

Study for the Month of February, 2008

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST PART I

*A STUDY ON THE NATURE OF CHRIST AND THE
MYSTERY OF HIS INCARNATION*

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I. PRECAUTIONS

Before we even attempt to start a study on this awesome topic, we need to earnestly pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the ministry and protection of the angels lest we unconsciously fall a victim to Satan's highly specialized deceptions on this topic, or commit the sin of carelessness and presumption, not realizing that we are standing on holy ground.

PRAYER: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. We plead that You to come into our hearts right now. We desire to know more of what you want us to know regarding the nature of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our loving Savior. Please send Your Holy Spirit to teach and guide us, and your holy angels to minister and protect us from the evil one. Check us when we are in any danger of making assertions or reaching conclusions that are not in harmony with your word. Thank you for answering our prayer for we ask this in the name and authority of Jesus Christ, Amen.

And God's immediate answer to this prayer is: *"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."* Exo. 3: 5, KJV.

See the following verses first: Luke 1: 21-35; Heb. 1: 1-13; 2: 9, 10, 16-18; 4: 15. Now we will quote extensively from the inspired pen of Ellen G. White that clearly specify the areas where extreme caution should be exercised whenever any discussion of the humanity of Christ and the mystery of His incarnation are entered into. Notice (all emphasis supplied):

*"Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin on him. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of His sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus was the *only* begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; *He could have fallen; but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity.* He was assailed with temptation in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptation in Eden.*

*"Avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. Truth lies close to the track of presumption. In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. His birth was a miracle of God; for, said the angel [Luke 1: 31-35 quoted]. *These words do not refer to any human being, except to the Son of the infinite God.* 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. He was tempted in all points like as man is, yet He is called 'that holy thing.' *It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and ever will remain a mystery.**

"That which is revealed, is for us and our children [see Deut. 29:29], but 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.

“I perceive that there is danger in approaching subjects which dwell on the humanity of the Son of the Infinite God. He 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.” – Letter 8, 1895; E.G. White Bible Commentary, vol. 5, pp. 1129-30 (emphasis supplied).

“When we approach the subject of Christ’s divinity clothed with the garb of humanity, we may appropriately heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, ‘Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.’ [Exo. 3:5].”– E.G. White Bible Commentary, vol.7, p. 905 (emphasis supplied).

II. PROMISES AND REWARDS

“We must come to the study of this subject with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ, is a fruitful field and will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.”– E.G. White Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 905 (emphasis supplied).

“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.” Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 244.

“When we want a deep problem to study, let us fix our minds on the most marvelous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven---the incarnation of the Son of God.” 7 BC 904.

The Plan of Redemption’s three-fold aspects are inexhaustible. - *“The theme of redemption is one that angels desire to look into; it will be the science and song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Is not worthy of our careful thought and study now? The subject is inexhaustible. [1] The study of the incarnation of Christ, [2] His atoning sacrifice, and [3] His mediatorial work [as our high Priest] will employ the mind of the diligent student as long as time shall last; and looking to heaven with its unnumbered years, he will exclaim, ‘Great is the mystery of godliness’ [1 Tim. 3:16].”*– Signs of the Times, Apr. 18, 1906; My Life Today, p. 360 (emphasis supplied).

III. EIGHT GUIDELINES

What was Christ’s human nature? Was it Adamic, meaning, sinless, unfallen (prelapsarian)? Or was it sinful, fallen (postlapsarian) of a four-thousand-year quality after the fall? In what sense did Christ become the “second Adam”?

Will the real Jesus, the incarnated Man-God, please stand up? This is, perhaps, the silent request if not urgent plea of those who, in frustration, are still confused and/or at odds over what human nature Jesus incarnated into.

It was for me, until lately, when I begun to zero into eight general guidelines I believe should always the steer the direction of the mind whenever a study of this sacred topic is entered into. You may have yours, too, but these were the ones that arrested my attention, culled during the course of my studies, especially during these past few months.

These guidelines helped me settle down and focus more now on what the Holy Spirit wants to *reveal* in the law and testimony (the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy) regarding the humanity of Christ where before my conscious effort, consequently, even the unconscious, was to find as much proof as I could muster against the other side of the debate of the side I had adopted earlier. That's what happens when any study is entered into with preconceived ideas, whether right or wrong. In a way the mind is closed to seeing increasing light on the subject and consequently, effort to continue searching ceases. Formality, coldness, and rigidity set in.

These eight guidelines, some slightly overlapping, accompanied with short explanations, are as follows (all emphasis supplied):

No. 1: There is a divinely set limit to unraveling the mystery of the incarnation.

“The mystery of the incarnation has ever been and ever will remain a mystery to mortal minds.”

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” 1 Tim. 3:16.

“In contemplating the incarnation of Christ in humanity, we stand baffled before an unfathomable mystery that the human mind cannot comprehend.”- Signs of the Times, July 30, 1896.

“Angels of God looked with amazement on Christ, who took upon Himself the form of a man and humbly united His divinity with humanity in order that He might minister to fallen man. It is a marvel among heavenly angels. God has told us that He did do it, and we are told to accept the Word of God just as it reads. And though we may try to reason in regard to our Creator, how long he had existence, where evil first entered into the world, and all these things, we may reason about them until we fall down faint and exhausted with the research, when there is yet an infinity beyond. We cannot grasp it, so what man is there that dares to take the Bible and say this part is inspired and that part is not inspired? I would have both my arms taken off at my shoulders before I would ever make the statement or act my judgment upon the Word of God as to what is inspired and what is not inspired.”- E. G. White Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 919.

There are two mysteries in the Bible: the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16) and the mystery of iniquity or “lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:7); God wants us to study these mysteries. However both cease to be mysteries but only to the extent of its divinely-set limits (Deut. 29:29), and only to those who search for truth as they would for hidden treasure (Matt. 13: 44), and only if Christ is magnified and glorified (John 12:32).

Q. What is the mystery of godliness?

“But although Christ’s divine glory was for a time veiled and eclipsed by His assuming humanity, yet He did not cease to be God when He became man. *The human did not take the place of divine, nor the divine of the human. This is the mystery of godliness.* The two expressions ‘human’ and ‘divine’ were, in Christ, closely and inseparably one, and yet they had a distinct individuality.” – *E. G. White Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1129.

Q. What is the mystery of iniquity?-

“The apostle Paul warned the church not to look for the coming of Christ in his day. ‘That day shall not come,’ he says, ‘except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed.’ 2 Thess. 2:3. Not till after the great apostasy, and the long period of the reign of the ‘man of sin,’ can we look for the advent of our Lord. *The ‘man of sin,’ which is also styled ‘the mystery of iniquity,’ ‘the son of perdition,’ and ‘that wicked,’ represents the papacy,* which, as foretold in prophecy, was to maintain its supremacy for 1260 years. This period ended in 1798.”- *The Great Controversy*, p. 356.

Thus the “mystery of iniquity” *fully* ceased to be a mystery at the termination of the Dark Ages of 1260 years. That portion of the prophecies of Daniel that were sealed in his time were at unsealed “at the time of the end” that begun with the capture and eventual death of Pope Pius XI by Gen. Berthier of Napoleon’s French Republic army in the year 1798. The unsealing of these prophecies were performed under the proclamation of the three angels messages of Revelation 14 in the years 1840-1844 in America and Europe. All diligent students of the Word now know that the “mystery of iniquity” is the Papacy. God now holds them accountable to spread this precious truth to as many as they can while religious liberty still holds by a thin thread. Soon the church will have to proclaim the truth “in sackcloth,” meaning, under religious restrictions and persecution.

No. 2: The human nature of Christ means everything to our salvation.

“The humanity of Christ is everything to us for it is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God.”

No such “golden chain” description is ever attached to any person, including Adam in his unfallen state, or even to angel Gabriel. It is only *the human nature of Christ* that binds our sinful, fallen human nature with the absolute *sinlessness* of His fallen human nature, and through Him, to God. It follows therefore that anyone earnestly desiring to receive the seal of the living God in their foreheads, which is synonymous with being “clothed with His perfect righteousness” and putting on of “the wedding garment,” will put forth great effort to study what the Word of God reveals of the humanity of Christ, for by constantly beholding one becomes changed, from image to image, from glory to glory. Only then will we be able to “overcome as He overcame.” Rev. 3: 21.

No. 3: Christ gave humanity an existence out of Himself.

“By His obedience to all the commandments of God, Christ wrought out a redemption for men. This was not done by going out of Himself to another, but by taking on humanity upon Himself. Thus Christ gave humanity an existence out of Himself.”

No other human being, not even Adam in his unfallen state, is capable of giving himself an existence out of himself, nor any of the angels, including Gabriel. No other human being is capable of working out our redemption—even if he perfectly obeyed all the commandments of God by God’s empowering grace of God, including Adam or Enoch or Job or Elijah or Daniel or Paul—as holy and sanctified these men were towards the end of their lives; only *God in the human flesh* could accomplish that.

No. 4: The humanity of Christ not altogether like ours.

“The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be.” - E. G. White Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1129.

“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: *but those things which are revealed* belong unto us and our children for ever.” Deut. 29:29.

“But while he (Joseph) thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: *for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*” Matt. 1:20.

What other human being was “conceived of the Holy Ghost” by Him “overshadowing” a mortal woman so that the offspring that was born nine months later was called “that holy thing?” None but Christ alone! The word “overshadow” is the untranslated Greek *epikiazō* which means “to cast a shade upon, i.e., by analogy, to envelope in a haze of brilliancy; figuratively, to invest with preternatural influence.”- *Strong’s Greek Dictionary.*

Moreover, since Christ’s humanity cannot be *altogether* (“wholly, thoroughly”- *Webster*) like *our* humanity, and can neither can it be *exclusively* Adamic or *exclusively* post-Adamic—both human natures. It is the same as saying that the humanity of *Christ* is not exactly the same as the humanity of *any man* for although Christ is also called the *Son of man* and *Son of David* (Matt. 8:20; 15:22), Christ means Messiah, the Anointed one, the Promised one of the Old Testament. No one else in the flesh owns these titles with the authority and power that comes with them, except Christ. Anyone who claims so, and there are many, are deceivers in the order of their true master, Satan, who claims “to be like the most High.”

V: The mysteries or secrets of God are revealed through His seers or prophets.

“Surely the Lord God will do nothing, *but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.*” Amos 3:7, K.J.V.

“Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: ‘*Come, let us go to the seer,*’ for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.” 1 Sam. 9:9, N.K.J.V.

If these Scriptures are true, and they certainly are, then to the “law and testimony” (Isa. 8:20) and to “the seer,” messenger and prophet with “the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10)” we should go to in order to understand that which

is revealed of the mysteries of the incarnation and humanity of Christ—not to some church creed. This is what we are what we are trying to do here.

VI. The indispensable role of the Holy Spirit.

“The Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the only-begotten Son of God, binds the human agent, body, soul, and spirit, to the perfect, divine-human nature of Christ.”

How many church creeds specifically declare that it is the Holy Spirit that *binds* the true believer, body, soul, and spirit, to the perfect, *divine-human nature of Christ*? How many of those debating this issue ever bring forth this truth with the force that it fully deserves into their discussions?

If this truth regarding the specific role of the Holy Spirit is not emphasized, all the scholarly dissertations and discussions on what nature Christ partook of will end up in the same arena of controversy. It should never be allowed to slip our consciousness that the Holy Spirit is Christ in the world today. He is Christ’s Vicegerent on earth, *the* appointed Comforter, Teacher, Guide, Convicter, the One that brings *all* things to remembrance, and the *Sealer* of the characters of the saints on earth. John 14: 26; 16: 7-14; Eph. 4: 30; 1:13.

Worse, we imperil our souls if we grieve the Holy Spirit by denying Him the authority and time to *bind* us to the divine-human nature of Christ. Since God is in Christ, if we grieve the Holy Spirit then we grieve Christ, and God the Father as well, for “these three are one.” 1 John 5:7.

No. 7. The two Adams had no propensities to sin or evil.

“We should have absolutely no doubt as to the sinlessness of Christ’s human nature.”

“And the angel answered and said unto her. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also *that holy thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called *the Son of God*.” Luke 1:35.

“The humanity of Christ is called ‘that holy thing.’”- *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 16, 1896.

“There should not be the faintest misgivings in regard to the *perfect freedom from sinfulness in the human nature of Christ*.”- Ms 143, 1897.

“Christ did *not* possess the same sinful, corrupt, fallen disloyalty we possess.” -Ms 94, 1893; *Selected Messages*, vol.3, p. 131.

“There were no corrupt principles in the first Adam, no corrupt propensities or tendencies to evil. Adam was as faultless as the angels before the throne.”- *Letter* 191, 1899; E.G. *White Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1083.

“It is *not* correct to say, as many writers have said, that Christ was like all children. *He was not like all children*. Many children are misguided and mismanaged. But Joseph, and especially Mary, kept before them the remembrance of their child’s *divine Fatherhood*. Jesus was instructed in accordance with the sacred character of His

mission. His inclination to right was a constant gratification to His parents. . . . *No one, looking upon the childlike countenance, shining with animation, could say that Christ was just like other children. He was God in the human flesh.* When urged by His companions to do wrong, *divinity flashed through humanity*, and He refused decidedly.”- *Youth’s Instructor*, Sept. 8, 1898; *E.G. White Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1116, 1117.

The human nature of the first Adam, upon his *creation*, had no propensity to sin or evil. The same is true of Jesus Christ, the second Adam, at His *incarnation*. (This will be discussed more fully later). The sinlessness and purity of their *respective* human natures is what is common between the humanity of the two Adams; this cannot be denied or downplayed. While the element of propensity to evil or sin is not the reason why man sins or should not sin—because of the endowment of the will, the power of choice—propensity or tendency is still a very powerful factor in the struggle to resist temptation, particularly in these last days of 6,000 years of accumulated sin and its consequences coursing through the power of heredity. Sin is not inherited; tendencies are, and are further exacerbated by bad influences, beginning in the prenatal stages.

This, we must readily admit, without ever yielding to the temptation to use it as an excuse or rationale for yielding. As Paul says, “Where *sin* abounds, *grace* much more abounds.” Rom. 5: 20. Sin and grace cannot coexist together. There is perfect enmity between them; their principles are completely antagonistic to each other. There is a death struggle between them. Grace is the power of God to salvation from sin. Rom. 1: 5, 16; Matt. 1:21. Sin is of, and comes from Satan; grace is of, and comes from God. Now, who do we allow to exert more influence in your life and mine? Satan? or Christ? Who is more powerful between the two to our minds? If Christ, then God’s grace, if we truly understand what it is, and what it is designed to accomplish in the plan of salvation, is infinitely more powerful than the greatest temptation, weakness, bad habits, wrong practices, or propensity to sin. By grasping this plain truth alone, Satan’s stronghold in our soul is broken.

No. 8. Christ was truly tempted like all human nature was and is tempted.

“Temptation is no temptation unless there is a possibility of yielding.”

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, *He Himself likewise shared in the same*, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. . . . Therefore, in *all things* He had to made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that *He Himself has suffered, being tempted*, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Heb. 2:14, 17, 18, N.K.J.V.

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, *but was in all points tempted as we are*, yet without sin.” Heb. 4: 15.

“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.” – *Christ Tempted as We Are*, p. 4.

“The *enticements* which Christ resisted were those that we find so difficult to withstand.” – *Desire of Ages*, p. 116.

“Temptation is resisted when man is powerfully influenced to do a wrong action and, knowing that he can do it, resists by faith, with a firm hold upon divine power. *This was the ordeal through which Christ passed.*” – *E.G. White Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1082.

How did Christ fight Satan and deal with his constant temptations?

“The first Adam fell; the second Adam held fast to God and His word under the most trying circumstances, and His faith in His Father’s goodness, mercy, and love did not waver for one moment. *‘It is written was His weapon of resistance*, and it is the sword of the Spirit which every human being is to use [see Eph. 6: 17; cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13]. ‘Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me’—nothing to respond to temptation. On not one occasion was there a *response* to his manifold temptations. Satan found nothing in Him to *encourage* his advances.”- *Letter 8*, 1895; *E.G. White Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1130 (emphasis supplied).

The first Adam was tempted, and fell, and every son and daughter of his, since then, have been tempted and have fallen. Paul says, “For **all have sinned** and come short of the glory of God. Rom. 3:23. The prophet declared earlier, “All we like sheep have gone astray.” Isa. 53:6. Jesus was the only sinless humanity and Lamb who was tempted, and could have fallen, but not once yielded, not even in thought. Indeed, “*It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points as we are, and yet be without sin.*” However, **have sinned** is not the same as **continuing in or to sin**. Many make misread, and thus misinterpret this familiar passage of Scripture.

“Whatever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom. 14:23, last part). The very first work of Satan was to cast doubts, by masterful misrepresentations, in the minds of the unfallen angels as to the fairness and justice of God’s law and His dealings with the heavenly beings, particularly with himself. (See 4 SOP 316-323, etc.) When we begin to doubt even one of God’s words, the process of doubting the rest has begun. It must be stopped instantly for it is an extremely slippery slope with eternal damnation waiting at the bottom.

It is best therefore that we do not force an explanation outside of what is *revealed* by the inspired Word in the Bible and the *Testimonies*. Otherwise our minds begin to question how Christ could have really, really been tempted *as we all are* since He had *a sinless nature in sinful flesh, right from the incarnation*, one that no mortal has, or will ever possess, not even the first Adam. This is not the same as the glorious possibility of a sinner reaching the condition of sinlessness that Adam had before the fall, in his sinful, fallen nature. This, in fact, is the glorious goal of the plan of redemption!

“He took upon *His sinless nature our sinful nature*, that He might know how to succor them that are tempted.” – *Medical Ministry*, p. 181.

Yes, men may reach the condition of moral sinlessness in this sinful flesh nature, as the 144,000 will at the very last remnant of time. But it is their character, not their flesh nature that achieves sinlessness by falling in love with Christ, walking after Him all the way as did Enoch, thus becoming *like* Him in His human character. It is the **mind**, however, that is fully transformed, not the flesh nature. Man’s mortal nature and

corruptible flesh will only be changed at the resurrection morning “in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump.”

Mind, in the New Testament, has been translated from several original Greek words, namely: (a) *phroneo*, as in Phil. 2: 5, which means “to exercise [the mind], i.e. entertain or have a sentiment or opinion; to be mentally disposed more or less earnestly in a certain direction; to interest oneself in with concern and obedience; to set the affections on.” (b) *nous*, as in Rev. 17: 9, which means, “the intellect, divine or human,, in thought, feeling or will; by implication, meaning, the understanding.” (c) *homophron*, as in 1 Pet. 3: 8, meaning, “ like-minded, i.e., harmonious.” (d) *gnome*, as in Rev.17: 13, meaning, “opinion, resolve, counsel,, consent, judgment, purpose, will.”- *Strong’s Greek Dictionary*. Except for the involuntary functions and actions that the organs of our body and its faculties perform, as commanded by the brain, the physical body simply responds to that what our minds tell it to do. But our mind thinks only what we choose to allow it to contemplate, imagine, mediate, and dwell upon. And only man was endowed by God with this exclusive faculty.

The Bible says Christ was truly tempted as we all are and yet without sin. **We must believe that by child-like faith.** Thus, all the inspired words that teach us *how* He overcame--by implicitly, joyfully, and intelligently trusting and obeying the Word and the Father *is for our example, inspiration, and motivation to follow*, as in “imaging;” as Paul says, “Looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Hcb. 12:2.

Let us keep it this simple, and study how to overcome as He overcame *in His human nature*. Let us repeat after Paul who said: “*But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.*” Phil. 3: 8-11, N.K.J.V.

This should be our ultimate goal in all our studies of the nature of Christ---not trying to find out by what *precise* human nature He overcame. His grace revealed in His revealed human nature is sufficient. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” John 1: 12-14, N.K.J.V.

IV. Is there room for “Pluralism?”

Pluralism is what they call the error of asserting that Christ adopted both the unfallen (sinless, prelapsarian) and unfallen (sinless, postlapsarian) human natures. First, I found that both sides of the controversy have very compelling Scriptural reasons, or interpretations thereof, for adopting their opposing views. Therefore, as a sort of a neutral approach, I initially started out mentally figuring out whether enough of each side’s position could produce an acceptable “amalgamation” in my mind that would help relieve the tension between the two, and maybe even contribute a bit to helping diffuse

the controversy. But what this initial attempt turned out to be was a more detailed consideration of both sides, plus some.

I found out lately that once a more thorough and spiritual application is made of the many references considered in this study (and there are dozens more), that there is actually no room or reason to put up a “third option,” as it were, of the so-called error of pluralism. The humanity of Christ is simply one-of-a-kind, *unique*, to avoid the word “different.” Pluralism assumes that He had *both* the Adamic nature and the fallen nature; but it isn’t as cut-and-dried as that because mystery has and always will be a part of the incarnation and the divine-human nature of Christ.

Rather, as Robert W. Olson, past secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, in the Introduction of his compilation of quotes from E.G. White entitled “The Humanity of Christ,” wrote (emphasis supplied):

“But Christ was human, as well as divine, and ***we need to see Him as one of us***. We need to let His feet touch the ground. The purpose. . . is to present an accurate picture of the Lord in His humanity. . . . We trust that these inspired passages [of E.G. White’s writings] will lead the reader to feel better acquainted with the real Jesus. By reflecting upon our Lord ***in His humanity*** and by meditating upon ***the beauty of His [human-divine] character***, may we be drawn ever closer to the One who was made ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh.’ May the time spent with Jesus in this life be continued throughout eternity.”

I want to make it clear that I am in no way attempting to presumptuously pull aside or peek beyond the divinely-woven veil that shrouds this mystery. Rather, I was and still am driven by the all-consuming desire to understand *as much* as God says will be revealed to those who search with all their heart. I am not a theologian, nor one who has obtained a degree in religion. I am simply a student of the Word. Therefore this is a *layman’s* honest attempt to understand what is meant by Christ’s human nature being “a *blending* of humanity with divinity,” and that “His incarnation has ever been and ever will remain a mystery to mortals” and reconcile it with the encouragement that “its study is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.”

Friends and fellow Bible students who brought up this issue with me recently have inquired from the very same angles that have rendered this topic a controversy. Their views, all-too-familiar, weren’t of much help. However, this recent revival of this debate has proved a great blessing for me personally. I was forced to revisit my past and current understanding of it, which was, perhaps, *overly simplistic*. Not that I had failed to seriously study this topic for I was into it in the early 1990s, and had written personal studies and given discourses on it to small groups. Back then I had reached the conclusion that Jesus took all of the fallen, sinful nature *without absolutely any qualifications whatsoever*. To my mind, anyone who subscribed to the position that He incarnated into the Adamic, hence, sinless nature, had imbibed one of the errors of “New Theology.” My attitude had slightly become confrontational, not reconciliatory. It is very easy to lose objectivity in such a state.

Since then, by God’s grace, though my understanding and stand has not changed regarding the fundamental truth that Christ incarnated into the fallen human nature, *the emphasis has*. It now includes insights that I did not consider seriously consider previously, or did not appreciate its significance then. This was brought to the fore by such passages as: “He *took* on,” “He took the *form* of,” He *veiled* His divinity,” “He took

the *garb* of humanity,” “He was our *Substitute*, “He did not know sin by experience but by taking on or bearing our sins,” etc., etc.

This is a problem hoary with age. Centuries ago, historic church synods had to be convened in an attempt to settle this issue—and they are nowhere nearer the truth as *it is in Jesus* today, though apparently united on certain church creeds formulated to define the Christian mainstream stand on it. What’s the evidence? Babylonian confusion reigns in the Christian churches today. Notice:

“Many of the Protestant churches are following Rome’s iniquitous connection with the ‘kings of the earth’—the state churches, by their relation to secular government; and other denominations, by seeking the favor of the world. The term ‘Babylon’—confusion—may be appropriately applies to these bodies, all professing to derive their doctrines from the Bible, yet divided almost into innumerable sects, with widely conflicting creeds and theories.”- *The Great Controversy*, p. 383.

The churches or denominations that don’t subscribe to these creeds, are either classed as “heretics” or “cults in the Christian mainstream,” if they profess to be *Christian* but deny the creedal definition of the Trinity, the Virgin birth—with emphasis on Mary, not Christ, such as the Mormons, Latter-day Saints, etc. I firmly believe what Biblically sets apart a church as the remnant of prophecy is that they are the “keepers” or preservers in these last days of the *true knowledge* or Biblical teachings of (1) the commandments of God (2) the all-encompassing sanctuary message in connection with the 2300-day prophecy, and (3) the faith of Jesus—which doctrines include the true teachings of the nature of Christ.

The other question that need to be considered by this prelapsarian/ postlapsarian dichotomy of the nature of Christ is this:

- If one of the divine purposes of Christ’s incarnation is that His people on earth may be *united as one* even as the Godhead are one (John 17; 1 John 5:7) shouldn’t the sacred truth regarding His incarnation and nature, when understood as only the Word is willing to reveal, be a unifying, not divisive doctrine?

It should. If not it must be of man’s interpretations, not the Holy Spirit’s unifying teaching that is in control.

My earlier reconsideration of the possibility that Christ adopted both the Adamic and the fallen human nature was *not* borne of careless surmising because I gave serious thought to the following: Christ, identified in the Old Testament as Jehovah (“Yahweh”), whose human nature had no pre-existence prior to His incarnation, had to incarnate into that human nature that *is subject to temptation*. God is not a man that He should lie or be tempted. Num. 23:19; James 1:13. God is above temptation by His very nature.

Ellen White says that: “Temptation is no temptation unless there is the possibility of yielding.” Adam, in his sinless and unfallen human nature *was* tempted, and he did fall by yielding to temptation in the pure, uncorrupted environment of the Garden of Eden. Thus, in the plan of redemption, the sinless nature of Adam, in which he sinned and fell, had to be shown to be also eminently able to withstand the fiercest temptation, or else it would forever remain suspect.

Christ, the Savior of *mankind*, beginning with Adam, *the first man* and very first sinner, and in that same human nature, was the only one capable of, and thus appointed in the councils of heaven to demonstrate this. He also had to include Adam's nature in the incarnation in order to begin where Adam began—with the sinless, unfallen nature. To this I found a statement apparently supporting this thought. Note:

- “Christ is called the second Adam. In purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God, *He began where the first Adam began. Willingly He passed over the ground where Adam fell*, and redeemed Adam's failure.”- E.G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 323 (emphasis supplied).

Here it is stated that Christ began where Adam began, and willingly passed over the ground where Adam fell. This can hardly be interpreted two ways. Christ became the second Adam because He began on the very same ground where the first Adam began and fell.

This “ground” which He willingly passed over could not be the uncorrupted literal grounds of pure Garden of Eden for Christ was born 4,000 years *after* the Fall in an animal stall in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth, the latter proverbial for its wickedness. Furthermore, the “ground” where both temptations took place cannot be contrasted even more in terms of time, space, and circumstance; there is absolutely nothing common between the pure Garden of Eden and the desolate Wilderness of Temptation—except that they were the places or grounds in which the two Adams were tempted, respectively.

Even if Adam was the only one who sinned, Christ would have done the same sacrifice of incarnation, humiliation, and crucifixion. Therefore, to my mind, this “ground” had to be also the ground of Adam's human nature *where he was tempted and fell*, as well as the specific *ground of temptation* on which he fell—*appetite and self-exaltation*. The only way He could redeem Adam's failure---*even if Adam was the only one that sinned*---was to stand on the very *same human nature and temptation nature* of the first Adam, and on these two same “grounds,” completely overcome where Adam failed.

And true enough of the latter, Christ's very first temptation after 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, 4,000 years after the fall, was the test on appetite. Thus, the case was resolved between the two Adams starting on equal grounds. It could not be otherwise or else heaven's decree would not have been satisfied; its standard of righteousness and perfection would remain in doubt for eternity because it could be accused of double standards. In this regard, Christ earned the right and heritage of the first Adam, and became the second Adam.

“And so it is written, The first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. . . . The first man was of the earth, made of dust: the second Man is the Lord from the heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” 1 Cor. 15: 45-49, N.K. J.V.

“There were no corrupt principles in the first Adam, no corrupt propensities or tendencies to evil. Adam was as faultless as the angels before the throne of God.” – *Letter 191, 1899; E. G. White Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 1899.

Adam's nature was sinless, having been created in the image, likeness, and form of God. Therefore, it could also be said of him that we should have absolutely no doubts as to the sinlessness of his nature *before* his fall. But this is exactly what Ellen White says of the human nature of Christ, contrary to those who say that Christ's sinlessness refers to His *character*, not to His human nature. Notice:

- “There should not be the faintest misgivings in regard to the perfect freedom from sinfulness in the *human nature* of Christ.” – Ms. 143, 1901.

Made a little lower than the angels.

“For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.” Heb. 2: 16, 17.

“He had not taken on Him even the nature of angels, but humanity, perfectly identical with our own nature, except without the taint of sin.” -MS 57, 1890; MR No. 1211. See also *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 129.

Where temptation, yielding, and its consequences are concerned, there is a difference between *angelic* nature and human nature. When Lucifer and the third of the angels fell through *rebellion*, no plan of salvation was prepared to restore them to their former estate. Thus their cases were irreversibly hopeless immediately after their fall. They permanently became the devils and evil spirits. To begin with, they were not created in the image and likeness of God as Adam and Eve were, but to serve the lone purpose of being “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14).

Eve was deceived; Adam was not. 1 Tim. 2:14. But when Eve first fell by *yielding to the deceptive temptation* of the father of lies, and Adam fell after by *allowing his inordinate love for Eve* to yield to *her temptation* to taste of the forbidden fruit, they instantly became the focus of the plan of salvation “prepared before the foundation of the world.” The first temptation, upon closer look, is not merely on appetite for food *per se*, as some merely focus on; its companion temptation is of “*becoming like gods*, knowing both good and evil.” Gen. 3:5.

This is important to remember when studying the origin and nature of sin and temptation. These are the two fundamental grounds of all temptations—(1) appetite, also defined as desire or “lust,” and (2) self-exaltation or self-glorification. One may not yield to the temptation to indulge in any of the forbidden food, drinks, drugs, or sexual matters—and may even live a truly celibate life; but he may be denying himself all these “things and pleasures of the world” in order to be adored and venerated “like a god” by men. Or he may become an ascetic in order to gain esoteric wisdom known only to a select group of “enlightened men” such as “avatars,” mystics, and “spiritually evolved men” such as Sat Sai Baba, Maharishi Mahayesh Yogi, etc. Or he may acquire such advance wisdom as to believe that there is no god but scientific wisdom and technology, and soon becomes an agnostic or atheist. But all these are part of Satan's unnumbered deceptions and schemes!

Question: Why did Jesus incarnate into a nature “a little lower than angels” (Heb. 2:9, 6, 7; cf. Ps. 8:5, 6)?

“Had Christ come in His divine form, humanity could not have endured the sight. The contrast would have been too painful, the glory too overwhelming. [Moreover], *humanity could not have endured the presence of the one of the pure, bright angels from glory*; therefore Christ took not on Him the nature of angels; He came in the likeness of men.”- *That I May Know Him*, p. 25.

In the sacred account of Scriptures, man alone is tempted with that temptation that the gospel and plan of redemption was designed to deal with, before the foundation of the world. Angels are not tempted with food or appetite; angels do not tempt their fellow angels *in heaven*, and man cannot tempt angels; and God tempts no one. *It is the fallen angels that tempt men, and taunt God when men yield*. Lucifer himself was not tempted by anyone except from within himself—another mystery to human minds. Satan *deceived* a third of the angels on questioning the wisdom of God and His law that resulted in the first rebellion and war in heaven. Why this took place is another mystery in the Bible.

Though the Word of God tells us who the *originator of sin* is, the *origin of sin* cannot be explained this side of the resurrection morning. Note:

“It is impossible to explain the origin of sin, or to give a reason for its existence. It is an intruder for whose existence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it; is to defend it. Could it be excused, could a cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is ‘the transgression of the law.’” - *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 316, 1884.

Since then, every son and daughter of Adam is born with fallen, sinful human nature. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” except the only-begotten Son God. There is absolutely no justification for sinning, especially the popular excuse that “we sin because of our fallen, sinful nature.” Sin is the result of disobedience and of choice, not nature, although the propensity to and weakness for sin and disobedience is ever present. And yet propensity, weakness, and temptation are not sin in themselves. It is yielding to temptation and the clamors of the fallen flesh nature that is sin.

It is of a truth that Christ did not incarnate into human flesh *immediately* after the fall, but 4,000 years *later*, apparently making His nature less Adamic in time and distance than post-Adamic, especially if the power of heredity were to be applied to His human nature, as surely as it did.

However, two questions hounded me, even with the preponderance of Scriptures, deep insights of the respected theologians, church creeds, and abundant quotes from the inspired pen of Ellen G. White, concluding that He took the fallen, sinful, human nature. These questions were: If Christ took *exclusively* of the fallen human nature that *we have*, without any qualification whatsoever, then:

- Is our fallen human flesh nature capable of bearing the *guilt* of the whole world, as Jesus did in the Wilderness, Gethsemane, and Calvary—which alone would have ended His human life had not the Father sent angel Gabriel to aid Him?
- Is our fallen human flesh nature capable of bearing the *sins of the whole world*, as He did in Calvary?

The obvious answer to both questions is an emphatic NO! If this fallen, sinful human nature of ours can really bear the guilt and sins of the world, one idea can quickly lead to another. We will be soon speculating that we really don't need a Savior after all upon whom we are told to cast all our guilt, sins, and burdens upon---if our own fallen human nature is capable of bearing our own guilt and sins. Such is the religion of the heathen, and heathenized Christianity, patterned after the worship of Cain, which was rejected by God because it acknowledged no need of the life and blood of Christ. But of course this could never be. Christ's human nature had to be 100% human but with a special quality to it that cannot be found in any created being, not even with the first Adam,--to be able to bear the guilt and sins of the *whole world!*

He had to incarnate into a fallen human nature that was *not altogether like ours*, as the *Testimony* says, but in fact, had the **infinite human capacity** to bear all of mankind's guilt and sin, and to truly feel to the very depths of His being all the sufferings of mankind from Adam down to the very last person alive on earth in an *infinite* degree. An understanding of the human nature of Christ such as this does not, cannot, and should not, in any way, diminish the Biblical teaching that Christ took the fallen nature, but in fact, took *a fallen nature not altogether like ours*, else He could not be world's sin and guilt-Bearer!

To me, this view of Christ's human nature makes Him *even greater and more powerful*. Why? If His human nature could bear the sins and guilt of the whole world He certainly can bear all *my* sins and guilt, right? It is when we think of Christ's humanity as being exactly like ours, without further qualification, that at times we think He is *too busy or overwhelmed* by the multitude of our sins, and thus we turn away from Him and seek other ways to "atone for our sins" or other means to "augment" or assist Him!

Not too long ago I had the opportunity to listen to one of the last funeral sermons that a well-loved, very accomplished, and popular Adventist educator, minister, and communicator gave, before he himself passed away. He comforted the bereaved family by saying that the deceased would rise in the resurrection and will join "the great multitude in heaven" excitedly looking for the loved ones she left on earth at her death, "in that grand reunion." But he also added that "since Jesus would be very busy attending to this happy and excited throng," and probably would not have time for all at the same time," he would have "to access the great computer in heaven and look her up in its directory"!

But it has to be a mistake! Complete salvation *from* sin never seemed much more possible when we understand the *infinite* human capacity of Christ's *unique* humanity to take all our sins, guilt, and sinful tendencies upon His human nature, and to be with all of us at any one given time in heaven! Computers in heaven? Would we need such human inventions when all that was lost by sin will be restored—including our mind capacity which will be infinitely greater and more powerful than all the latest computers today or in the future!

Nature and character

Does recognizing the difference between nature and character---there is any between them---help us better understand the humanity of Christ? I agree with the view that the "*no propensity to sin or evil*" aspect of Christ had to do with His *character* and not to His human physical and mental *nature*. Moral character has been defined as being made of "the thoughts and feelings combined."

I say this because those who will receive the seal of the living God in the last days of earth's history, particularly the 144,000, will still have fallen, sinful flesh natures and yet will have reached the condition of sinlessness that Adam had before the fall.* This has to do with character, not the flesh nature. In fact, six thousand years earlier, Enoch, the seventh patriarch and first person to be translated to heaven without tasting death, and the precursor of the 144,000, had a similar character transformation in his sinful, fallen human nature. He "walked" with God for three centuries in the midst of a generation so wicked that God "repented that He had made man," meaning, it broke His heart to see how degraded man had made himself in transgression in contrast to the perfection He had created Adam and Eve.

**"Everyone who by faith obeys God's commandments, will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression." – E. G. White, *Maranatha* (last part), p. 224.

Moral character has been defined by inspiration as "the thoughts and the feelings combined." As discussed earlier, mind has several definitions. Thus, mind here is one of the two elements of moral character, and therefore, when its corresponding feelings are factored in, translates into character. One may draw the following conclusions in these, namely, a sinless mind in a sinful body, since it is by the mind that a sinner sins; the body, or the lower faculties, simply responds to the mind's directions; or, a perfect character in sinful flesh.

Doctor Collin Standish and his twin brother, Russell, have put out a book entitled "Deceptions of the New Theology." In the chapter "The Human Nature of Christ and the New Theology" they cite excerpts from the book of the late Dr. Ralph Larson, "The Word Made Flesh," and declare Elder Larson's book "a monumental work" in that he assembled an exhaustive documentation of the nature of Christ as being fallen. They wrote:

"In his monumental work, *The Word Made Flesh*, Dr. Ralph Larson investigated every written work published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States, Great Britain, South Africa, and Australia, from the year 1852 when the first published reference to the nature of Christ appeared in our publications. Elder Larson discovered that, from 1852 to 1952, approximately 1200 statements appearing on our publications dealing with the subject of the human nature of Christ. Of these, there were approximately 400 written by Sister White and 800 authored by other writers. Without fail, when reference was made to the humanity of Jesus, the authors upheld the doctrine of His fallen nature." – Standish & Standish, "*Deceptions of New Theology*," p. 36,

I have not yet read the late Dr. Larson's book but I have no doubts as to its scriptural soundness and scholastic quality. I was admirer of his and still am. Some 15 years ago I had the privileged of being invited to sit down with him and Dr. Collin Standish, among others, here in Colton, California in one of the very rare mini-conferences where I was invited to be a participant. We were trying to resolve with three brethren coming from the Midwest the issue they had raised that "The SDA Church is already in a Babylonian condition." Of course, Dr. Larson's very concise presentation, after we all had made ours (he could speak only with great difficulty even at that time), proved beyond any doubt that the SDA church is not Babylon and never will be. The three eloquently-gifted brethren resisted the evidences presented all the way, countering them with their own arguments. We parted after prayer but they refused to be convinced even after some months had elapsed. They called me up from out of state and were trying to question

why I refused to accept their point of view. I did my best to convince them otherwise to no avail. I haven't heard from them since then or as to their whereabouts.

However, as regards arriving at the Biblical truth of *any* subject, including the nature of Christ, it is important to remember the following counsel that has suddenly taken on even greater urgency in these last days. Notice:

"The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: 'The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. 2 Tim. 4:3. *That time has fully come.* The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deception. But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and basis of all reforms. [1] The opinions of learned men, [2] the deductions of science [3] *the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils*, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent [4] the voice of the majority [as in the political will of the people]—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support."- *Great Controversy*, "Scriptures A Safeguard," chap., pp. 594-5. (all emphasis supplied).

Q. How and through whom does Satan carry out his deceptions?

"Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will." – *Ibid*, p. 595.

Q. How are we to know that *we really know what we believe in*? How can we discern between the counterfeit and the genuine? How are we to secure this knowledge such that we shall not be moved regardless of how cunningly devised, repeatedly and convincingly these lies are declared from any pulpit? There is only one way. Notice:

"God has given us His word that we may become acquainted with its teachings and know for ourselves what He requires of us. When the lawyer came to Jesus with the inquiry, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' the Savior referred him to the Scriptures [not to church creeds], saying: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" Ignorance will not excuse young or old, nor release them from the punishment due for the transgression of God's law; because there is in their hands a faithful presentation of the law and its principles and claims.

It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul's salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is the truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything.

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help [of the Holy Spirit and the angels] we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God."- *Ibid*, p. 598 (all emphasis supplied).

V. Does Jesus, in fact, truly bear our sins and guilt? How?

I asked myself this question: How could Christ truly bear our guilt and sins, and feel to the very depths of His soul what every tempted and fallen person feels, and truly feel

the overwhelming tide of woe deluging the world when He never tasted sin by *experience* and never *fell*, therefore, was never *guilty* of any sin? How could He, in fact, truly relate to all that?

I had a difficult time trying to figure this out to my complete satisfaction, first mentally, and as a result, in reality, although doctrinally I believed it to be so. Perhaps, this is the same quandary that countless good Christians are in, which has, and continues to drive them to seek solace from “sainted” mortals who they find more affinity with, or try to do good things in order “to atone” for their sins—in both cases rendering Christ less than the Savior that the gospel promises that He is. But I have found reconciliation among these seemingly-contradicting statements and thoughts because of the eight guidelines cited earlier, and, the following brief discussion regarding His experience in the Wilderness, Gethsemane, and Calvary. Note:

In the Wilderness. See Matt. 4: 1-10; Luke 22: 39-46; Mark 1: 12, 13.

“It was not merely the gnawing pangs of hunger that made Christ’s sufferings so intense; it was the *guilt of the sins of the world*, which pressed so heavily upon Him. He who knew no sin *was made* sin for us. With this terrible *weight of guilt* upon Him, He withstood the fearful test upon appetite; upon the love of the world and of honor; and upon pride of display, which leads to presumption.” – *Youth’s Instructor*, Dec. 28, 1899 (emphasis supplied).

“The *weight* of the sins of the world was pressing His soul, and His countenance expressed unutterable sorrow, *a depth of anguish that fallen man had never realized*. He *felt* the overwhelming tide of *woe* that deluged the world. He realized the strength of indulged appetite and of unholy passion that controlled the world.” – *Review & Herald*, Aug. 4, 1874. (emphasis supplied).

In the Garden of Gethsemane. See Matt. 26: 36-46; Mark 14: 32-42.

“Then saith He to them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, *even to death*.” Matt. 26: 38. “And being in agony He prayed more earnestly: and His became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Luke 22: 44. “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have note yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” Heb. 12: 3, 4, N.K.J.V.

“Christ was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. His suffering can best be described in the words of the prophet, [Zech. 13; 7 quoted]. . . . *The conflict was terrible. Its measure was the guilt of His nation, of His accusers, and betrayer, the guilt of the world lying in wickedness. The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God’s wrath against sin was crushing out His life.*” - *Desire of Ages*, pp. 686, 687.

At Calvary. See Matt. 27: 23-50; Mark 15: 20-37; Luke 23: 26-46; John 19: 16-30.

“Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was *laid* the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, so that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The *guilt* of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. . . .

“But now with the *terrible weight of guilt* He bears, He cannot see the Father’s reconciling face. The *withdrawal* of the divine countenance from the Savior in His hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a *sorrow that cannot be fully understood by man*. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt. . . .

“Christ felt the *anguish* which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the *sense of sin*, bringing the Father’s wrath upon Him as man’s Substitute, that made the cup he drank so bitter, and *broke the heart* of the Son of God.”
– *Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

“In His closing hours, while hanging on the cross, *He experienced to the fullest extent what man must experience when striving against sin*. He realized how bad a man may become by yielding to sin. He realized the terrible consequence of the transgression of God’s law; for the iniquity of the whole world was upon Him.”– *Youth’s Instructor*, July 20, 1899; *E.G. White Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1082.

The above quotes are extra special. They clearly explain what “the death of the cross” means in contradistinction to what many Christian ministers and preachers teach. Let us review it once more: **While hanging on the cross, Christ “experienced to the fullest extent what man must experience when striving against sin.”** This is how difficult and painful it truly is when we strive against *sin itself*! This is what Christ meant when He said, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” Luke 13: 24. This is what is meant by crucifying sin in our lives! But many erroneously strive against the *consequences* of sins!

I humbly realized that the full explanation of this imponderable mystery will only be made in the classrooms of the University of Christ in Heaven,—and I eagerly look forward to the heavenly registration day! In the meantime, let us learn as good students in the school of Christ on earth.

It is sufficient for me that Jesus still *bears, as our merciful and faithful High Priest*, all our sins and guilt that we repent, confess, and forsake. He is carrying that *load* on His divine-human shoulders, feeling the *full weight* of that “box” containing the corruptions of all our sins and its guilt. But He was never afflicted or contaminated by its filth and vileness for not once did yield or participate in sin, not even in thought. Thus He never *felt* guilty because He was never guilty of sin. And yet He *experienced and felt in His tender and pure senses* all the sorrow, pain, suffering, guilt, and the penalty of sin of every single person born since Adam’s fall that cannot, and can never be fully understood by any mortal. The unsaved, however, feel to certain extent, the *anguish* He suffered because of the sins of the world that were laid on Him!

Let me illustrate this: It is like a father who has been cruelly hog-tied by home-invading rapists and criminals under the Satanic influence of drugs, and forced to witness his wife and daughter being raped and tortured to death. (This actually happened!). The excruciating, insupportable pain and indescribable horror he is going through was unbearable, made worse by his helplessness to do anything, although he himself was not actually being subjected to the Satanic deeds. He *truly and fully sensed, tasted, and felt* their horror, fear, and pain, and probably even more. This is one of the most important functions of our senses. This is the closest I could bring to mind on how Christ truly feels the guilt and burden of our sins without ever being guilty of it.

I did not realize till now that *the weight of the guilt of the sins of the world* was already weighing upon the soul of Jesus when He was at the Wilderness after fasting 40 days and night from food and water! In was in this terribly compromised condition of unparalleled hunger, thirst, and the weight of the guilt of the sins of the world upon Him, that no other human being will ever experience, that He was subjected by Satan to his fiercest temptations! Let us repeat this: it was “the *weight* of guilt, not *the* guilt of sin itself that Jesus bore! There is a world of difference between the two which has everything to do with the difference between our humanity and His! Previously, I was under the impression that it was only at Gethsemane that the weight of the *guilt* of sins was laid on Him!

Furthermore, it must be emphasized that Christ was tempted *all the days of His life*, not merely at the Wilderness or at Gethsemane, or at Calvary! In fact, the humanity of Jesus could have died in right at Gethsemane alone for bearing “the cup filled to the brim” of the guilt of the whole world, had not the Father sent Him angel Gabriel to encourage and strengthen Him in His death struggle.

It was at Gethsemane, not at Calvary that “the fate of *humanity* trembled in a balance,” that is, both *the humanity of Christ*, and *the fate of all human* beings. Many Christians are sadly ignorant of this special truth. They bypass Gethsemane and head straight for Calvary, and thus miss the preparatory stage for the ultimate sacrifice. Thus unprepared, they are not mentally and spiritually capable of fully understanding and appreciating the nature and magnitude of the perfect atoning sacrifice that Christ made at Calvary, which prepared Him for His penultimate office and work as High Priest in the ministration, and, cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary at His ascension. When this final work is ended, and probation finally closes on the earth, He assumes His final office as King of kings and returns to earth to redeem His people. Notice the inspired account:

“Christ was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. His suffering can be best described in the words of the prophet, ‘Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.’ Zech. 13:7. As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. He saw what justice meant. *Hitherto He had been as an intercessor for others; now He longed to have an intercessor for Himself.* As Christ felt His unity with the Father was broken up, **He feared that His human nature would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness.** In the Wilderness of temptation the destiny of the human race had been at stake. [But] Christ was then conqueror. *Now* the tempter had come for the *last fearful struggle.* *For this he [Satan] had been preparing during the three years of Christ’s ministry. . . .* **The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour.** He prayed not now for His disciples that their faith might not fail, but for His own, tempted soul. The awful moment had come—the moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in a balance.” -*Desire of Ages*, pp. 686, 687, 690 (emphasis supplied).

To be continued next month.