

Gospel Study Group
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Andrews University

The Mind Versus Sinful Flesh

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Thank you for the opportunity to share a layman's point of view on the humanity of Christ. What I hope we accomplish, is expressed by these simple words from Ellen White .

We want to comprehend so far as possible the truly human nature of our Lord.¹

This paper is not meant to be a deep theological study. I can neither read nor speak the Hebrew or Greek languages. While this would be helpful, I do not believe it is necessary in order to understand and appreciate why Christ came in the flesh of humanity. I believe we sometimes move too fast and too far away from the simplicity of the gospel.

Let me begin by sharing with you, why this subject is so very near and dear to my heart. I became deeply interested in this topic in 1986. This study is still and always will be, a work in progress. I hope to share the clearest, simplest, and easiest to understand statements from the writings of Ellen White and her peers in the church. We will be looking to see how *they* understood the scriptures when speaking about the humanity of Christ.

We need to fully understand the relationship between the nature of God and the nature of man which met in Jesus; and the Divine nature of God and the fallen nature of man which must meet in us if we are to be saved. When we can grasp why God sent His son in the body and nature of man, we can begin to understand how it was possible for Christ's humanity to die on the cross and how "we may overcome even as Christ overcame."²

In Adventism, we have debated, argued, and divided the church on this subject since the 1950s. In fact, we have had many people, yes, even sincere pastors, tell us Ellen White did not have a clear understanding on this subject. What a shock this was for me the first time I heard an Adventist pastor suggest that Ellen White made statements supporting the idea that Christ took the nature of Adam *before* the fall, and statements saying He took the nature of Adam *after* the fall. (*Emphasis supplied throughout*)

How is it possible for us, as Adventists, to say we believe Ellen White was a prophet, and at the same time believe she was some how confused? Why is it easier for us to believe she was confused rather than believe that maybe, just maybe it is *us* who are confused? I began reading everything I could find in Sister White's writings dealing with this subject. For me, it came down to one of two choices: Either Ellen White did not contradict herself and was indeed

¹ Letter 69, 1897, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 447.3.

² That I Might Know Him p. 166

a true prophet, or, if she contradict herself, I would have to conclude she was a false prophet. If this turned out to be true, then for 36 years I had been in the wrong church. The stakes were high. Would my studies lead me to give up the only faith I had known? Or would they be part of the cementing process, the continuing “settling in of the truth” of my youth?

After many weeks, and hundreds of hours of studying, I came to the conclusion Ellen White was indeed a true prophet. (PRAISE THE LORD!) She did in fact present a very clear teaching on the subject of Christ’s human nature. Because of all the confusion over her writings, much of what I will be sharing will be from the pen of sister White. I make no apologies for this. I wish only to compare her writings with scripture and let the beauty of the lesser light lead us to the glorious greater light of the spoken Word.

Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.³

In sharing statements from Adventist writers on the nature of Christ, I hope to give you a little different picture than the one you may currently envision. My desire is to share with you simple, easy to understand statements that will hopefully lay the ground work for us to build upon. Here is a simple statement I found years ago in the Spirit of Prophecy.

The Lord Jesus has made a great sacrifice in order to meet man where he is. He took not on Him the nature of angels, he did not come to save angels. It is the seed of Abraham that He is helping. Christ helps humanity by taking human nature.⁴

The second line gives us unbelievable insight into the human nature Christ took. Notice again what it said:

He took not on Him the nature of angels, *He did not come to save angels.*

This is easy to understand, yet profound. Why did Jesus not take the nature of angels? Because “He did not come to save angels.” When the question is asked, did Christ take the nature of Adam *before* or *after* the fall?, the above quote *should* provide the answer. In order to drive this point home, let’s reread the sentence about angels, and in the place of the word “angels” insert the words “unfallen Adam:”

³ 2 Chronicles 20:20.

⁴ Letter 97, 1898.

He took not on Him the nature of *unfallen Adam*, He did not come to save *unfallen Adam*.

This would still be a true statement because unfallen Adam never needed a Savior. Now, notice what happens if we replace the word “angels” with the words “fallen Adam:”

He took not on Him the nature of *fallen Adam*, He did not come to save *fallen Adam*.

This obviously is not a true statement, but it makes it very clear as to why Christ took our fallen nature. Christ did not come to save angels, He did not come to save unfallen Adam, but He *did* take our fallen nature because it was *us*, fallen man, that He came to save. This alone should end the discussion as to which nature Christ took and why. Later, we will discuss in detail what Christ inherited in the fallen nature He assumed.

In the first two years of my studies, I had conversations pertaining to this subject with two well-known leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist church. One was with Elder Morris Venden. he was the primary speaker at a Florida camp meeting in the late 80s. While speaking privately with him, I shared one of several statements I believe are impossible to ignore when speaking of the nature, fallen or unfallen, that Christ took:

It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon Himself *the form and nature of fallen man*.⁵

This statement is very clear. Christ taking “the form” “of fallen man” meant He took the literal skin and bones, the physical structure of a man. “A body thou hast prepared me.”⁶ But we cannot stop here. Ellen White also stated that He took the “nature of fallen man.” What did she mean by this? We cannot pretend this statement and others just like it do not exist or are not important.

After reading the above quote to Elder Venden, I said, “It seems to me that there is overwhelming evidence in the Spirit of Prophecy supporting the idea that Christ took the nature of man *after* the fall, yet without ever sinning.” He surprised me by replying, “That would have been impossible. If He had taken our nature, he would have had to sin.” I asked, “Even though Christ came with a surrendered will, and was born of the Holy Spirit?” Elder

⁵ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a, p. 115.

⁶ Hebrews 10:5.

Venden answered, “Even then. If He had taken our nature, He would have had to sin.” I left our meeting thinking to myself, “this is not good news for anyone. And it’s not a part of the message of “Righteousness by Faith.” If what Elder Vendon said is true, then when we are born again—born of the spirit—we too, must continue sinning.”

A year or so later, in 1988, I was in Washington D. C. visiting my dear friend, Elder Samuel Monnier. He asked me to come by his office at the General Conference headquarters for lunch. I did so and an old friend of his, Elder Raoul Dederon, shared lunch with us. At the time, I had no idea who this man was. During lunch, Elder Monnier began a dialogue on the subject of the nature of Christ. Elder Dederon commented that 70 to 80 percent of our pastors and teachers were in harmony on the subject of Christ’s human nature, believing that Christ took the nature of Adam *before* the fall. I questioned him saying, “If that is true, then do you think the church will ever take an ‘official’ position on the nature of Christ?” He responded, “That will never happen because it’s not that important of a subject.” I do not question the sincerity of Elder Venden or Elder Dederon. Both appeared to be fine Christian gentlemen. The question is not, “Were they sincere?” The question is, “Were they right?”

We have examined two of my favorite statements from Ellen White. The first one told us *why* Christ did not take the nature of angels. The second explained that Christ took both the form and nature of fallen man. Here is a third statement, which I believe is equally as strong:

The nature of God, whose law had been transgressed, and the nature of Adam, the transgressor, met in Jesus, the Son of God, and the Son of man.⁷

The nature of Adam the transgressor, the nature of Adam the sinner, met in Jesus. We can not deny what the prophet said so clearly, but we must look carefully, in order to see, how He remained sinless in sinful flesh.

We all agree that Christ came to this earth and died to pay the penalty for man’s sin. But, is there another reason why Christ chose to become a man? Shortly after Adam and Eve fell, Satan leveled charges against God. Ellen White gives us insight as to what these charges were, and how Jesus chose to respond to them.

Satan declared that it was impossible for the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God, and thus charged upon God a lack of wisdom and love. If they could not keep the law, then there was fault with the Lawgiver.⁸

⁷ *Manuscript 141*, 1901.

⁸ *Signs of the Times*, January 16, 1896.

In all of Satan's accusations against God, he never once said it was impossible for Adam and Eve to keep the law of God *before* they fell. The first accusation was the *impossibility* of "the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law." The second charge was, "if they could not keep the law," it was God's fault! Now notice how Christ responded to Satan's charges.

Satan claimed that it was impossible for human beings to keep God's law. In order to prove the falsity of this claim, Christ left His high command, took upon Himself the nature of man, and came to this earth to stand at the head of the fallen race, in order to show that humanity could withstand the temptations of Satan.⁹

Christ came to this world and took "the nature of man" "in order to show that humanity *could* withstand the temptations of Satan." How could Christ have shown that the fallen sons and daughters of Adam "could withstand the temptations" if He did not take the *same* fallen nature that *we* are tempted in? What would He have proven otherwise? Only that Adam and Eve could have withstood Satan's temptations and therefore had no excuse for their fall.

Please do not jump to any conclusions. I am not suggesting that Christ was just like *us* when He came into this world. I *am* suggesting that we are to become just like *He* was in human nature. As we look at this topic together, please keep this in mind. Christ did not come to this earth to give a living demonstration of what unfallen Adam could have been had He never sinned. He did not come to show us what a sinner is. He came to show us what all sinners *may* become in Christ Jesus! ☺

There are many other statements in Ellen White's writings that tell us why Christ kept the law in human flesh. The following is one I must share with you.

Christ kept the law, proving beyond controversy that man also can keep it.¹⁰

I am always amazed when I read this statement, since there remains much controversy in the church over which human nature Christ took and whether today's fallen man can keep the law through Christ. Is it possible that there is a connection between the two? If we do not understand which nature Christ took and how He overcame sin, can we really *understand* and truly *believe* that fallen man can overcome?

⁹ *Manuscript 77*, 1902.

¹⁰ *Review and Herald*, May 7, 1901.

Immediately following the fall of man, Christ appeared before the throne of His Father where they discussed the plan of salvation. Christ pleaded with His father to go forward with the plan—the plan they had originally decided upon before the foundation of the world.

The Father did not yield up his dearly beloved Son without a struggle, whether to let guilty man perish or to give his Son to die for the lost race. It was impossible for God to change his law, or give up the smallest part of its claims, in order to save man; therefore He suffered His Son to die for man's transgression.¹¹

God so loved His only son, and God so loved the world, that His heart was being torn in two. But there was no other way to save man in his fallen condition. God could not change His law, the very transcript of His character. “Therefore He suffered His Son to die” for man. Justice demanded death, but mercy gave us life!

Christ, upon entering the garden, immediately began telling Adam and Eve the plan of salvation. But Adam and Eve were not the only ones present that day. Satan also heard the plan of salvation for the first time. Imagine how shocked he must have been when he first realized Christ was going to die for mankind. Never in his wildest dreams did he think that God so loved the world that he would give His only begotten Son. Satan could not wrap his mind around *this* kind of love. It was impossible for him to understand. But there was something Jesus said to Adam and Eve that caught Satan’s attention. It caused him to again rejoice just as he had done when he caused Adam and Eve to sin.

When the plan of salvation was revealed, Satan rejoiced with his angels that he could, by causing man's fall, pull down the Son of God from his exalted position. He told his angels that when Jesus should take fallen man's nature, he could overpower him, and hinder the accomplishment of the plan.¹²

Wow! Satan was well aware from the *very beginning* how the battle would be fought. He knew from the very start which human nature Christ would possess. I believe, for four thousand years, Satan was waiting with great anticipation for Christ to come to this earth. I am sure he was anxious to take Christ on—one on one—believing it would be an easy victory for him. He had easily defeated Adam and Eve in the garden, where everything was in their favor. It should be much easier, under new rules, to win against Christ. Against Adam the fight was much tougher. Satan could only tempt him by the tree in the center of the Garden. Adam had

¹¹ *Signs of the Times*, January 30, 1879.

¹² *Signs of the Times*, January 30, 1879.

an *unfallen* nature, therefore Satan could only tempt him from without and not from within. Now, Satan reasoned, Jesus was going to come to his home turf—this wicked, evil world. He was going to take upon himself “fallen man’s nature.” Remember Satan’s charge: fallen man cannot keep the law. Satan also knew he would be able to tempt Christ from without *and within*, and at any time and place. Satan was sure the advantage belonged to him.

The previous quote is interesting for two reasons. First, as we just found out, Christ took our fallen nature, a fact Satan knew from the very beginning. Another interesting point about the quote, is the date—January 30, 1879. Many in Adventism believe, the teaching that Christ took our fallen human nature began with A.T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner shortly after the General Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1888. But in actuality, almost ten years earlier Ellen White said Satan knew “Jesus should take fallen man’s nature.” When she heard Jones, Waggoner, and later, W.W. Prescott and others begin to elaborate on the humanity of Christ, she did *not* for one moment, believe she was hearing new theology. Her heart was warmed by the new emphasis being placed on the love and character of Christ. Only a few months after Minneapolis [June 1889], she made this comment in reference to the meetings:

... when another [E.J. Waggoner] presented it, every fiber of my heart said, Amen. ... the matchless charms of Christ. This is what I have been trying to present before your minds.¹³

The next year in the Review and Herald, on February 18, 1890 Ellen White wrote:

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.

Remember Elder Venden’s response? “If He [Christ] had taken our nature, he would have had to sin.” Elder Venden was expressing the same idea that the people were expressing to Ellen White almost 120 years ago! Why were people writing to her about the nature of Christ at this time? During the fifteen months following the meetings in Minneapolis, elders Jones and Waggoner and sister White had, at times, been traveling together preaching on the subject of righteousness by faith. The nature of Christ was included in their sermons and articles. To many, this was new light and they looked to Ellen White for clarity. Remember, this was not a new subject or different understanding for *her*. She had written about it ten years before. She and elders Jones and Waggoner were in perfect harmony on the subject.

¹³ Sermon, Rome, New York, June 19, 1889. *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 219.1.

Now let's go back to the letters Ellen White was receiving and read her response to those who were claiming "Christ could not have had the same nature as man." She explained:

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 was not possible for Him to yield to temptation, He could not be our helper. It was a solemn reality that Christ came to fight the battles as man, in man's behalf. His temptation and victory tell us that humanity must copy the Pattern; man must become a partaker of the divine nature.¹⁴

When sister White said, "[Christ's] temptation and victory tell us that humanity must copy the Pattern; man must become a partaker of the divine nature," she was simply agreeing with the apostle Paul when he said, "Walk in the spirit (born again), and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."¹⁵ Two years later the pen of inspiration assures us Christ had no special power, and still later, she assures us He had no advantage over those who are born again.

If Christ had a *special power, which it is not the privilege of man to have*, Satan would have made capital of this matter.¹⁶

When we give to His human nature *a power that it is not possible for man to have* in his conflicts with Satan, we *destroy the completeness of His humanity*.¹⁷

Every advantage that Christ had in the conflict He has made possible for man to have. ... Oh, if men would avail themselves of their advantages, they would in turn become victors over the powers of darkness.¹⁸

If Christ had a "special power" that was not available to us, that power would "*destroy the completeness of His humanity*." Christ in His humanity *did* have an advantage. He *did* have a special power. But it was a special power, an advantage, we *too* can have. A power freely given to all who will receive Him as their personal Savior. This is not just good news—this is *GREAT NEWS*—for all of us who have struggled with sin. What is this special power? Ellen White, while writing in *The Youth Instructor*, told the youth in very clear language the answer:

Many who fall under temptation excuse themselves with the plea that Christ's divinity helped Him overcome, and that man has not this power in his favor. But *this is a mistake*. Christ has brought *divine power within the reach of all*.¹⁹

¹⁴ *Review and Herald*, February 18, 1890.

¹⁵ Galatians 5:16.

¹⁶ *Manuscript 1*, 1892.

¹⁷ *Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 929.

¹⁸ *Letter 19*, 1899.

Divine power is the “special power” that Christ has brought *within the reach of all*. But what was the source of Christ’s divine power? Was it His own divinity that helped Him overcome as some people were saying?

I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.²⁰

Ellen White complemented this scripture when she wrote:

[Christ] rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the "Master of earth and sea and sky" that He reposed in quiet. *That power He had laid down*, and He says, "I can of Mine own self do nothing." John 5:30. *He trusted in the Father's might*. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and *the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God*.²¹

He[Christ] has *by faith alone* to trust in Him [the Father] whom it has ever been His joy to obey.²²

[Christ] exercised in His own behalf no power which man cannot exercise. As man He met temptation, and overcame in *the strength given Him of God*...His life testified that by the aid of *the same divine power which Christ received*, it is possible for man to obey God's law.²³

[Christ] was able to resist the temptations of Satan through His *dependence upon the divine power of His heavenly father*.²⁴

It is vital for everyone to understand, how and from where Christ received His power. Jesus chose to “lay down” His “almighty power” before He came to the earth. This is why “Christ received” “divine power” “and overcame in the strength given Him of God.” It was “by faith alone” “He trusted in the Father’s might” and “by faith alone” “in God’s love and care that Jesus rested.” It will be no different for any of us who are born again. We will receive “*the same divine power which Christ received*”, when we rest by faith alone in Jesus. The Bible and Sister White reassures every believer of this amazing truth:

...the world's Redeemer declares, "I can of mine own self do nothing." All I do is in fulfillment of the counsel and will of my heavenly Father. The history of the daily, earthly life of Jesus is *the exact record* of the fulfillment of the purposes of God toward man. *His life and character were the unfolding or representation of the perfection of the character that man may attain by becoming a partaker of the divine nature* and overcoming the

¹⁹ *Youth Instructor*, December 28, 1899.

²⁰ John 12:49.

²¹ *Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

²² *Amazing Grace*, p. 170.

²³ *Manuscript 141*, 1901.

²⁴ *Youth Instructor*, August 23, 1894.

world through daily conflicts. Jesus assumed human nature that he might work with human nature, and bring fallen man across the gulf which transgression had made.²⁵

...[Christ] did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. *So it may be with us.* Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.²⁶

“...man may attain” to “the perfection of the character” that Christ attained, if we too “become a partaker of the divine nature.” “...Not even by a thought” do we need to yield to sin, because “sin has no more dominion over us” *when we are in Christ, by faith.* This was part of the message of “Righteousness by Faith” that God in His great mercy gave to the Seventh-day Adventist church and commanded us to give to the world.

Christ gave the world a step-by-step living demonstration of what His father could do in *Him*, and what He can do in *us*.

1. Christ came with a surrendered will, We must surrender *our* will.
2. Christ came, born of the Holy Spirit. We must be born of the Holy Spirit.
3. Christ received divine power from His father. We receive divine power through Christ.
4. Christ rested in the care and love of His father. We may rest in the care and love of Christ.
5. Christ overcame by faith alone in His father. We are to overcome by faith alone in Christ.

Ellen White wants us to fully understand what Christ accomplished by taking human nature. Again she ties the human nature of Christ to the character He wishes to produce in us:

Had He not been *fully human*, Christ could not have been our substitute. Christ could not have worked out in humanity that perfection of character which it is the privilege of all to reach.²⁷

Just how “fully human” did she believe Christ to be? The following phrases are quite telling. She said Christ took our nature in order to experience or understand:

ALL our temptations
ALL our difficulties
ALL our afflictions
ALL our experiences
ALL things like His brethren
ALL points tempted

Review and Herald, March 9, 1905
Review and Herald, October 1, 1889
Manuscript Release, Number 1405
Signs of the Times, November 24, 1897
Review and Herald, May 1, 1892
Signs of the Times, April 17, 1894

²⁵ *Youth Instructor*, March 30, 1893.

²⁶ *Desire of Ages*, p. 123.

²⁷ *Signs of The Times*, June 17, 1897.

ALL its attended ills	<i>Signs of the Times</i> , January 4, 1877
ALL its liabilities	<i>The Faith I Live By</i> , p. 48
ALL our trials	<i>Signs of the Times</i> , April 18, 1892
ALL our weaknesses	<i>Upward Look</i> , p. 139
ALL our necessities	<i>Manuscript Release</i> , Number 878
ALL our sorrows	<i>That I May Know Him</i> , p. 53
ALL our battles	<i>Bible Echo</i> , December 1, 1892
ALL our griefs	<i>That I May Know Him</i> , p. 53
ALL the infirmities	<i>Bible Echo</i> , May 21, 1900
ALL points like His brethren	<i>Signs of the Times</i> , May 16, 1895
ALL points except sin	<i>Review and Herald</i> , January 7, 1904

Ellen White truly believed that Christ was fully human, and yet never consented to sin. You may be thinking, what about all the statements in the spirit of prophecy where she tell us Christ took the nature of unfallen Adam? That is a very good question and deserve an answer. There are over 300 statements where Ellen White described Christ's human nature in the following ways:

nature of fallen man	<i>Spiritual Gifts</i> , vol. 4A, p. 115
fallen man's nature	<i>Signs of the Times</i> , January 30, 1879
nature of Adam the transgressor	<i>Manuscript 141</i> , 1901
our fallen human nature	<i>Letter 81</i> , 1896
our fallen nature	<i>Letter 81</i> , 1896
our nature	<i>Review and Herald</i> , February 18, 1890
likeness of sinful flesh	<i>Signs of the Times</i> , October 17, 1900

But how many times, in describing Christ's human nature, did she use such phrases like the following?

Nature of unfallen man
 Unfallen man's nature
 Man's unfallen nature
 Nature of Adam before the fall
 Adam's unfallen nature
 Adam's unfallen human nature
 Sinless flesh of Adam
 Unlikeness of sinful flesh

I searched every word combination I could come up with in order to find the number of times Ellen White supported the idea that Christ took the nature of Adam *before* the fall. The total number discovered was:

ZERO !

Not one time in all of her writings, did Sister White ever use one of the phrases mentioned above. How is this possible? We have heard for over fifty years that Christ took the human nature of *unfallen* Adam. This was never suggested or hinted at by the pen of inspiration.

Confusion over this subject, by the most part, began in 1957 with the book *Questions on Doctrine*. Meetings were held between General Conference leadership (primarily Elder Leroy Froom), and several evangelical leaders, just prior to the release of the book. The two most prominent evangelicals attending the meetings were Dr. Donald Barnhouse, editor of *Eternity Magazine* and Walter Martin, a young researcher who had gained a reputation writing about non-Christian cults. The meetings began in 1955 when Walter Martin, asked Elder Froom's permission to interview Seventh-day Adventist church leaders in order to gain a better understanding of what Adventists believed. A new annotated edition of *Questions on Doctrine* has since been printed in 2003. George Knight made several interesting comments in the section dealing with the humanity of Christ. He was correct when he stated the following:

We need to examine the history of the topic of the human nature of Christ in the denomination.²⁸

Referring to Walter Martin, Dr. Knight said, "the question *foremost in the mind* of Martin as he began to investigate Adventist theology was whether the denomination held that Christ 'partook of man's sinful fallen nature at the incarnation.'" Walter Martin was concerned regarding this because he had read many statements in our Adventist literature which stated clearly that Christ took our "sinful fallen nature." Elder Froom and others convinced Walter Martin that the church no longer believed this teaching. Elder Froom went so far as to refer to those holding to the old position as the "lunatic fringe," even though, as George Knight said:

Froom himself (in a poll of Adventist leaders) had discovered that 'nearly all of them' 'feel that Christ had our sinful nature.'²⁹

Walter Martin eventually removed the Adventist religion from his list of cults. Had he known what most Adventists continued to believe about Christ's humanity, he would not have done this. But over time, *Questions on Doctrine* accomplished most of its objectives. Many of the evangelicals accepted Adventists as Christian brothers, while continuing to believe they

²⁸ *Questions on Doctrine*, annotated edition, p. 518.

²⁹ *Questions on Doctrine*, annotated edition, p. xv.

were misguided on several biblical truths. Over a period of time the majority of Adventist leaders came to accept the idea that Christ took the nature of Adam *before* the fall.

In the annotated edition, George Knight made many valuable contributions dealing with the history surrounding *Questions on Doctrine*. However, some of the things he wrote concern me. One of his claims is that Ellen White did not support Jones, Waggoner, and Prescott's teaching on the humanity of Christ. George Knight suggests the following:

The teaching that Christ had sinful flesh in the sense of having the same tendencies to sin as every other child of Adam became the belief of the majority of Seventh-day Adventists in the first half of the twentieth century. That teaching was so widely accepted that it no longer needed to be argued in Adventist literature. *It was accepted as a fact ...*

... the fact is that since the 1890s there had been two quite distinct Adventist understandings on the human nature of Christ in Adventism. One had been a *visible* interpretation, while the other had been *invisible*.

The visible interpretation had been set forth by Jones, Waggoner, and Prescott in the mid 1890s. ...

The other strand of Adventist thinking on the topic had been largely invisible, since it was tucked away in *unpublished letters* and out-of-print periodicals. The second interpretation was that of Ellen White.

This one of the most unbelievable statements made in the attempt to discredit Jones, Waggoner, and Prescott. Sister White publicly supported their teachings on the nature of Christ. If she was in fact writing private letters, giving others the impression that she did *not* believe what they were teaching, her credibility would have been destroyed. Please note what Ellen White had to say about her writings:

Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her *published works*.³⁰

No proof has been found to substantiate Elder Knight's "invisible interpretation" theory. If she was troubled by what Jones, Waggoner, or Prescott were teaching on the subject of Christ's humanity, she would have made known her beliefs and understanding by voice and by pen. In 1895 she wrote a letter to Pastor William Baker in Tasmania. She instructed him that he had been misstating part of the truth about the humanity of Christ. There are some who

³⁰ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 696.

suggest that in writing this *unpublished letter*, she was giving a back-handed slap to Jones, Waggoner, and Prescott because of their teaching on the same subject. Again, this was not the way she dealt with people and biblical issues. As a matter of fact, during this same time period [1895-1896], she was giving Jones, Waggoner, and Prescott some of her *strongest support*:

The Lord in his great mercy sent a most precious message to his people through Elders Waggoner and Jones.³¹ (1896)

We are sure that the Lord has endowed him (Prescott) with His Holy Spirit, and the truth is flowing forth from him in rich currents.”³² (1896)

When there were issues that needed addressing, Ellen White faced the problems directly. While pointing out errors that needed correcting, she took the time to encourage the people in the Lord as she pleaded for their souls. Is it possible that she was intimidated by these three men and therefore said nothing directly to them? Or perhaps, because she was approaching her late 60s, God was using her less in this kind of matter. Based on her own words, you decide:

I know that Elder Smith and Elder Butler and Morrison and Nicola have been doing a work in their blindness that they will not wish to meet in the judgment.³³

We are on the earth as combatants. This is no time or place for us to be negligent, indifferent, or careless...³⁴

Recently I have written letters to different ones who are in danger of being misled by the deceptive influence that prevails at Battle Creek. ... But the Lord lives and reigns. I am writing out the cautions He gives me. I will not give up. I must relieve my soul of its burden. It may be that I shall have to visit Battle Creek.³⁵

Ellen White was 78 years old by the time she penned this last statement. She said “I will not give up” and if necessary, “It may be that I shall have to visit Battle Creek.” This would have been a very difficult task to undertake. Remember, she was living in California at the time. It mattered not, whether she was writing to the editor of the *Review and Herald*, the General Conference President, or a little known pastor in Tasmania—as the Lord directed, she

³¹ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 9, 1896.

³² *Review and Herald*, Jan. 7, 1896.

³³ Letter, Dec. 6, 1890.

³⁴ Letter to Elder G.I. Butler, Dec. 14, 1903, File B-43.

³⁵ Letter to Elder G. I. Butler, October 30, 1906.

would write. God’s messenger was not quietly writing private letters in which she shared a different gospel from that of “the majority of Seventh-day Adventists.” Why was she not writing letters directly to Elders Jones, Waggoner, or Prescott warning them about the nature of Christ as she did to Pastor Baker? I believe it is obvious. She did not write to them because the Lord gave her no message of warning to write. There is no evidence that the error she was warning Baker about, was at all related to the teachings of Jones, Waggoner, or Prescott. Some still use Ellen White’s letter to Pastor Baker to suggest she disagreed with these three men. In presenting this argument, they are really promoting the idea that she disagreed with “the majority of Seventh-day Adventists” on this subject.

In 1895, the same year she wrote to Pastor Baker, she invited W.W. Prescott to Australia as the main speaker for their November camp meeting. On January 7, two months after the camp meeting, the following report by Ellen White appeared in the *Review and Herald*. Notice the frequency with which she used the word “truth” in describing Prescott’s message—a message, according to George Knight, she privately disagreed with.

In the evening, Professor Prescott gave a most valuable lesson, precious as gold. The tent was full, and many stood outside. All seemed to be fascinated with the Word, as he presented ***the truth*** in lines so new to those not of our faith. ***Truth was separated from error***, and made, by the divine Spirit, to shine like precious jewels... . The Lord is working in power through His servants who are proclaiming ***the truth***, and He has given Brother Prescott a special message for the people. ... The Lord has visited Brother Prescott in a most remarkable manner. We are sure that the Lord has endowed him with His Holy Spirit, and ***the truth*** is flowing forth from him in rich currents.³⁶

What led sister White to exclaim that Prescott had “a special Message for the people” and that “the Lord has endowed him with His Holy Spirit?” Why did she keep saying, over and over, it is “the truth”? “Truth,” she said, “was separated from error.” What error was Prescott being led by the Holy Spirit to expose? The title of his sermon was, “The Word was Made Flesh.” Here are some of the words he shared:

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and word was God, ... and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us.³⁷

There is no portion of the theme of redemption that makes such a demand upon our minds in order to appreciate it, ...as the subject we shall study now. Jesus Christ becoming flesh,

³⁶ *Review and Herald*, Jan. 7, 1896.

³⁷ John 1: 1, 14.

God being manifest in the flesh, is one of the most helpful truths, one of the most instructive truths, *the truth above all truths*, which humanity ought to rejoice in... Let us command our minds to the utmost, because to comprehend that the word became flesh, and dwelt among us, demands all our mental powers.

Hebrews 2:14-18:

14 For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same.

16 For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels: but he took on Him the seed of Abraham.

17 Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.

18 For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.”

The scripture states very plainly that Jesus Christ had exactly the same flesh that we bear; flesh of sin; flesh in which we sin; flesh, however, in which He did *not* sin; but He bore our sins in *that* flesh of sin. No matter how you may have looked at it in the past, look at it now as it is in the Word; and the more you look at it in *that* way, the more reason you will have to thank God that it is so. ...

... Jesus Christ came of flesh, and *in* the flesh, born of a woman, made under the law: born of the Spirit, but *in* the flesh. And what flesh could He take but the flesh of the time? Not only that, but it was the very flesh He designed to take: because, you see, the problem was to help man out of the difficulty into which he had fallen, and man is a free moral agent. He must be helped as a free moral agent. Christ's work must be, not to destroy him, not to create a new race, but to recreate man, to restore in him the image of God

God made man a little lower than the angels, but man fell much lower by his sin. Now he is far separated from God; but he is to be brought back again. Jesus Christ came for that work, and in order to do it, He came, not where man was *before* he fell, but where man was *after* he fell. ... Adam was tempted at the very first on the question of appetite. Christ came ... and notice, it was in sinful flesh that He was tempted, not the flesh in which Adam fell. ***This is wondrous truth.***

Did Prescott sound at all like he was confused on this subject? Could he have said it any clearer? “Jesus Christ had exactly the same flesh that we bare,” “it was in sinful flesh that He was tempted, not the flesh in which Adam fell. This is wondrous truth.” “The truth above all truths, which humanity ought to rejoice in.” Some say the nature Christ took is not that important, while others say it is too controversial of a subject, and should therefore be left alone. Prescott strongly disagreed and so did Ellen White.

Where was sister White when Elder Prescott shared this sermon? Sitting in the tent with the congregation, listening to every word. She said it was “precious as gold” and that the Holy Spirit was working through Elder Prescott, making his message, “shine like precious

jewels.” Was the prophet of the Lord correct in giving such a ringing endorsement of Prescott? Did she truly believe what she said—“truth was separated from error?” George Knight would have us believe that at the same time she was writing a very strong endorsement regarding Prescott’s message, she was just as busy writing “unpublished letters” stating she believed something totally different. *If this is true, Adventism was and is spiritually bankrupt.*

Prescott was not alone in believing Christ took “exactly the same flesh that we bare.” Here are three statements expressing the same idea. All three are from the Sabbath School Quarterly in 1909 and 1913:

Divinity tabernacled in the flesh of humanity. Not the flesh of sinless man, but such flesh as the children of earth possess. *That was the glory of it.*³⁸

Assuming sinful flesh...made it possible for Him [Jesus] to minister to sinful flesh.³⁹

By the dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, Rome teaches that the mother of Jesus was preserved from the stain of original sin, and that *she had sinless flesh*. Consequently she was separated from the rest of humanity. *As a result of this separation of Jesus from sinful flesh*, the roman priesthood has been instituted in order that there may be someone to mediate between Christ and the sinner.⁴⁰

When was the last time you heard this strong a language being used in the Sabbath School Quarterly to describe the nature of Christ? The doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary produces the same results as the teaching that has brought confusion into the Seventh-day Adventist church over the nature of Christ. Rome teaches, because Mary was born with sinless flesh, Christ therefore, also bypassed the great law of heredity, and inherited the same sinless flesh of His mother. Many in Adventism are also teaching that Christ bypassed the great law of heredity, but have given no better answer as to how this was accomplished than the answer we receive from Rome. I share the following statements on the immaculate conception with you, not to offend, but only to present the serious dilemma that arises if we diminish how “*fully human*” Christ became in sinful flesh.

It is a fundamental teaching of Roman Catholicism that Jesus Christ did not take the same flesh that we bear.⁴¹

³⁸ *Sabbath School Quarterly*, second quarter, 1909.

³⁹ *Sabbath School Quarterly*, first quarter, 1913.

⁴⁰ *Sabbath School Quarterly*, second quarter, 1913.

⁴¹ W.W. Prescott, *Review and Herald*, Jan. 13, 1910.

Was Christ, that holy thing which was born of the virgin Mary, born in sinful flesh?...The doctrine of the immaculate conception is that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born sinless. Why?—Ostensibly to magnify Jesus; really the work of the devil to put a wide gulf between Jesus the Saviour of men, and the men whom he came to save, ...
...*We need to settle, every one of us, whether we are out of the church of Rome or not.*⁴²

To deny that Jesus Christ came not simply in flesh, but in the flesh, the only flesh that there is in this world, sinful flesh, to deny this is to deny Christ. Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist. *1 John 4:3*. The Catholic church does not confess this; but on the contrary, declares it to be shocking to Christian minds...Therefore this is the spirit of Antichrist.⁴³

Satan does not care how strongly Adventism preaches against the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary, as long as we believe in the *final results* of this deception. Merely removing Mary from the equation, does not remove the deception. In Adventism, we have taught various forms of the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Christ—a deception, where there is just enough difference between the flesh Christ took and the flesh of those He came to save, so the world ends up with a Savior who is far removed from the rest of mankind.

The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy teach that Jesus inherited from His ancestors, the same things all of humanity inherit.

[Christ] took on Him the seed of Abraham.⁴⁴

... Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;⁴⁵

[Christ] accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such an heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.⁴⁶

It's important for us to remember that Christ *inherited* sinful flesh, but never *cultivated* the things of the flesh. He took our nature but not our performance. He came to show us what we *may become*, not what we *already are* in sinful flesh.

I hope, based on what we have read so far, we can agree on the following points.

⁴² A.T. Jones, April 22, 1901, *General Conference Bulletin*, Q01 VOL. IV. Battle Creek, Mi., Extra No. 17. P. 404.

⁴³ A.T. Jones, August 1894.

⁴⁴ Hebrews 2:16.

⁴⁵ Romans 1:3.

⁴⁶ Ellen White, *Australian Record*, Jan. 15, 1903.

1. From the time of the fall, Satan knew Christ would take “fallen man’s nature.”
2. Satan said it was “impossible for sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God.”
3. Christ came to prove “beyond all controversy” that fallen man could keep the law.
4. Christ “laid down” His “almighty power,” surrendered His will, and was born of the Spirit.
5. Christ was of “the seed of Abraham.” “The great law of heredity” was upon Him.
6. Ellen White believed Christ took the human nature of “Adam, the transgressor.”
6. Prescott “separated truth from error” when he stated Christ took sinful flesh.
7. Jones, Waggoner, and Ellen White also taught that Christ took “our fallen nature.”
8. Most Adventist leaders, until the late 1950s, believed Christ took “sinful flesh.”
9. By partaking of the divine nature by faith, we, too, can overcome in sinful flesh.

We have read some very descriptive phrases such as “Adam the transgressor,” “fallen nature,” “fallen man’s nature,” in describing the human nature of Christ. All of these terms are simply different ways of saying what scripture tells us in simple language. Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh. But the Bible also reveals, that while He had *our* flesh, we are to have *His* mind. We must understand the relationship between the mind and sinful flesh. This is the key in solving decades of debates in Adventism.

The Bible speaks of Christ taking *the nature* of fallen man. It never speaks of Christ having *the mind* of fallen man. He had a human mind that received divine power from His father *by faith alone*. Christ’s mind *never* consented to the sinful flesh He inherited. The Bible authors and the Adventist pioneers fully understood this.

...as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm your self likewise with the same mind. ⁴⁷

Armed with the mind of Christ, we shall be more than over comers. ⁴⁹

He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh; not in the likeness of sinful mind. Do not drag His mind into it. His flesh was *our* flesh; but the mind was the mind of Christ Jesus....If He had taken our mind, how could we ever be exhorted to ‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus?’ It would have been so already. ⁵⁰

All things that come to us by way of temptation come to the mind through the avenue of the flesh. We shall study the different terms used in describing the mind and the flesh. What is in the mind and the flesh through the law of heredity? And what can be in the mind through the law of Grace?

The Mind Versus Sinful Flesh

⁴⁷ 1Peter 4:1.

⁴⁹ Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, June 10, 1903.

⁵⁰ A.T. Jones, 1895 *General Conference Bulletin* p. 327.

The statements we will be looking at now, are dealing with the mind and the flesh. It will be necessary to ask ourselves whether the terms are just another word(s) to *describe* the mind or the sinful flesh, or if it is being used to describe what is *in* the mind or *in* the flesh. If it is describing what is *in* the mind or flesh, is it referring to *before* or *after* conversion?

The heaven entrusted faculties of *the mind* are to be treated as the *higher powers*, to rule the *kingdom of the body*. The *natural appetites and passions* are to be brought under the control of *conscience* and the *spiritual powers*.⁵¹

The “kingdom of the body” is a term used to describe sinful flesh, as is “higher powers” in describing the mind. In “the kingdom of the body” are our “natural appetites and passions.” Sister White states that the “conscience” and “spiritual powers”, are located within “the higher powers” which are to rule the natural appetites and natural passions.

Mind
Higher powers

Conscience
Spiritual powers

Sinful Flesh
Kingdom of the body

Natural appetites
Natural passions

The lower passions have their seat in *the body* and work through it. The word ‘flesh’ or ‘fleshly’...embrace the lower corrupt nature.⁵²

Here she refers “to the kingdom of the body” simply as “the body.” She tells us that in the body are our “lower passions.” The “flesh” and “the lower corrupt nature” are terms used to describe sinful flesh.

Mind
Higher powers

Conscience
Spiritual powers

Sinful Flesh
Kingdom of the body
The body
Flesh
Lower corrupt nature

Natural appetites
Natural passions
Lower passions

⁵¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p.63.

⁵² *Adventist Home*, p.127.

Those who overcome, will follow the example of Christ by bringing appetites and passions under the control of enlightened conscience and reason.⁵³

We know our passions are found in our sinful flesh. Now, we must add ‘appetites’ to the list. We will also add the terms ‘enlightened conscience’ and ‘reason’ as things found in the mind. An ‘enlightened conscience’ is obviously referring to a converted mind.

Mind	Sinful Flesh
Higher powers	Kingdom of the body
	The body
	Flesh
	Lower corrupt nature
Conscience	Natural appetites
Spiritual powers	Natural passions
Enlightened conscience	Lower passions
Reason	Appetites

The apostle Paul understood this relationship between the mind and the sinful flesh. He said:

For they that are after *the flesh* do mind the things of *the flesh*; But they that are after *the spirit*, the things of *the spirit*.⁵⁴

Paul understood that when we let the sinful flesh lead, appetites and passions will have their way. But those who allow the spirit filled mind [divine nature] to lead will follow after the things of God.

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.⁵⁵

When Satan powerfully tempts us through our flesh, our minds can resist if we have a firm hold on divine power *by faith*—the very same way Christ accomplished it in the flesh.

⁵³ *Confrontation* p. 74-75.

⁵⁴ Romans 8:5.

⁵⁵ *The Youth's Instructor*, July 20, 1899.

A.T. Jones agreed with the Apostle Paul and Sister White when he told us where our temptations get their start:

Where does he [Satan] start the temptation? In the flesh. Satan reaches the mind through the flesh; God reaches the flesh through the mind...The battlefield is right upon the line between the flesh and the mind.⁵⁶

God and Satan are battling for control of our minds in order to win the battle for our souls.

Ellen White stated:

The *beginning of yielding* to temptation is in the sin of *permitting the mind to waver*, to be inconsistent in your trust in God. The wicked one is ever watching for a chance to misrepresent God and to attract the mind to that which is forbidden.⁵⁷

Again, A.T. Jones agreed with Sister White when he discussed what takes place when our minds waver:

Our minds have consented to sin. We have felt the enticements of the flesh, and our minds yielded, our minds consented, and did the wills and the desires of the flesh and the mind. The flesh leads, the mind follows. *When the mind can lead, the law of god is served.*⁵⁸

Jones showed the simple steps that led to the act of sin. First, we are enticed by the flesh [lower nature], tempted by Satan through the avenue of our senses. Our minds then yield resulting in the act of sin. When the spiritual or enlightened conscience is allowed to control, sin in all its power is resisted, temptation loses its power, and the law of God is served.

There are several statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that have caused much confusion in the Seventh-day Adventist church regarding the nature of Christ. The crux is due to the fact that the statements in question are usually applied to His *nature* rather than to His mind or *character*. Remember, He *inherited* sinful flesh; however, He *cultivated* a Righteous character. Here are a few statements from Ellen White that seem to create a contradiction.

1. Not a taint of corruption was upon Him.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ 1895 General Conference Bulletin, p. 328.

⁵⁷ 1MCP p. 31.

⁵⁸ 1895 General Conference Bulletin, p. 328.

⁵⁹ Signs of the Times, Dec. 9, 1897.

We should never apply the words “Not a taint of corruption” to the fallen nature which Christ assumed. It refers to His mind which remained surrendered therefore there was no taint of sin upon His character. The word ‘corruption’ is synonymous with the word ‘sin.’ Our lives become tainted by corruption the moment we yield our minds. At that very moment the act of sin takes place. Ellen White explains it further when she said,

His *spiritual nature* was free from every taint of sin.⁶⁰

He had no *taint of sin* upon His character, yet He condescended to connect our fallen human nature with His divinity.⁶¹

He had no taint of sin upon His character, because He never sinned. “His Spiritual nature”, refers to the mind of Christ. His mind was “free from every taint of sin” because His *mind never yielded*, not even by a thought. The Good News—“so it may be with us.”

2. He is a brother in our infirmities, but not possessing like passions. As the sinless One, his nature recoiled from evil. *Signs of the Times*, August 7, 1879.

“...Sinless one” is in reference to the performance of His mind and not the flesh He inherited. The flesh cannot commit sin without the cooperation of the mind.

“...His nature recoiled from evil.” Christ’s *fallen nature* never recoiled from sin any more than our fallen nature can. Fallen nature is the avenue through which our senses operate—what we see, hear, smell, feel, and touch. Satan bombards us with temptations through our senses for he knows this is the *only* avenue to our minds. It was Christ’s *mind* that recoiled from evil, as will ours, the more we fall in love Jesus. By beholding we, too, become changed.

“...Not possessing like passions.” Just as the phrases “sinless one” and “nature recoiled from evil” refer to the response of Christ’s mind, so also does the phrase “not possessing *like passions*.” However, Ellen White *does* speak about ‘passions’ in relationship to Christ’s sinful flesh when she wrote:

Though *He had all the strength of passion* of humanity, never did He yield...⁶²

There is only one way for Christ to have “*all the strength of passion*” and yet “*not possessing like passions*” at the same time. Christ never *possessed* “like passions” because “never did He *yield*” to “the strength of passion” which He *inherited in the flesh*. Like

⁶⁰ *Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 449.

⁶¹ *Letter 81*, 1896.

⁶² *Heavenly Places*, p. 155.

passions are the result of having sinned. Strength of passion is the result of *being born in sinful flesh*.

3. "...Not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity." He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.⁶³

The context of this statement is the area of temptation and sin. Evil propensity is *always* the result of *choosing* sin. Natural propensities which we are born with are to be kept under controlled by a sanctified mind. We *choose* to fall in love with evil by *yielding* to natural propensities of the flesh.

...[Satan] stirs up the evil propensities, *awakening unholy passions and ambitions*. He says, "All this power, these honors, and riches, and sinful pleasures, will I give thee"; but his conditions are that *integrity shall be yielded, conscience blunted*. Thus he degrades the human faculties, and *brings them into captivity to sin*.⁶⁴

Christ inherited, but never cultivated the things of the flesh. He took the *equipment* but not the *performance* of fallen man. He was tempted but never yielded. Everyone who comes into this world is born with a fallen sinful nature—also know as 'sinful flesh,' 'lower nature,' and 'kingdom of the body.' Etc. The following comes as standard equipment in the flesh of all men, including Christ when He was hear.

Natural appetite
Natural passions
Natural propensities

While all of these come to us naturally, they must be controlled by an 'enlightened conscience,' a sanctified mind. This is only possible to those who are born again and become a *partaker* of the divine nature.

Each of the following becomes part of the fallen nature of man when the mind cooperates with the temptations that come through *flesh* and the act of sin occurs.

Animal appetite
Gluttonous appetite
Lustful appetite

Sinful passions
Animal passions

⁶³ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, p. 18.

⁶⁴ *Our High Calling*, p. 153.3.

Evil passions

Money-loving propensities

Selfish propensities

Lustful propensity

Sinful propensities

Through the mind's consent, sin occurs and natural appetite becomes *animal* appetite, or a natural propensity becomes a *sinful* propensity. This is why Ellen White could write, truthfully, that Christ had no "evil propensity"—because His *mind never consented* to the temptations of the flesh. We all agree that Christ had natural appetite, but because He never *yielded* to the sin of appetite, He never experienced *animal or gluttonous appetite*.

We have *all* yielded to sin. When we surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we "have all the advantage that Christ had" and therefore "we need *not retain* one sinful propensity." Mrs. White reminds us, "Our natural propensities *must be controlled*, or we can *never* overcome as Christ overcame." All of our appetites, all of our passions, and all of our propensities, whether they are inherited naturally or cultivated by experience, *can be overcome* when we become a partaker of His Divine nature *by faith*.

"All through the scriptures He has given us assurances that through *His grace* we may attain the same perfection of character that He attained."⁶⁵

"By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for *every* human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with *His* heart, the will is merged in *His* will, the mind becomes one with *His* mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to *His*; we live *His* life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of *His* righteousness."⁶⁶

Just that which *you may be*, *He was* in human nature.⁶⁷

His nature (by choice) was *ours*. His mind (by choice) belonged to *God*. May the day come soon when we, as Adventists, come to fully understand and appreciate what Paul meant when he said:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Signs of the times*, June 19, 1903.

⁶⁶ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.

⁶⁷ *Letter 106*, 1896.

⁶⁸ *Philippians 2:5*.

His Attributes May Be Ours.--The higher attributes of His being it is our privilege to have, if we will, through the provisions He has made, appropriate these blessings and diligently cultivate the good in the place of the evil. We have reason, conscience, memory, will, affections--all the attributes a human being can possess. Through the provision made when God and the Son of God made a covenant to rescue man from the bondage of Satan, every facility was provided that human nature should come into union with His divine nature. In such a nature was our Lord tempted. He could have yielded to Satan's lying suggestions as did Adam, but we should adore and glorify the Lamb of God that He did not in a

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single point yield one jot or one tittle. {3SM 130.2}

Two Natures Blended in Christ.--Through being partakers of the divine nature we may stand pure and holy and undefiled. The Godhead was not made human, and the human was not deified by the blending together of the two natures. Christ did not possess the same sinful, corrupt, fallen disloyalty we possess, for then He could not be a perfect offering.--Manuscript 94, 1893. {3SM 131.1}

The Reality of Christ's Temptations.--When the follower of Christ meets with trial and perplexity, he is not to become discouraged. He is not to cast away his confidence if he does not realize all his expectations. When buffeted by the enemy, he should remember the Saviour's life of trial and discouragement. Heavenly beings ministered to Christ in His need, yet this did not make the Saviour's life one of freedom from conflict and temptation. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. If His people will follow this example, they will be imbued with His Spirit, and heavenly angels will minister to them. {3SM 131.2}

The temptations to which Christ was subjected were a terrible reality. As a free agent He was placed on probation, with liberty to yield to Satan's temptations and work at cross-purposes with God. If this were not so, if it had not been possible for Him to fall, He could not have been tempted in all points as the human family is tempted. {3SM 131.3}

The temptations of Christ, and His sufferings under them, were proportionate to His exalted, sinless character. But in every time of distress, Christ turned to His * Father... He "resisted unto blood" in that hour when the fear of moral failure was as the fear of death. As He bowed in Gethsemane, in His soul agony, drops of blood fell from His pores, and moistened the sods of the earth. He prayed with strong crying and tears, and He was heard in that He feared. God strengthened Him, as He will strengthen all who will humble themselves, and throw themselves, soul, body, and spirit, into the hands of a covenant-keeping God.

{3SM 131.4}

Upon the cross Christ knew, as no other can know, the awful power of Satan's temptations, and His heart was poured out in pity and forgiveness for the dying thief, who had been ensnared by the enemy.--The Youth's Instructor, Oct. 26, 1899. {3SM 132.1}

Christ's heart was pierced by a far sharper pain than that caused by the nails driven into His hands and feet. He was bearing the sins of the whole world, enduring our punishment--the wrath of God against transgression. His trial involved the fierce temptation of thinking that He was forsaken by God. His soul was tortured by the pressure of great darkness, lest He should swerve from His uprightness during the terrible ordeal. {3SM 132.2}

Unless there is a possibility of yielding, temptation is no temptation. 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.--The Youth's Instructor, July 20, 1899. {3SM 132.3}

We May Overcome as Christ Overcame.--The love and justice of God, and also the immutability of His law, are made manifest by the Saviour's life, no less than by His death. He assumed human nature, with its infirmities, its liabilities, its temptations. . . . He was "in all points tempted like as we are" (Heb. 4:15). He exercised in His own behalf no power which man cannot exercise. As man He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him of God. He gives us an example of perfect obedience. He has provided that we may become partakers of the divine nature, and assures us that we may overcome as He overcame. His life * testified that by the aid of the same divine power which Christ received, it is possible for man to obey God's law.-- Manuscript 141, 1901. {3SM 132.4}

God Sent a Sinless Being to This World

God did for us the very best thing that He could do when He sent from heaven a Sinless Being to manifest to this world of sin what those who are saved must be in

character--pure, holy, and undefiled, having Christ formed within. He sent His ideal in His Son, and bade men build characters in harmony with this ideal.--Letter 58, 1906. {3SM 132.5}

Man Created With Sinless Moral Nature

In the councils of heaven God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Gen. 1:26, 27). The Lord created man's moral faculties and his physical powers. All was a sinless transcript of Himself. God endowed man with holy attributes, and placed him in a garden made expressly for him. Sin alone could ruin the beings created by the hand of the Almighty.--The Youth's Instructor, July 20, 1899. {3SM 133.1}

Sickness of Others Carried Vicariously

Christ alone was able to bear the afflictions of all the human family. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." He never bore disease in His own flesh, but He carried the sickness of others. When suffering humanity pressed about Him, He who was in the health of perfect manhood was as one afflicted with them. . . {3SM 133.2}

In His life on earth, Christ developed a perfect character, He rendered perfect obedience to His Father's commandments. In coming to the world in human form, in becoming subject to the law, in revealing to men that He bore their sickness, their sorrow, their guilt, He did not become a sinner. Before the Pharisees He could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Not one stain of sin was found upon Him. He stood before the world the spotless Lamb of God.--The Youth's Instructor, Dec. 29, 1898. {3SM 133.3}

Christ's Sinlessness Disturbed Satan

Christ, the Redeemer of the world, was not situated where the influences surrounding Him were the best calculated to preserve a life of purity and untainted

morals, yet He was not contaminated. He was not free from temptation. Satan was earnest and persevering in His efforts to deceive and overcome the Son of God by his devices. {3SM 133.4}

Christ was the only one who walked the earth upon whom there rested no taint of sin. He was pure, spotless, and undefiled. That there should be One without the defilement of sin upon the earth, greatly disturbed the author of sin, and he left no means untried to overcome Christ with his wily, deceptive power. But our Saviour relied upon His heavenly Father for wisdom and strength to resist and overcome the tempter. The Spirit of His heavenly Father animated and regulated His life. He was sinless. Virtue and purity characterized His life.--The Youth's Instructor, February, 1873. {3SM 134.1} *

Our Fallen Human Nature Connected With Christ Divinity

Though He had no taint of sin upon His character, yet He condescended to connect our fallen human nature with His divinity. By thus taking humanity, He honored humanity. Having taken our fallen nature, he showed what it might become, by accepting the ample provision He has made for it, and by becoming partaker of the divine nature.--Letter 81, 1896. {3SM 134.2}

Tempted as Children Today Are

One may think that Christ, because He was the Son of God, did not have temptations as children now have. The Scriptures say He was tempted in all points like as we are tempted.--The Youth's Instructor, April, 1873. {3SM 134.3}

What the Incarnation Accomplishes

The Lord did not make man to be redeemed, but to bear His image. But through sin man lost the image of God. It is only by man's redemption that God can accomplish His design for him in making him a son of God. {3SM 134.4}

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which 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. . . . And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:12-16). {3SM 134.5}

Because of the ransom paid for him, man, by his own choice, by obedience, may accomplish the design of God, and through the grace given of God bear the image that was first impressed upon him, and afterwards lost through the fall. . . . {3SM 135.1}

Christ's Obedience Not Altogether Different From Ours.--The great teacher came into our world, not only to atone for sin but to be a teacher both by precept and example. He came to show man how to keep the law in humanity, so that man might have no excuse for following his own defective judgment. We see Christ's obedience. His life was without sin. His lifelong obedience is a reproach to disobedient humanity. The obedience of Christ is not to be put aside as altogether different from the obedience He requires of us individually. Christ has shown us that it is possible for all humanity to obey the laws of God. . . . {3SM 135.2}

The work of Christ was not a divided heart service. Christ came not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. Jesus says, "Step in the footprints of my Sonship in all obedience. I obey as in partnership with the great firm. You are to obey as in co-partnership with the Son of God. Often you will not see the path clearly; then ask of God, and He will give you wisdom and courage and faith to move forward, leaving all issues with Him." We want to comprehend so far as possible the truly human nature of our Lord. The divine and human were linked in Christ, and * both were complete. Letter 69, 1897 {3SM 135.3}

Our Saviour took up the true relationship of a human being as the Son of God. We are sons and daughters of God. In order to know how to behave ourselves

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circumspectly, we must follow where Christ leads the way. For thirty years He lived the life of a perfect man, meeting the highest standard of perfection. Then let man, however imperfect, hope in God, saying not, "If I were of a different disposition I would serve God," but bring himself to Him in true service. . . . That nature has been redeemed by Me. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12)--you are not degraded, but raised, ennobled, refined

by Me. You can find refuge in Me. You can obtain victory and be more than conquerors in My name.--Letter 69, 1897. {3SM 135.4}

Satan Declared That Man Could Not Keep God's Law

The world's Redeemer passed over the ground where Adam fell because of his disobeying the expressed law of Jehovah; and the only begotten Son of God came to our world as a man, to reveal to the world that men could keep the law of God. Satan, the fallen angel, had declared that no man could keep the law of God after the disobedience of Adam. He claimed the whole race under his control. {3SM 136.1}

The Son of God placed Himself in the sinner's stead, and passed over the ground where Adam fell, and endured the temptation in the wilderness, which was a hundredfold stronger than was or ever will be brought to bear upon the human race. Jesus resisted the temptations of Satan in the same manner that every tempted soul may resist, by referring him to the inspired record and saying, "It is written." {3SM 136.2}

Humanity Can Keep God's Law by Divine Power.--Christ overcame the temptations of Satan as a man. Every man may overcome as Christ overcame. He humbled Himself for us. He was tempted in all points like as we are. He redeemed Adam's disgraceful failure and fall, and was conqueror, thus testifying to all the unfallen worlds and to fallen humanity that man could keep the commandments of God through the divine power granted to him of heaven. Jesus the Son of God

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humbled Himself for us, endured temptation for us, overcame in our behalf to show us how we may overcome. He has thus bound up His interests with humanity by the closest ties, and has given the positive assurance that we shall not be tempted above that we are able, for with the temptation He will make a way of escape. {3SM 136.3}

The Holy Spirit Enables Us to Be Victorious.-- The Holy Spirit was promised to be with those who were wrestling for victory, in demonstration of all mightiness, endowing the human agent with supernatural powers, and instructing the ignorant in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. That the Holy Spirit is to be the grand helper, is a wonderful promise. Of what avail would it have been to us that the only begotten Son of God had humbled Himself, endured the temptations of the wily foe, and wrestled with him during His entire life on earth, and died the Just for the unjust that humanity might not perish, if the Spirit had not been given

as a constant, working, regenerating agent to make effectual in our cases what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer? {3SM 137.1}

The imparted Holy Spirit enabled His disciples, the apostles, to stand firmly against every species of idolatry and to exalt the Lord and Him alone. Who, but Jesus Christ by His Spirit and divine power, guided the pens of the sacred historians that to the world might be presented the precious record of the sayings and works of Jesus Christ? {3SM 137.2}

The promised Holy Spirit, whom He would send after He ascended to His Father, is constantly at work to draw the attention to the great official sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary, and to unfold to the world the love of God to man, and to open to the convicted soul the precious things in the Scriptures, and to open to darkened minds the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, the truths that make their hearts burn within them with the awakened intelligence of the truths of eternity. {3SM 137.3}

Who but the Holy Spirit presents before the mind

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the moral standard of righteousness and convinces of sin, and produces godly sorrow which worketh repentance that needeth not to be repented of, and inspires the exercise of faith in Him who alone can save from all sin. {3SM 137.4}

Who but the Holy Spirit can work with human minds to transform character by withdrawing the affections from those things which are temporal, perishable, and imbues the soul with earnest desire by presenting the immortal inheritance, the eternal substance which is imperishable, and recreates, refines, and sanctifies the human agents that they may become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly king. . . . {3SM 138.1}

Christ Overcame Sin as a Man.-- The fall of our first parents broke the golden chain of implicit obedience of the human will to the divine. Obedience has no longer been deemed an absolute necessity. The human agents follow their own imaginations, which the Lord said of the inhabitants of the old world were evil and that continually. The Lord Jesus declares, I have kept My Father's commandments. How? As a man. Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. To the accusations of the Jews He stood forth in His pure, virtuous, holy character and challenged them, "Who of you convinceth me of sin?" {3SM 138.2}

Our Example and Sacrifice for Sin.--The world's Redeemer came not only to be a sacrifice for sin but to be an example to man in all things, a holy, * human character. He was a Teacher, such an educator as the world never saw or heard before. He spake as one having authority, and yet He invites the confidence of all. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). {3SM 138.3}

The only begotten Son of the infinite God has, by His words [and], His practical example left us a plain pattern which we are to copy. By His words He has educated us to obey God, and by His own practice He has showed us how we can obey God.

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{3SM 138.4}

Not only did Christ give explicit rules showing how we may become obedient children but He showed us in His own life and character just how to do those things which are right and acceptable with God, so there is no excuse why we should not do those things which are pleasing in His sight. {3SM 139.1}

He Disproved Satan's Claim.--We are ever to be thankful that Jesus has proved to us by actual facts that man can keep the commandments of God, giving contradiction to Satan's falsehood that man cannot keep them. The Great Teacher came to our world to stand at the head of humanity, to thus elevate and sanctify humanity by His holy obedience to all of God's requirements showing it is possible to obey all the commandments of God. He has demonstrated that a lifelong obedience is possible. Thus He gives chosen, representative men to the world, as the Father gave the Son, to exemplify in their life the life of Jesus Christ. {3SM 139.2}

He Stood the Test as a True Human Being.--We need not place the obedience of Christ by itself as something for which He was particularly adapted, by His particular divine nature, for He stood before God as man's representative and tempted as man's substitute and surety. If Christ had a special power which it is not the privilege of man to have, Satan would have made capital of this matter. The work of Christ was to take from the claims of Satan his control of man, and He could do this only in the way that He came--a man, tempted as a man, rendering the obedience of a man. . . . {3SM 139.3}

Bear in mind that Christ's overcoming and obedience is that of a true human being. In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that it is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity. His imputed grace and power He gives to all who receive Him by faith. The obedience of Christ to His Father was the same obedience

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that is required of man. {3SM 139.4}

Man cannot overcome Satan's temptations without divine power to combine with His instrumentality. So with Jesus Christ, He could lay hold of divine power. He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God's Holy Law, and in this way He is our example. {3SM 140.1}

Jesus Showed What Man Could Do.--The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God's power to help in every emergency. Man is, through faith, to be a partaker in the divine nature, and to overcome every temptation wherewith he is beset. The Lord now demands that every son and daughter of Adam through faith in Jesus Christ, serve Him in [the] human nature which we now have. {3SM 140.2}

When the human agent feels his need of the Sun of Righteousness, when he comes to Jesus saying, Lord, I am sinful, unworthy, hopeless; save me, or I perish, he is accepted in the beloved, and his heart is warmed by the rays of divine love. In this sincere coming to Christ he opens the door to Him who has long been saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." He is accepted by faith, and he knows what it means to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.--Ms 164, 1898, pp. 1, 4. ("Be Ye Therefore Perfect," typed December 14, 1898.) {6MR 5.1}

The Lord Jesus has bridged the gulf that sin has made. He has connected earth with heaven, and finite man with the infinite God. Jesus, the world's Redeemer, could only keep the commandments of God in the same way that humanity can * keep them. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). . . . {3SM 140.3}

We must practice the example of Christ, bearing in mind His Sonship and His humanity. It was not God that was tempted in the wilderness, nor a God that was to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself. It was the Majesty of heaven who became a man-- humbled Himself to our human nature. {3SM 140.4}

How We Are to Serve God.--We are not to serve God as if we were not human, but we are to serve Him in the nature we have, that has been redeemed by the Son of God; through the righteousness of Christ we shall stand before God pardoned, and as though we had never sinned. We will never gain strength in considering what we might do if we were angels. We are to turn in faith to Jesus Christ, and show our love to God through obedience

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to His commands. Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Jesus says, "Follow me." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."--Manuscript 1, 1892. {3SM 140.5}

Real Meaning of the Incarnation

Christ took upon Himself humanity, and laid down His life a sacrifice, that man, by becoming a partaker of the divine nature, might have eternal life. Not only was Christ the Sacrifice but He was also the Priest who offered the sacrifice. "The bread that I will give," said He, "is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). He was innocent of all guilt. He gave Himself in exchange for the people who had sold themselves to Satan by transgression of God's law--His life for the life of the human family, who thereby became His purchased possession. {3SM 141.1}

"Therefore doth my Father love me," said Christ, "because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17, 18). {3SM 141.2}

"The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). To Adam before his fall the Lord said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). "If you transgress my law, death will surely be your punishment." By disobeying God's command, he forfeited his life. {3SM 141.3}

Before his fall Adam was free from the results of the curse. When he was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He was created perfect in thought and in action. But he yielded to sin, and fell from his high and holy estate. {3SM 141.4}

In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh.--Christ, the second Adam, came in the likeness of sinful flesh. In man's behalf, He became subject to sorrow, to weariness, to hunger, and to thirst. He was subject to

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temptation, but He yielded not to sin. No taint of sin was upon Him. He declared, "I have kept my Father's commandments [in My earthly life]" (John 15:10). He had infinite power only because He was perfectly obedient to His Father's will. The second Adam stood the test of trial and temptation that He might become the Owner of all humanity.--Manuscript 99, 1903. {3SM 141.5}

A misunderstanding of the character of God, has like a fog rolled over the Christians of the world, covering her like a thick cloud, sweeping over both the Catholic and Protestant churches. God sent His only son wrapped in the flesh of humanity. Why did God choose to veil Christ in the form of a man? in order for the world to see the fullness of God's love. The cross while revealing the depth of God's love, at the same time, revealed to all of the unfallen universe the depth of Satan's hatred. Through Christ, the world was to see, believe, and be saved. Why did God choose to veil His son in the flesh? The most obvious reason is because fallen man cannot see God face to face and live.

Also, God was now able to gather the whole world into His embrace through the death of His son on the cross. A death the divine son of On the cross Christ destroy Satan who had the power of death and took away the sin of every believing soul. Third, Christ conquered sin in the flesh to make it possible for Him to conquer sin in us.