in mind. The facts indicate that she never opposed or contradicted their views on the nature of Christ, although she helped them to clarify them.

For example: before the Minneapolis Conference, Waggoner in 1888 had printed his *The Gospel in Galatians* as a response to Butler's *The Law in Galatians*. The fact that Waggoner's view aroused consternation even before 1888 is evident:

These texts (Galatians 4:4; Romans 8:3; Philippians 2:5-7; Hebrews 2:9) show that Christ took upon Himself man's nature, and that as a consequence He was subject to death, he came into the world on purpose to die; and so from the beginning of His earthly life He was in the same condition that the men are in whom He died to save... (Romans 1:3)...What was the nature of David, "according to the flesh"? Sinful, was it not? ... Don't start in horrified astonishment; I am not implying that Christ was a sinner.

His being made in all things like unto His brethren, is the same as His being made in the likeness of sinful flesh, "made in the likeness of men" [Waggoner is equating the use of "likeness" in Romans 8:3 with Paul's use of the same syntax in Philippians 2:5]. One of the most encouraging things in the Bible is the knowledge that Christ took on Him the nature of man; to know that His ancestors according to the flesh were sinners. When we read the record of the lives of the ancestors of Christ, and see that they had all the weaknesses and passions that we have, we find that no man has any right to excuse his sinful acts on the ground of heredity. If Christ had not been made *in all things* like unto His brethren, then His sinless life would be no encouragement to us. We might look at it with admiration, but it would be the admiration that would cause hopeless despair [*The Gospel in Galatians*, p. 61, emphasis original].

You are shocked at the idea that Jesus was born under the condemnation of the law, because He never committed a sin in His life. But you admit that on the cross He was under the condemnation of the law... Well, then, if Jesus could be under the condemnation of the law at one time in His life, and be sinless, I see no reason why He could not be under the condemnation of the law at another time, and still be sinless (*ibid.*, p. 62).

2. Is there evidence that this teaching was presented at the Minneapolis Conference itself?

From Waggoner's widow's recollections of the 1888 Conference, L. E. Froom informs us that she took his studies down in shorthand and transcribed them as *Signs* editorials in the weeks immediately after the 1888 Session ended (MD, p. 200). There is no reason to doubt her testimony, for she was an eyewitness and was involved. The following statements appeared in a *Signs* editorial by "E. J. W." on January 21, 1889. He could hardly have unpacked his suitcases after attending the Minneapolis Session before writing:

A little thought will be sufficient to show anybody that if Christ took upon Himself the likeness of man, ... it must have been sinful man that He was made like, for it is only sin that causes death.... Christ took upon Himself the flesh, not of a sinless being, but of sinful man, that is, that the flesh which He assumed had all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies to which fallen human nature is subject to.... Sinless, yet not only counted as a sinner, but actually taking upon Himself sinful nature.... Himself voluntarily descended to the level of sinful man.... There was in His whole life a struggle. The flesh, moved upon by the enemy of all righteousness, would tend to sin, yet His Divine nature never for a moment harboured an evil desire, nor did His Divine power for a moment waver.

Indeed, this view must have been "shocking" to G. I. Butler. He telegraphed the delegates at Minneapolis to "stand by the old landmarks" and thus reject Waggoner's message, for this as well as for other reasons.

3. Did Ellen White specifically support the teaching of Jones and Waggoner on the nature of Christ?

Her statement published in the *Review and Herald* of February 18, 1890 supplies evidence. Some had written her complaining of what Jones and Waggoner were teaching; she rejected their complaints:

Letters have been coming in to me affirming that Christ could not have had the same nature as man, for, if He had, he would have fallen under similar temptations [the Roman Catholic view!]. If He did not have man's 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 were 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 (1SM 408).

Let us analyze this statement:

(a) The timing is very soon after the initial publication of Waggoner's views of the nature of Christ in his *Christ and His Righteousness*, and *Signs* articles.

(b) The "letters" she referred to were on the wrong side.

(c) She did not take a neutral stand but took the opportunity in the *Review* to uphold his view. Her statement is not merely a general endorsement of justification by faith as the Protestant world and the 16th Century Reformers taught it; it is emphatically an endorsement of this unique feature of Waggoner's message—Christ took the sinful nature of man *after* the Fall. Had she wished to fault Jones's and Waggoner's view of the nature of

Christ, this was her excellent opportunity to do so. Not a word is evident of such a desire, only the opposite.

(d) In fact, she goes a step further than Waggoner at that time. He apparently took the initial, immature view that it was impossible for Christ to have sinned—at least his faulty expressions seem to convey that idea in his early *Signs* editorials. Thus she implies that Waggoner in 1889 did not express fully the extent and reality of Christ taking man's fallen nature. (By the time Waggoner edited his *Signs* editorials for publication as *Christ and His Righteousness* [October 15, 1890], he had harmonized his view with Ellen White's position).

We must ask ourselves the question: Would Ellen White endorse Waggoner's view of the nature of Christ in 1889 and 1890 and then contradict it in later years or even express grave misgivings about it?

4. Were her endorsements of the Jones and Waggoner message only selective and partial?

As some view her so-called contradictory statements, they know of no other conclusion possible than to surmise that when she endorsed their message she meant to exclude specifically their views of the nature of Christ. But that is logically impossible:

(a) She was extremely aware of the danger of false concepts, and of the proximity of error to truth, drawing very sharp lines between the two. According to the tenor of her writings of many decades, if she meant to endorse a portion of Jones's and Waggoner's message and not the whole, she would have made the distinction exceedingly clear, and done so numerous times. Her ability to emphasize a thought through repetition is *very* well known, even painfully so.

(b) Waggoner's 1887, 1889, and 1890 statements on the nature of Christ were so radical or "shocking" that they would surely have elicited her very prompt and decisive disavowals if she had entertained even the slightest opposition to them.

(c) Although her more than 200 endorsements of Jones's and Waggoner's message show sympathy for them as hard-pressed messengers, she would never for a moment gloss over defects in their message if she disagreed with it. Her letter of correction to Jones dated April 9, 1893, is an example. If one *suggests* that she would not have written earlier letters objecting to their teaching for fear she might discourage zealous young workers, it is necessary only to remind ourselves that she knew very well how to write to hard-pressed workers rebuking them when necessary and yet give plenty of encouragement. Letters to Dr. Kellogg are an example. Further, her 1887 letter cautioning young Jones and Waggoner is evidence that she was not above correcting *them very decidedly* when the occasion demanded. But not one letter expresses disapproval of their Christology.

(d) Their view on the nature of Christ was an integral part of their "message of Christ's righteousness." Delete this, and the very heart of their appeal for Christlike character disappears:

(1) The concept of "Christ's righteousness" becomes a meaningless abstraction if separated from their emphasis on His sinless living in the likeness of sinful flesh. Such a concept they labeled a "sham."

(2) The tie-in of "Christ's righteousness" with the cleansing of the sanctuary would also have to disappear, for their view of the cleansing of the sanctuary involved the full practical realization in His last days' people of the atonement wrought out by the world's Redeemer in His life and death and resurrection.

(3) Their insistence (and Ellen White's) that righteousness by faith is the "third angel's message in verity" would have to be abandoned, for "the faith of Jesus" that the third angel calls for would cease to exist if Christ took a sinless nature with only the sinless infirmities of our weakened physical organism. Adam did not have faith nor did he need it in his sinless state.

(e) In an effort to show that Ellen White did not give them "a blank check in theological matters," one writer cites three of her statements: their position was not "perfect" in 1886; "some things presented in reference to the law in Galatians ... do not harmonize with the understanding I have had of this subject," and "some interpretations of Scripture given by Dr. Waggoner I do not regard as correct" (Ms. 15,1888). This sounds like we have a "blank check" for disregarding anything of their message we may not like. But the contextual evidence gives quite a different impression. As to whether or not they were ever "perfect" is irrelevant to the issues—nobody is "perfect" except God, according to Ellen White. But the two November 1,1888 statements cited above are followed by a categorical one uttered five minutes later: "That which has been presented harmonizes perfectly with the light which God has been pleased to give me during all the years of my experience" (*idem*). Did she contradict herself? No. In her personal, finite understanding she confessed the need for more study. Our author omitted her key statement, "if I fully understand his position" (cf. George Knight, *Angry Saints*, pp. 43, 44). Later she did understand, and she endorsed it fully.

To my knowledge, no serious-minded Adventist has ever accorded to Jones and Waggoner the status of infallibility. All we need is common sense and reason. Ellen White is clear: the Lord "sent" them with "a most precious message," and we need to give it a fair hearing. To reject their message is to reject Christ (*1888 Materials*, p. 1353).

5. Were Jones and Waggoner in harmony with themselves?

Ellen White deeply appreciated their perfect harmony between themselves. Repeatedly we discover that each came to the same conclusions independently. In her many endorsements of their message, she linked their names together as a unit. For example: "God is presenting to the minds of *men* divinely appointed precious gems of truth, appropriate for our time" (*1888 Materials*, p. 139; 1888). "I have deep sorrow of heart because I have seen how readily a word or action of Elder Jones or Elder Waggoner is criticized. How readily many minds overlook all the good that has been done by *them* in the few years past, and see no evidence that God is working through *these* instrumentalities" (p. 1026; 1892).

6. What does the following mean: "[Christ] is a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions. As the sinless One, His nature recoiled from evil" (2T 202)?

If we say that Christ took the sinless nature of Adam before the Fall, this statement would be meaningless, for Adam in his sinless state surely did not recoil from evil.

Does it imply that Christ was not truly tempted by sin? We dare not interpret it so, lest we deny Scripture. I find quinine an extremely bitter medicine to take—I used to take it when I had malaria in Africa. Truly, my "nature recoiled" from drinking quinine, and I would actually shudder physically when I had to take it. Would it make sense to say that I had to resist the temptation to drink quinine? When hot and thirsty I might have to resist a temptation to drink a cold cola, but I never had to resist an impulse to drink quinine!

I believe drinking cola is harmful. Suppose I am trying to help a cola addict to stop using it, so I say: "Friend, look at me—I have the strength to resist a temptation to drink quinine, in fact 'my nature recoils from' drinking it; now you must give up your cola drinks." Would such "encouragement" be relevant to him?

Was our temptation "quinine" to Christ's human nature? If so, it was no struggle for Him, no temptation. I have never had to plead with the Lord to give me strength to resist an impulse to take a glass of quinine! But Christ pleaded for "this cup" to be taken from Him. To interpret the above statement thus would be to deny the reality of Christ's temptability and destroy the completeness of His identity with us in temptation. No one is "powerfully influenced" to drink bitter quinine, yet we read that Christ was "powerfully influenced to do a wrong action.... This was the ordeal through which Christ passed." Otherwise temptation is no temptation for Him or for us (cf. 5BC 1082).

But the above statement harmonizes perfectly with all that Ellen White has written if it is understood as saying that Christ perfectly *resisted* every temptation. He did not "possess like passions" because he did not "for one moment" *yield* to the temptations that produce "passions." The temptation being perfectly resisted, no "passion" ever had a chance to develop. The next sentence adds that this perfect resistance to temptation was so constant that it was a "recoiling from evil" as prompt as when a spring stretched out of shape "recoils" to its original shape. There was in Him *no response* to temptation, even momentary, involuntary, or unconscious. Thus it was His "nature" to "recoil from evil." The word "nature" in this passage refers to character, not to innate genetic inheritance. But we dare not say that for Him to "recoil from evil" did not involve a painful struggle with temptation "even unto blood" (Hebrews 12:4, KJV). Bearing His cross was never easy.

Here is an example of Ellen White's use of the word "passion":

One little girl was partaking of her boiled ham, and spiced pickles, and bread and butter, when she espied a plate I was eating from. Here was something she did not have, and she refused to eat. The girl of six years said she would have a plate. I thought it was the nice red apple I was eating she desired; and although we had a limited amount, I felt such pity for the parents, that I gave her a fine apple. She snatched it from my hand, and disdainfully threw it quickly to the car floor. I thought, this child, if permitted to thus have her own way, will indeed bring her mother to shame. This exhibition of passion was the result of the mother's course of indulgence (CD 240).

Of course, Christ never exhibited any such exhibition of passion. He never "hankered after sin" or "preferred the darkness to the light" as some suggest the 1888 view asserts of our Lord (cf. William Johnsson, *op. cit.*, p. 104).

7. As "the second Adam, in purity and holiness connected with God and beloved by God, [Christ] began where the first Adam began," and willingly passing "over the ground where Adam fell [He] redeemed Adam's failure" (cf. YI, June 2, 1898). What does this mean?

Let us ask: Did Christ redeem *only* Adam's failure? Did he *end His* atonement where He *began* it—by passing over the ground where Adam fell? If so, while His righteousness may prove that there was no justification for Adam's sin, it justifies *our* sins. (This idea is

undoubtedly responsible for the continuing lukewarmness of the church). Ellen White does not take that position.

The problem that God has to deal with is "indwelling sin" in His people *today*, not Adam's condition in the Garden of Eden. The remnant church is "lukewarm." It worships every Sabbath; but Laodicea is forced to confess, "That which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good [Laodicea has long "consented" that the law is good!]. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.... For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:15-18, KJV).

The sinless Adam had no such problem. Merely for Christ to redeem Adam's failure and stop with such a victory would mean that the church is doomed to perpetual lukewarmness, and the problem of sin that *dwells within* and compels us to sin can never be solved. Hence the incarnate Christ must "condemn sin *in the flesh*," "abolish *in His flesh* the enmity" (Romans 8:3; Ephesians 2:15), which the sinless Adam never had to do.

8. Does this mean that "Christ was born with indwelling sin"?

Certainly not. Here is where "truth lies close to the track of presumption" (Letter 8, 1895; 5BC 1128). Never did He sin, or "do that which He allowed not," or helplessly "find not how to perform that which is good" (cf. Romans 7:15-18, KJV). In Paul's inspired phraseology, all these frustrations are the evidence of "sin that *dwelleth* in me." His expression is the exact equivalent of Waggoner's expression "harbored." A ship that "harbors" in a port "dwells" there. With us, as fallen sinners we are the "port" that has "harbored" sin and permitted it to "dwell" in us. Thus the corruption "rests" there, to borrow Ellen White's verb. In contrast, Christ "condemned sin *in the flesh*." He did not permit His "flesh" to be the port to "harbor" an evil desire or act, nor did He permit a taint of sin to "rest" upon Him or "dwell" within Him (*Christ and His Righteousness*, p. 29).

9. But does Ellen White ever specifically attribute to Christ the need to resist an "inclination" that was a powerful incentive toward sin?

Yes, she does, specifically:

Christ was put to the closest test, requiring the strength of all His faculties to resist the inclination when in danger, to use His power to deliver Himself from peril, and triumph over the power of the prince of darkness (7BC 930).

(a) If Christ had yielded to this "inclination," the yielding would have been sin. The problem He faced was clearly "danger." The "inclination" He wrestled with was to *escape* danger. If He had yielded, He would have refused the cross, just what Satan wanted Him to do. And if Christ had refused the cross, it would have been a denial of His Father's will and therefore sin for Him. Paul says, "Consider him who endured.... You have not yet resisted to bloodshed [as He did], striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:3, 4). If Christ had wiped the bloody sweat from His brow and come down from His cross, Ellen White indicates He would have sinned:

Could one sin have been found in Christ, had He in one particular yielded to Satan to escape the terrible torture, the enemy of God and man would have triumphed (DA 761).

Christ claimed to be sinless because "I always do those things that please" "the Father" (John 8:46, 29). "Christ did not please *Himself*" and it was in His denying His own will and seeking instead His Father's will that He "overcame" (cf. Romans 15:3; John 5:30 and 6:38; and Revelation 3:21).

(b) Therefore, had He refused the cross He could not have said, "I have kept My Father's commandments." Going to the cross was (we speak reverently) "not as I will, but as You will" (cf. John 15:10; Matthew 26:39). If "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10), a cross-less Christ would have transgressed the law, for refusing the cross would not have been love. "Had He failed in His test and trial, He would have been disobedient to the voice of God, and the world would have been lost" (5BC 1082, 1083).

(c) The "inclination" Christ resisted was terribly strong, for it required "the strength of all His faculties to resist" it. Here was an *inward* "inclination" to resist. His human soul was aghast at the contemplation of the horror of the cross: "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." So overwhelmingly strong was the "inclination" that He was "in agony ... and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). As we know the inward hunger for sinful indulgence, the terrible compulsion of illicit desire, so Christ knew the inward hunger of soul for release from that cross. In reality, all our inward "inclinations" to sin are a compulsion to evade the cross. (Surrender of self to the cross *with Christ* will take care of every one of them!)

(d) Let us remember that the Bible is also "the Spirit of Prophecy." Ellen White's writings are the "lesser light" to guide us to the "greater light." And the words of Jesus Himself in the Bible surely must be the prime witness. His words in John 5:30 and 6:38 can't make sense except that He constantly chose to resist His inward "inclination" to "seek" His own will: "I do not seek My own will." "I have come down from heaven [I became incarnate that I might demonstrate how] not to do My own will."

10. If Christ took upon Himself the temptation to resist our "inclination" to do evil, would He need a Saviour Himself? Would His "corruption" need to put on "incorruption"?

Of course not, for there was no corruption of character there. The confusion in many people's minds is due to preconceived ideas of Platonic Augustinian original sin that are not sustained in Scripture. An "inclination" to sin resisted and "condemned in the flesh" is not sin. We must not permit Roman Catholic error to lessen the full impact of the gospel. It was *in the flesh* that Christ "condemned sin," and the condemning of it was complete and total. He would have needed a Saviour only if He had failed to condemn sin in the flesh. Ellen White also says specifically that Christ was "mortal" (DA 484; 5BC 1127). Had He not been resurrected, He would have "seen corruption" (Psalm 16:10; Acts 13:35).

11. Why did Ellen White say that Christ "was a mighty petitioner, not possessing the passions of our human, fallen natures, but compassed with like infirmities, tempted in all points like as we are" (cf. 2T 509)?

"Passions" are identical to the "evil propensities to sin" that Christ did not have "for one moment." A "passion" in this context is a compulsive *surrender* to evil. However, her use of a pivotal "but" indicates how she wished to preserve the truth that Christ was *tempted on* the point of "passions." She says, "His mind, like yours, could be harassed and perplexed.... His enemies could annoy Him.... Jesus was exposed to conflict and temptation,

as a man" (OHC 57). Jesus knew the emotion of anger, for He was often righteously angry; and the ability to be righteously angry "as a man" presupposes the ability also to be *tempted to* unrighteous anger. "Passions" may not be inherited genetically, but they are inherited environmentally. But it is impossible for any human being to *yield* to the prompting of evil passions *if he has the faith* which Christ had.

We cannot read into this statement more than Ellen White said, making it imply that because Christ did not take or possess "the *passions* of our human, fallen natures" He could not have taken our fallen nature. The word "human" is linked to "fallen" in her context. If we interpret the statement to mean that He did not take our fallen nature, we must also make it mean that He did not take our *human* nature. The "infirmities" He took are evidently related to our temptations, and are far more than physical weaknesses.

12. *What does this statement mean: "He was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man" (ST May 29, 1901)?*

This one sentence does not contradict Ellen White's numerous other statements on the humanity of Christ. Whatever Christ did in taking "His position at the head of humanity," it was *sinful* humanity, not sinless, that He came to stand at the head of. The next sentence is as follows: "In heaven was heard the voice, 'The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.'"

In harmony with her general teachings, Ellen White is saying simply that Christ "took" upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, but "not the sinfulness of man." The "sin-fulness of man" would be man's sinning. In this He did not "participate."

13. *"Did Christ have a unique nature unlike either Adam's or ours?" To what extent were her ideas of the nature of Christ taken from Anglicans Henry Melville and Octavius Winslow?*

The evidence is clear that she borrowed ideas and expressions from them, but she never recommended or endorsed their writings as she did those of Jones and Waggoner. In an excellent article published in the December 1989 *Ministry* Tim Poirier prints in parallel columns Ellen White's and Winslow's statements. Both Melville and Winslow were very perceptive in their defense of the perfect sinlessness of Christ. But neither of these godly Anglicans at that time could understand the relationship between Christ's righteousness and the cleansing of the sanctuary—a preparation for the coming of the Lord. Ellen White discerned that added light in the message of Jones and Waggoner, and rejoiced. She could gather all the help possible from the Anglican theologians in defining the sinlessness of Christ, and also embrace a more complete view than they could have understood.

A careful reading of Melville and Winslow raises the question whether they disengaged themselves from Augustinian "original sin." In the 19th century, few Anglicans or Presbyterians could do so. Poirier quotes Melville:

"Whilst [Christ] took humanity with the innocent infirmities, He did not take it with the sinful propensities. Here Deity interposed. The Holy Ghost overshadowed the virgin, and, allowing weakness to be derived from her, forbade wickedness, and so caused that there should be generated a sorrowing and a suffering humanity, but nevertheless an undefiled and a spotless.... [Thus] Christ's humanity was not... in every respect the humanity of Adam after the *Mt*" (*idem.*).

It is interesting that in Ellen White's use of phraseology from this Anglican writer she carefully avoided this tincture of Roman Catholicism that was implicit therein. Part of Ellen White's gift was to adapt what best expressed her thought and to leave untouched what was contrary to her own convictions.

14. Was Christ's sinlessness due to Deity "forbidding" and "interposing" so as to prevent defilement, as Melville believed?

We must be careful not to bypass the exercise of Christ's own power of choice. Can we take the position that "sinful propensities" are genetically transmitted through the genes and chromosomes? If so, we would certainly want "Deity to interpose" and "forbid" it! But then we would need for Christ at least a substitute for the Roman Catholic doctrine of the intervention of an Immaculate Conception. And if "Deity interposed [and] forbade" it for Jesus externally, why should He not be fair and do it for us as well?

Some Seventh-day Adventists feel driven to the idea of an Immaculate Conception by the assumption that if Christ "took" our fallen, sinful nature then He must have "had" a *sinning nature*. And there the door is opened at least a crack for the Roman Catholic idea that Christ would not dare to come in our "flesh," which is our *sarx*. Thus, as Poirier says, Melville's and Winslow's view is that Christ took "a unique nature *unlike ... ours*." In contrast, the 1888 concept sees Him as taking a "nature *like ours*."

By requiring an exemption for Christ that bypassed His freedom of will in the nature which He took, Melville and Winslow would probably be uncomfortable seeing the "flesh" of 1 John 4:1-3 as Jones and Waggoner saw it. Ellen White was very perceptive to go only so far and no farther in using the Anglicans' language. Not only did Jesus take the "innocent infirmities [that are] consequences [of] guilt which are perfectly guiltless," as Melville said; He also went further:

For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. *Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation* (DA 117; emphasis supplied).

If we were to hold strictly to Melville's and Winslow's position we would have to conclude logically that Christ can "rescue" us only from "hunger, pain, weakness, sorrow, and [physical] death." "The third angel's message in verity" must go further. Jones's plea in behalf of sinners is as follows:

The papacy ... puts God and Christ so far away that nobody can come near to them.... Mary ... and ... the Catholic saints ... have to come in between God and men.... But... Christ is not so far away as that.... God wants us to view Him,—so near that it is impossible for anything or anybody to get between.... He is not far from every one of us, even the heathen.... The false idea [is] that He is so holy that it would be entirely unbecoming in Him to come near to us and be possessed of such a nature as we have,—sinful, depraved, fallen human nature. Therefore Mary must be born immaculate, perfect, sinless, and ... Christ must be so born of her as to take His nature in absolute sinlessness from her....

But if He comes no nearer to us than in a sinless nature, that is a long way off; because I need somebody that is nearer to me than that. I need some one to help me who knows something about sinful nature, for that is the nature that I have; and such the Lord did take. He became one of us....

It is true He is holy; He is altogether holy. But His holiness is not that kind that makes Him afraid to be in company with people who are not holy, for fear He will get His holiness spoiled (GCB, 1895, p. 311).

About the time that Jones preached this sermon (February 24, 1895), Ellen White was writing her most enthusiastic approval of his message (cf. TM 77-98, May 1, 1895).

The powerful appeal of this truth for practical godliness and evangelistic soul-winning is evident here:

Christ was in the place, and He had the nature, of the whole human race. And in Him meet all the weaknesses of mankind, so that every man on the earth who can be tempted at all, finds in Jesus Christ power against that temptation. For every soul there is in Jesus Christ victory against all temptation, and relief from the power of it (A. T. Jones, GCB, 1895, p. 234).

In His coming in the flesh—having been made in all things like unto us, and having been tempted in all points like as we are—He has identified Himself with every human soul just where that soul is. And from the place where every human soul is, He has consecrated for that soul a new and living way through all the vicissitudes and experiences of a whole lifetime, and even through death and the tomb, into the holiest of all, at the right hand of God (*The Consecrated Way*, p. 84).

Then let the weary, feeble, sin-oppressed souls take courage. Let them "come boldly unto the throne of grace," where they are sure to find grace to help in time of need, because that need is felt by our Saviour in the very time of need. He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, p. 30).

Could this be one reason why Ellen White so rejoiced to hear this message as "the beginning" of the loud cry that must lighten the earth with glory? Sinners must see the Saviour "nigh at hand"!

15. Why do some scholars downgrade the 1888 messengers, warning the church that their message of Christ's humanity is dangerous?

These authors themselves may not know why they feel driven to do this. Some possible reasons may be:

(a) They focus on minor inconsistencies or imperfections in Jones's and Waggoner's message while they disregard its overall spiritual impact.

(b) They may be influenced to regard popular Evangelicalism as more important to guide our thinking than the special light the Lord gave us.

(c) Some scholars are tempted to build up their own image by being iconoclasts—that is, acquiring a reputation for intellectualism by destroying or bespattering "icons" of a previous generation. This is widespread in the modern literary world. In the Adventist Church, anyone who has been a spiritual leader is fair game for this same kind of attack.

(d) It is possible that the same unbelief that afflicted the 1888 generation is alive and well today. But if so, it's too late in the day to repeat this sin.

(e) Because of preconceived ideas they may be misunderstanding what they are hearing of Jones and Waggoner.

Section 3

Is the "Baker Letter" Clear?

1. Why did Ellen White write Letter 8, 1895 to Elder Baker of New Zealand? Did she intend to discredit Jones's and Waggoner's view of the humanity of Christ (5BC 1128, 1129)?

(a) The letter is not addressed to Jones or Waggoner, nor was it sent to them.

(b) It does not mention Jones's and Waggoner's views by name or allude to them.

(c) It does not condemn their views even remotely, only Baker's distortions of their views.

(d) Had she intended to oppose Jones and Waggoner in their teachings of the nature of Christ, she knew well how to write letters to *them*. The idea of her attempting to cut them down obliquely via Baker in Tasmania as a beating-around-the-bush kind of rebuke is out of character to anyone who knows Ellen White's forthright openness.

(e) No one knows (to date) for sure what Baker was teaching that elicited this letter. He, not Jones and Waggoner, was the one teaching or in danger of teaching wrong ideas. He may have been tempted to lapse into an extreme manner of presenting the truth of Christ's humanity. Inasmuch as Ellen White does not condemn Baker or urge him to leave the ministry but in fact encourages him to clarify his teaching, it is possible that he was overreacting to criticism of the 1888 message and in his youth or inexperience was in danger of muddying the waters by imprecise expressions. It is interesting that she made no move to publish this letter or even to incorporate portions of it in volumes of the *Testimonies* at the time. If Ellen White had felt that Jones's and Waggoner's Christology was faulty or dangerous, she would not have hesitated to publish her letter to Baker in the messages that comprise our volumes of the *Testimonies for the Church*.

2. If Christ took the sinful nature of man after the Fall, would He be "a man with the propensities of sin" that the Baker letter says we must not present Him as having (5BC 1128)?

In Ellen White's own context, her use of the term "propensities of sin" means a *yielding* to temptation, a *harboring* of an evil purpose, that would be the compulsive result of a previous involvement in an act, word, or thought of sin. She did not teach that we incur guilt genetically.

Jones and Waggoner never implied that Christ had "evil propensities." Ellen White defines her own terms. We cannot inject into her use of these words our own misconceptions. She said "*not for one moment* was there in Him an evil propensity." This language is meaningless unless the phrase "not for one moment" is understood as implying the exercise of personal choice from moment to moment. Such an expression doesn't make sense if it refers to genetic inheritance. Thus an "evil propensity" is understood as sinful *character* involving personal choice. In the same letter, her context makes her meaning clear: "Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption *rested upon* Christ, or that He in any way *yielded* to corruption."

Elsewhere she states that He was tempted by the inclination to disobedience to His Father's will, but *never yielded* to it (cf. 7BC 930). In her own use of the term, "an evil propensity" would have been a "passion," a display of selfishness, a yielding to self, an *indulgence* of disobedience.

Here is a succinct example of Ellen White's use of the word "propensities": "Self-indulgence, self-pleasing, pride, and extravagance must be renounced. We cannot be Christians and gratify these propensities" (R&H, May 16, 1893). When Paul says, "Christ did not please Himself (Romans 15:3), it is clear that He did not have these "propensities."

One can quite easily discover Ellen White's idea of "propensities" by consulting the *Index*, vol. 2, pages 2157 and 2158 under "Propensity." Every statement cited can be reasonably understood as consistent with the idea that an "evil" or "sinful propensity" is an *indulged lust* created by a previous environmental involvement in acts of sin, strengthened by repetition. An alcoholic has a propensity for alcohol because he has used it previously. "Not for one moment was there in [Christ] an evil propensity"—this does not mean He did not "take" our fallen, sinful nature, because those who have the faith of Jesus (within mortal, sinful flesh) "need *not retain* one sinful propensity." God's grace "works in us ... to *overcome* powerful propensities" (7BC 943; COL 354, emphasis supplied). But even after God's people "overcome" fully, they will still be in "sinful flesh," with a "sinful nature," until glorification.

3. Does the 1888 view transgress Ellen White's counsel in this letter by giving the "slightest impression ... that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption" (5BC 1128, 1129)?

No. In fact, Waggoner anticipated this statement, using almost this exact expression of hers seven years before she wrote it to Baker, emphasizing the sinlessness of Christ:

How was it that Christ could be thus "compassed with infirmity" and still know no sin? Some may have thought while reading thus far that we were depreciating the character of Jesus, by bringing Him down to the level of sinful man. On the contrary, we are simply exalting the "Divine power" of our blessed Saviour... His own spotless purity ... He retained under the most adverse circumstances....

... There was in His whole life a struggle. The flesh, moved upon by the enemy of all righteousness would tend to sin, yet His Divine nature never for a moment harbored an evil desire, nor did His Divine power for a moment waver. Having suffered in the flesh all that men can possibly suffer, He returned to the Father as spotless as when He left the courts of glory (*Christ and His Righteousness*, pp. 28, 29).

The verbs Waggoner used were synonyms of Ellen White's of seven years later: she said "rested" and "yielded," and he said "harbored" and "waver," in the same syntax of expression. She said in 1895 that "not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity," and he wrote in 1889 that "not for a moment" did His "Divine power... waver." It is almost as if Ellen White were advising Baker that if he stuck to Waggoner's precise 1889 expressions, he would be safe.

4. Does the 1888 view of Christ's nature make Him "altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be" (5BC 1128, 1129)?

Ellen White's expression is clear: she does not object to making Christ "human" *per se*, for she is not a Docetist. The key thought in this expression of hers is "*such an one as ourselves?* Christ was divine as well as "human," but we are merely "altogether human" and not divine. The context of her statement makes clear that this is her point:

Let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be. The exact time when humanity blended with divinity, it is not necessary for us to know. We are to keep our feet on the Rock Christ Jesus, *as God revealed in humanity.*

Further, we "ourselves" are sinners and Christ was not a sinner; therefore, He cannot be "made altogether human, *such an one as ourselves?* This is not to say that since we are sinners by genetic inheritance that Christ was "exempt" from participating in our genetic inheritance as *Questions on Doctrine* strongly implies (page 383). Neither the Bible nor Ellen White teaches the Augustinian doctrine of "original sin."

5. How then can we understand the following statement: "Never in any way leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption"(5BC 1128, 1129)?

The two key verbs in this expression are: "*rested*" and "*yielded*?" Christ's righteousness is the result of a "verb" and not a mere "noun." He always *did* righteousness; and He could not have *done* righteousness unless he *chose* to. Adam was created sinless, and if we were to say he was "righteous" in his sinless state (which it seems Ellen White or the Bible never says he was) we would have to imply by that expression that righteousness was innate in him and it was not by choice that he was "sinless." But the glory of Christ's righteousness is that it was by *choice* that He was sinless, and not by an innate, pre-programmed, automaton "nature."

He explains the truth, telling us that He had taken upon Himself a natural will that was opposed to His Father's will, and thus He had the same struggle with "self that we have: "I do not seek My own will, *but* the will of the Father who sent Me;" "I have come down from heaven, *not* to do My own will, *but* the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30; 6:38). "Christ did not please Himself (Romans 15:3). Therefore His righteousness was the fruit of a constant struggle to yield His will to His Father's will; and the terrible extent of that struggle is seen in His agony in Gethsemane and on the cross. Ellen White's expression indicates that "a taint of corruption *resting* upon Christ" would have been equivalent to His "*yielding* to corruption." And that would have been sin. And that He never did, or thought, or purposed, or even fantasized.

6. How could Christ have taken upon Himself the sinful nature of man after the fall, and not have had "a taint of sin"?

The word "taint" means a touch or flavor indicating the presence of the tainting article. Spoiled milk has the "taint" of spoilage because the spoilage is there. If Christ had "a taint of sin" or permitted it "for one moment" to "rest upon Him," He would be a sinner and thus *have brought* on Himself "the taint of sin." Jones's and Waggoner's message never

presented the slightest "taint" of sin or corruption as "resting upon Christ." But Christ endured the full tempt-ability that the *fallen* sons of Adam meet, not only the tempt-ability of the sinless, unfallen Adam in the Garden. The glory of "Christ's righteousness" is that never "for a moment" did He allow a taint of sin to "rest" upon Himself. The cross is the answer.

7. If Christ was "born without a taint of sin" (Letter 97, 1898), was He not different from us who are "born with inherent propensities of disobedience" (5BC 1128)?

Yes, He was surely different from us, for we are fallen sinners and He was sinless. What was "unlike" between us was His character, His righteousness. What is "like" between us is His nature which He "took," His genetic heredity and ours. We must not misunderstand what are our "inherent propensities of disobedience," or how we inherit them. Ellen White is very clear that prenatal influences are a part of our "inheritance." But perhaps there is a difference between "inherent propensities to disobedience" that a baby might "inherit" *genetically* through the genes, and those that he would "inherit" *environmentally* from prenatal influences. We dare not say that *sin per se* is transmitted in the DNA, or we would have to adopt a version of the Roman Catholic Immaculate Conception.

8. If Christ "was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden" (5BC 1128), does this mean that His nature was like that of the sinless Adam?

Not unless we re-write her words and insert "only" where the comma appears. It is true that Christ took Adam's place, but it is *not* true that He redeemed *only* Adam's failure. He redeemed ours as well. The use of the word "but" in these statements in *The Desire of Ages* is significant:

Ever since Adam's sin, the human race had been cut off from direct communion with God.... Now that Jesus had come "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3), the Father Himself spoke. He had before communicated with humanity *through* Christ; now He communicated with humanity *in* Christ. [This statement becomes meaningless if one understands that Christ took the sinless nature of Adam before the fall.]... Satan had pointed to Adam's sin as proof that God's law was unjust, and could not be obeyed. In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam's failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him.... It was not thus with Jesus.... For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth, and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation (pp. 116, 117, emphasis original).

It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. He came with such a heredity,... to give us the example of a sinless life (*ibid.*, p. 49).

Obviously, according to her emphasis, the fallen "heredity" that Christ "accepted" was not mere physical deterioration, but also "moral." Her point is that in our nature, which is clearly "sinful," it *is* possible to live "a sinless life," for He did so as an "example." "The lowest depths I of degradation" are spiritual and moral, *not merely physical*. And it was "man" *there* that Christ "rescued" with that long "golden chain" let down from heaven, in which there is to be no "broken link."

In no way does this compromise the perfect sinlessness of Christ. It enhances it, and gives us hope. This is the "message of Christ's righteousness." Ellen White's language seems clear: "Christ was to redeem Adam's failure,... *but* when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects I of sin were upon him.... *It was not thus with Jesus.*" The I great controversy requires that He redeem our failure too!

9. "He [Christ] did humble Himself when He saw He was in fashion as a man, that He might understand the force of all temptations wherewith man is beset" (5BC 1128, 1129). Does this suggest that He was born with a different nature than ours, but later in His incarnation, He "humbled Himself"?

Not necessarily. Christ was born as a human baby and "grew" in knowledge and understanding. "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8; see also Luke 2:52). As a baby He could not "*understands*[^] force of all temptations wherewith man is beset"—no baby can. He had to *grow* into this maturity. The point is that at any moment in this growth process, the Son of God could have refused to suffer further, and He could have excused Himself from further participation with us in temptation. But He "humbled Himself to suffer "the force of all temptations" to the end.

10. How is Ellen White's *The Desire of Ages* related to the 1888 concepts of the nature of Christ?

It is very closely related. She wrote it in the decade after 1888. It contains a number of very clear statements which support the Jones and Waggoner concept (cf. pp. 49, 68-70, 112,117, 208, 329, 336, 363). Very strong statements also appear in YI June 2, Aug. 4, Sept. 8, Oct. 13, 1898; ST June 9, 1898; and Letter 97, 1898.

She seems at that time to have been almost obsessed with the parallels between the history of the Jews and our 1888 history. She speaks of this in a series of articles in the R&H from January to April, 1890:

Letters have been coming in to me, affirming that Christ could not have had the same nature as man, for if he had, he would have fallen under similar temptations.... I feel like fleeing from the place lest I receive the mold of those who cannot candidly investigate... the evidence of a position that differs from theirs (Feb. 18).

They [brethren] oppose they know not what, because, unfortunately, they are leavened with the spirit of opposition (Feb. 25).

Brethren, there is light for us.... Light is flashing from the throne of God, and what is this for?—It is that a people may be prepared to stand in the day of God.... As I am writing on the "Life of Christ," I lift up my heart in prayer to God that light may come to His people.... Every line I trace about the condition of the people in the time of Christ, about their attitude toward the Light of the world, in which I see danger that we shall take the

same position, I offer up a prayer to God: "O let not this be the condition of thy people. Forbid that thy people shall make this mistake." ... It is when we meet unbelief in those who should be leaders of the people, that our souls are wounded. This ... grieves the Spirit of God (March 4).

For some reason, neither the White Estate nor any official publishing house has ever reprinted Ellen White's powerful "Bible Student's Library" booklet of 1894 entitled *Christ Tempted As We Are*. This dates from the same general period as the Baker letter. She clearly supports the 1888 message:

(a) "It behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren."

(b) He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

(c) His temptations were not like Adam's; "it was not thus with Jesus." "Alone He was to tread the path of temptation and exercise self-control stronger than hunger, ambition, or death.... Specious reasoning was a temptation to Christ. His humanity made it a temptation to Him.... He walked by faith, as we must walk by faith.... One has endured all these temptations before us.... The Christian's ... strongest temptations will come from within. Christ [was] tempted as we are [same page]" (p. 11).

(d) "Every struggle against sin, every effort to conform to the law of God, is Christ working through His appointed agencies upon the human heart."

Ellen White's mind was not confused on this issue!

Section 4

Roman Catholicism's Deadly Broken Link

1. Did the Councils of Nicea (A.D. 325) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451) go far enough in understanding the humanity of Christ?

Those early post-apostolic centuries were dominated by fierce theological controversies over the humanity of Christ. Stalwart Greek theologians fought bravely to save the church from the heresy of Arianism.¹ The formula hammered out by the debates of these general councils on the humanity of Christ is commendably orthodox.

But though it was orthodox, the following centuries saw it as a stale orthodoxy that eventually led to a denial of Christ's true humanity. As Harry Johnson remarks, the "orthodox" church leaders throughout history continued to persecute bitterly those who dared to uphold the clear New Testament concepts of Christ's humanity (*op. cit.*, pp. 129 ff). The reason is that although the early councils did firmly uphold the humanity of Christ as well as His divinity, they did not clearly spell out what kind of humanity He took, and that humanity came to be understood as the sinless nature of the pre-Fall Adam.

Nicea and Chalcedon cannot escape being a part of the great controversy history. Speaking of the context of that era, Ellen White says:

Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church.... As persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions. The nominal conversion of Constantine, in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing; and the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed (GC 49, 50).

In the early part of the fourth century, ... the bishops of the church [were] inspired by ambition and thirst for power (p. 53).

Indeed, by the time of Chalcedon (451 A. D.) "the work of corruption [had] rapidly progressed," and the "era of spiritual darkness" was well on its way. "Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ" (p. 50).

¹ Some have charged E. J. Waggoner with being an Arian or semi-Arian. This is refuted by the fact that over 30 times in his *Christ and His Righteousness* (Pacific Press, 1890), he affirms the eternal preexistence and deity of Christ. Eight years before Ellen White declared that "in Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived" (DA 530), Waggoner expressed the same conviction.

At Chalcedon Pope Leo the Great's influence led the bishops to favor the doctrines of Mary being "the Mother of God" (*Theotokos*), clergy celibacy, and the primacy of the bishop of Rome over the universal church. His leadership was so highly respected that his "*Tome* was triumphantly received" there (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 17, p. 242; 1968; the *Tome* established that "Peter had truly spoken through Leo," Vol. 13, p. 955). Cyril may have been clear in his understanding himself, but if so, he was misunderstood. While his influence was dominant at Chalcedon, his position was regarded by many as "a denial of the human nature of Christ, which, they said, was reduced by Cyril to a mere appearance of human nature" (*idem*). Such is, in fact, the germ of the Immaculate Conception idea.

While it is true that the formula of Chalcedon clearly affirms the human as well as the divine nature of Christ, the Roman Catholic Church built its theology in the centuries after Chalcedon on the idea that Christ is "afar off" and not "nigh at hand." It denies that 1 John 4:1-3 applies to them ("every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh ... is the spirit of the Antichrist"). They profess to believe in the "real humanity" of Christ; yet their dogma of the Immaculate Conception neatly denies it in fact. Surely it is time to recover the full New Testament truth as clearly as the apostles saw it. It will be a distinctive part of the message that will go to the world in the loud cry of Revelation 18.

2. What is "original sin"? Is it a Seventh-day Adventist doctrine?

The term does not appear in the Bible, nor as a theological concept in the writings of Ellen White. A simple definition is as follows:

ORIGINAL SIN. Theological term for man's congenital depravity, inherited or acquired from Adam's disobedience in the garden of Eden. Thus, original sin differs from specific acts of sin, which may result from this depraved condition (Donald T. Kauffman, *The Dictionary of Religious Terms*, p. 341).

The idea is that every baby (Christ exempted) has been conceived actually a sinner and automatically guilty of Adam's sin genetically inherited. Infant baptism is derived from the doctrine. The idea was chiefly developed by Augustine (354-450 A.D.) and through unfortunate circumstances adopted by "orthodox" Christianity along with Sunday sacredness and other extra-Biblical doctrines. As a pagan, young Augustine had become deeply enmeshed in sexual vice. When he became a Christian, he retained the pagan idea that sex was inherently evil (even in marriage) and thus he became celibate. To him, sex became the sin of sins. He assumed that temptation is automatically sin.

He soon discovered that sexual desires could not be eradicated. The result was that through extended, tortuous reasoning he concluded that since sexual desire was for him ineradicable, sin itself is also so deeply rooted in human nature that it can never be eradicated so long as we are imprisoned in mortal flesh. The Hellenistic view of the dichotomy of man's nature doubtless contributed to his thinking. God-implanted physical desires and love were mistakenly considered a hindrance to holiness.

Having concluded that sin is ineradicable in human nature, Augustine went further in his efforts to find some reason for God's acceptance of "the elect." Thus he developed his doctrine of predestination. This again was a distortion of truth but was complementary to his idea of "original sin."

Pelagius opposed Augustine. But as happens so often, he apparently went to another extreme, giving an unacceptable alternative. He is understood to have said that Adam's descendants inherit neither guilt nor weakness from him, but that every child starts off on an equal footing with the sinless Adam. This of course is not true, "for in Adam all die."

Neither Augustine or (it seems) Pelagius correctly understood the relationship of Christ "the second Adam" to our genetic inheritance from our first father. Everyone, including every baby, desperately needs a Saviour and none can live apart from sin, without Him. A miraculous new birth is needed by everyone. But through faith in Him "every man" may overcome "even as [Christ] overcame" (Revelation 3:21). Thus "we need not retain one sinful propensity" (7BC 943).

3. If we leave out Augustine's error, can we salvage the term "original sin" and still use it?

The extra-Biblical idea of "original sin" involves endless debate and philosophical contention. It muddies the waters of Biblical righteousness by faith. Seventh-day Adventist pioneers wisely avoided the term, largely because they believed that Zwingli, Arminius, and Wesley saw more light than did Luther and Calvin in their day. As noted above, Ellen White never took her pen to write the term as a theological concept. Instead, it appears certain that she opposed the idea. For example:

There are many who in their hearts murmur against God. They say, "We inherit the fallen nature of Adam, and are not responsible for our natural imperfections." They find fault with God's requirements, and complain that He demands what they have no power to give. Satan made the same complaint in heaven, but such thoughts dishonor God (ST, August 29, 1892).

However, this is not to say that we should try to define sin as merely outward acts of transgression. While Ellen White says that the "only definition of sin" is John's phrase "transgression of the law" (1 John 5:4, KJV), the Greek word is *anomia* which means rebellion or lawlessness. It is deep within the human heart, even beneath the layer of consciousness. Sin is a condition of rebellion against God, more than mere outward alienation. While on the cross Christ cried out "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" but that alienation from God which He felt did not mean that He rebelled against God. We have "all sinned." In our spiritual pride we may not want to admit that we have rebelled against God, but we have. Christ felt the full force of our alienation from His Father, but He never participated in our rebellion against Him.

4. What is the doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception"?

New Testament righteousness by faith is closely intertwined with a correct understanding of the humanity of Christ. If the doctrine of "original sin" is true, and if it is maintained that Christ is "Immanuel, ... God with us," then some way must be found or invented to "exempt" Him from this "original sin" which is assumed to be our human genetic inheritance from Adam. The fiction of "original sin" must have a corresponding fiction of "exemption" for our Saviour. *Unlike* "every child of Adam," He must somehow be made not to accept "the results of the working of the great law of heredity" (cf. DA 49).

Thus the Roman Catholic invention for accomplishing this maneuver is known as the dogma of the "Immaculate Conception," which requires the faithful to believe that the Virgin Mary herself in the moment of her conception in the womb of her mother was "exempt" from all trace of "original sin." It follows of course that although the Virgin Mary was a woman, she lacked normal God-given sexual desire; and having such virtual "holy flesh," she passed on the same to Jesus.

5. But what is the harm in this apparently innocent invention? It looks so beautiful!

But it is deadly. A little thought will show that sexual irresponsibility and consequent permissiveness become the natural ethical result of this false doctrine, for Christ as Saviour is forced into an unnatural role that precludes the possibility that He can be a true Substitute for us. He cannot redeem what He does not assume. Nor can He be a true Example to believers if He bypassed taking our true fallen nature. The popular doctrine of Christ taking the sinless nature of Adam before the Fall is next door to the Catholic idea. The word "exempt" is a favorite with Roman Catholics in discussing the nature of Christ:

The whole mind of the Oriental church ... drew from St. Augustine, the great Doctor of grace, those remarkable declarations which exempt the Blessed Virgin from all sin.

In the same spirit, and with a like implied exemption from the curse, St. Hippolytus, Bishop and Martyr, says, speaking first of our Saviour: "He was the ark formed of corruptible wood. For by this is signified that His tabernacle was exempt from sin, of wood not obnoxious to corruption according to man; that is, of the Virgin, and of the Holy Ghost, covered within and without with the pure gold of the word of God" (Berington and Kirk, *The Faith of Catholics, Confirmed and Attested by the Fathers of the First Five Centuries of the Church*, vol. III, pp. 443-446, emphasis supplied).

The difficulty with the word "exempt" and the idea associated with it is that it divorces the incarnate Christ from the exercise of His free choice. It bypasses the "right action of the will, the power of choice" (SC 47). The Word of God has described this twisted, confused, apostate system of thought that permeates the Roman Catholic idea of "righteousness by faith" as "the abomination that maketh desolate" and "the mystery of iniquity" (see Daniel 11:31; 2 Thessalonians 2:7). Its clever doctrine concerning the nature of Christ fulfills the prophecies, for its natural consequence is the perpetuation of sin. While ostensibly warning and preaching against sin, it spreads the underlying belief that sin is ineradicable, and that Christ is irrelevant to us as a Saviour from it. "The mystery of iniquity" "is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with [the] fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome" (GC 489). Inevitably, the one who accepts the doctrine feels that sin is ultimately excusable. Nevertheless, he wants to go to heaven. So a life of vague fear is the consequence. Oh that these millions who lack the gospel may have an opportunity to hear it!

There is a remnant church which is called to prepare a people for the second coming of Christ. Would Satan be Satan if he did not make heroic efforts to intrude this false doctrine into that remnant church?

6. Those who disparage the 1888 view of Christ's humanity insist that they believe that victory over sin is still possible for us even if it wasn't possible for Christ if He had taken our fallen nature. Does this indicate that the 1888 view is unnecessary?

Merely to say that victory over sin is possible is not good enough. A high standard is commendable, but the *how* of overcoming is necessary. And that *how* is faith in Christ and His righteousness. No saint can ever accomplish a greater feat of righteousness than did Christ. If He would have sinned if He had taken our fallen, sinful nature, then it is not possible for anyone to overcome as long as he has a sinful nature. Any highly laudable goal of overcoming becomes merely an exercise in human will-power if we do not grasp by faith the reality of Christ's identity with us and His condemning sin in the likeness of our sinful flesh.

7. All agree that the body or flesh which Christ "took" in His incarnation was the weakened physical organism possessed by fallen humanity. But can we say that in His incarnation Christ had the sinless mind that Adam had before the fall?

It is true that the mind of Christ was totally sinless. Before the fall, the mind of Adam was also sinless, as is the mind of all the holy angels and the unfallen universe. But that sinless mind of created beings was not the "mind ... which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). There was an infinite difference between the sinless mind of created beings and the mind of the Creator-Redeemer.

The mind of Christ was *agape*. No sinless created mind in eternity had ever grasped the dimensions of that kind of love until Christ demonstrated it at the cross.

To compare the mind of Christ with that of the sinless Adam therefore lowers the Creator down to the level of His creature. Adam in his sinless state could not have known how to die for the sins of the world. He could not have known "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of "the *agape* of Christ ... which passeth knowledge" (Ephesians 3:18,19). He could not have known how to die the second death in order to redeem his fallen race, how to suffer the anguish of the lost in order to effect the salvation of those who believe. We read of Adam's pure innocence, but never do we read of his righteousness.

If Adam had known or believed such *agape*, he would not have chosen sin. He would have chosen to die on a cross. Such *agape* had never before been demonstrated to the unfallen universe. Instead of having that mind of *agape*, Adam selfishly chose to suffer Eve's fate—not in order to redeem her, but because he loved her more than he loved God. He joined her in sin. He did not have the divine love ("mind") to be her savior.

Thus the sinlessness of Adam before the fall was neither *agape* nor righteousness. But Paul describes the mind of Christ as "the righteousness of One [by which] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18).

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